

GJYLBEHARE MURATI¹, SABIHA SHALA², AFRIM HOTI³

The Internal and External Factors: EU Contestation in Kosovo as a Peripheral Country⁴

Submitted: 24.11.2023. Accepted: 19.12.2023

Abstract

Kosovo, as a peripheral country in the context of the EU integration process, remains a potential candidate country with one of the most isolated populations in the Western Balkan region. The citizens of Kosovo are still unable to travel to EU countries without a visa. Unfortunately, this process has been a condition with Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, facilitated by the EU. This article assesses the influence of both processes, from the internal and external perspective, on the contestation of the EU's actress among different actors in Kosovo – political elites, experts, and citizens. An analysis of existing relevant research, statistical data of national and international organizations, and above thirty media articles published between 2015 and 2023, shows a decline in Kosovo citizens' trust in the EU from 89% in 2015 to 73% in 2022, and lately a substantial drop with only 42%.

Keywords: European Union contestation, Kosovo, political elites, experts, citizens, visa liberalization, dialogue.

¹ Prof. Ass. Dr Gjylbehare Murati – Law Faculty, University of Haxhi Zeka, Peja (Kosovo), e-mail: gjylbehare.murati@unhz.eu; ORCID: 0009-0002-5776-8208.

² Prof. Sabiha Shala – corresponding author, University of Haxhi Zeka, Peja (Kosovo), e-mail: sabiha.shala@unhz.eu; ORCID: 0000-0002-5170-5946.

³ Prof. Afrim Hoti – University of Prishtina (Kosovo); email: afirim.hoti@uni-pr.edu; ORCID: 0000-0002-9609-5985.

⁴ The research in this article has not been supported financially by any institution.

GJYLBEHARE MURATI, SABIHA SHALA, AFRIM HOTI

Czynniki wewnętrzne i zewnętrzne. Kontestowanie UE w Kosowie jako państwie peryferyjnym⁵

Streszczenie

Kosowo, jako państwo peryferyjne w kontekście procesu integracji unijnej, pozostaje potencjalnym kandydatem do UE, przy czym jest ono państwem o jednej z najbardziej odizolowanych populacji na terenie Bałkanów Zachodnich. Obywatele Kosowa nadal nie mogą podróżować do krajów unijnych bez wizy. Niestety ów proces był warunkiem dialogu kosowsko-serbskiego, wspomaganego przez UE. Autorzy oceniają, z perspektywy wewnętrznej i zewnętrznej, wpływ obu tych procesów na kontestowanie UE w Kosowie – wśród elit politycznych, ekspertów i obywateli. Analiza istniejących badań na ten temat, danych statystycznych zebranych przez krajowe i międzynarodowe organizacje oraz ponad trzydziestu artykułów, które ukazały się w mediach w latach 2015–2023, pokazuje spadek zaufania obywateli Kosowa do UE z 89% w 2015 roku do 73% w 2022, a ostatnio zaobserwowano znaczny spadek do zaledwie 42%.

Słowa kluczowe: kontestowanie Unii Europejskiej, Kosowo, elity polityczne, eksperci, obywatele, liberalizacja systemu wizowego, dialog.

⁵ Badania wykorzystane w artykule nie zostały sfinansowane przez żadną instytucję.

Introduction

Since the early 1990s, with the emergence of the European Union (EU), there have been limited instances of the EU actively involved in organizing peace talks, designing peace treaties, deploying peacekeepers, or enforcing peace agreements through military or other coercive means such as economic sanctions.⁶

Empirically, only a handful of instances align with the traditional and narrowly defined peace initiatives undertaken by the EU. Notable examples include: **Bosnia (1992–1994)**: several EC/EU-designed peace plans in Bosnia failed during this period,⁷ **Macedonia (2001)**: the EU played a significant role in brokering the Ohrid Framework Agreement in Macedonia, with Javier Solana, former High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, diplomatically intervening to achieve success⁸; and **Indonesian Aceh (2005)**: the EU supported the process of the peace agreement between the government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement, known as the Indonesian Aceh Peace Agreement.⁹

Nevertheless, theoretically speaking, the EU is expected to function as an effective and liberal peacemaker. According to the primary law, specifically Article 21 of the Lisbon Treaty,¹⁰ the EU is mandated to preserve and prevent conflicts. To be more precise, Article 43(1) of the treaty outlines provisions for planning and executing peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations, often referred to as the Petersberg Tasks. These tasks encompass various aspects, including humanitarian and rescue tasks; conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking; joint disarmament operations; military advice and assistance tasks; post-conflict stabilization tasks (Petersberg Tasks, 1992):

⁶ J. Bergmann, A. Niemann, *The European Union as an Effective Mediator in Peace Negotiations? Conceptual Framework and Plausibility Probe*, 2013/01, Chair of International Relations, Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz.

⁷ F. Capano, T. Greiff, *Challenges to European Unity During Conflict in its Neighbourhood: The Yugoslav Wars, "JIOS"* 2019, 10(1), pp. 11–27.

⁸ D. Marolov, *Understanding the Ohrid Framework Agreement*, [in:] S.P. Ramet, O. Listhaug, A. Simkus (eds.), *Civic and Uncivic Values in Macedonia*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2013.

⁹ C. Thorburn, *Building Blocks and Stumbling Blocks: Peacebuilding in Aceh, 2005–2009*, "Indonesia" 2012, 93, pp. 83–122.

¹⁰ Lisbon Treaty (2007). The Treaty of Lisbon (2007/C 306/01). Council of Europe and the European Parliament, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3AC2007%2F306%2F01> (access: 19.06.2023).

- ❑ Ukraine and Russia war 2014 – ongoing): the EU backed the Minsk Agreements' compliance by imposing economic sanctions, targeting exchanges with Russia in response to the illegal annexation of Crimea, even though these sanctions were not consistently upheld. Moreover, in response to the invasion, February 2022, the EU lunched unprecedented sanctions against Russia and Belarus, demonstrating unwavering support for Ukraine in various dimensions. These actions included breaking established norms, such as utilizing the European Peace Facility to procure weapons for a third country at war and provide protection to the country at war.
- ❑ However, the Russian aggression on Ukraine has brought the EU's foreign policy deficiencies to the surface. There is an ongoing criticism of the European foreign policy system and its apparent inadequacies. Scholars claim that the collective norm has not been codified in the treaties nor explicitly championed as a political objective within the domain of foreign policy. Instead, it has evolved organically through recurring and institutionalized interactions between the capitals of member states and their representatives in Brussels, both within and beyond the scope of foreign policy.¹¹

In addition, the EU's effectiveness in security and foreign affairs policies continues to be subject to scrutiny by many scholars.¹² Fischer argued that the EU's security policies in the Black Sea region failed to yield significant improvements.¹³ Sima similarly highlighted the ineffectiveness of the EU's neighbourhood policy, despite substantial financial investments.¹⁴ This trend of ineffectiveness extended to the EU's involvement in conflicts such as the wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, with the EU's inability to resolve these issues without US intervention.¹⁵

With this in mind, we turn to examine the EU involvement in Kosovo. Following the Kosovo war, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1244 in 1999, placing Kosovo under the administration of the United Nations through

¹¹ H. Maurer, R.G. Whitman, N. Wright, *The EU and the Invasion of Ukraine: A Collective Responsibility to Act?*, "International Affairs" 2023, 99(1), pp. 219–238.

¹² M.A. Orenstein, R.D. Kelemen, *Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy*, "JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies" 2017, 55, pp. 87–102. M. Rabinovych, *Failing Forward and EU Foreign Policy: The Dynamics of 'Integration Without Membership' in the Eastern Neighbourhood*, "Journal of European Public Policy" 2021, 28(10), pp. 1688–1705.

¹³ S. Fischer, *The European Union and Security in the Black Sea Region after the Georgia Crisis*, "Southeast European and Black Sea Studies" 2009, 9(3), p. 333–349.

¹⁴ R. Sima, *Fatigue Within the EU's Eastern Partnership: The EU Role in the "Neighbourhood of Crisis"*, "Baltic Journal of Law & Politics" 2018, 11(2), pp. 127–154.

¹⁵ D. Bandow, *The U.S. Role in Kosovo*, CATO Institute, 1999, <https://www.cato.org/testimony/us-role-kosovo#>

the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).¹⁶ In 2003, the EU deployed the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Kosovo to monitor political and security developments, along with other initiatives such as the Stabilization-Association Process (SAP), designed to integrate Western Balkans countries into the EU.¹⁷ Kosovo was included to this process through the Stabilization and Association Process Tracking Mechanism (STM).¹⁸ After Kosovo's declaration of independence, the STM was transformed into the SAP Dialogue (SAPD) – an identical mechanism as that applied to other Western Balkan countries.¹⁹

In 2008, the EU also launched its largest ever mission to establish the rule of law in Kosovo (EULEX), as part of the EU's common security and defence policy, status neutral and technical mission.²⁰ The EU also nominated an EU Special Representative (EUSR) for four years. The EUSR's role was notable and controversial because this person also served as the head of the International Civilian Representative Office in Kosovo – an office that was mandated to oversee the implementation of the Ahtisaari Plan.²¹ In addition, the EU established an EU Liaison Office in Kosovo, later renamed the European Union Office, with the mandate to present, explain and implement EU policy and financial assistance, as well as analyse and report on the policies and developments in Kosovo.²²

Subsequently, the EU pledged visa liberalization for Kosovo citizens and took interest in facilitating dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia in 2011, an initiative welcomed by the United Nations.²³ Regrettably, the promise of visa liberalization for Kosovar citizens remains unfulfilled, making Kosovars the sole exception in

¹⁶ R.A. Schulze, *Perspectives for Kosovo's Accession to the EU*. University of Szczecin, "Reality Politics" 2018, 9, pp. 98–111, <https://czasopisma.marszalek.com.pl/images/pliki/rop/2018/rop201807.pdf> (access: 1.07.2023).

¹⁷ G. Qorraj, *Integrating the Western Balkans into the European Union: Overcoming Political and Economic Constraints*, "Europe and Perspectives: Journal on Europe and Perspectives of the Western Balkans" 2010, 2(2), pp. 79–92.

¹⁸ A. Jakupi, *Stabilization and Association Agreement between Kosovo and the European Union*, James Madison University, Max Weber Programme Graduate Symposium, EUI, Fiesole, Italy, 2019. <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1032&context=ese> (access: 20.09.2023).

¹⁹ S. Shala, D. Gërbeshi, M. Hyseni, *Cost and Benefits of Signing SAA Agreement with EU Immediate Results for Kosovo Business–Producers' Community* (Conference Proceedings), Management, Knowledge and Learning International Conference, 2018, pp. 98–106, <http://www.toknowpress.net/ISBN/978-961-6914-23-9/papers/ML2018-011.pdf> (access: 26.07.2023).

²⁰ R. Muharremi, *The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) from the Perspective of Kosovo Constitutional Law*, "Zeitschrift für ausländisches öffentliches Recht und Völkerrecht" ("Heidelberg Journal of International Law") 2010, 70, pp. 357–379.

²¹ L. Hisari, F. Kalliopi, *Post-war Cultural Heritage Preservation in Kosovo: Rethinking the Implementation of Ahtisaari Plan Annex V*, "Heritage" 2020, 3, p. 98–115.

²² European External Action Service, *Who We Are: European Union Office in Kosovo*, 2021, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/kosovo/who-we-are_en?s=321 (access: 18.09.2022).

²³ A. Beha, *Disputes over the 15-Point Agreement on Normalization of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia*, "Nationalities Papers" 2015, 43(1), pp. 102–121.

the Western Balkans who require Schengen visas for EU travel.²⁴ Furthermore, despite nearly 12 years of EU-mediated dialogue, no resolution has been reached, and Kosovo has remained a potential candidate country for over 20 years due to the non-recognition of Kosovo's independence by five EU member states.²⁵

This article will assess how these processes, from the perspective of internal and external factors, have influenced the contestation of the EU actress in Kosovo by different actors – political elites, experts, and citizens. The opinions of the three abovementioned actors' opinions are relevant to provide a realistic assessment on the EU actress in Kosovo.²⁶ Indeed, this article contributes to the existing research on how the EU's actress is perceived in countries outside the EU.²⁷

To achieve this aim, the analysis seeks to answer the two main research questions:

- (1) How do political elites, experts, and citizens of Kosovo perceive the EU actress in Kosovo?
- (2) Do the visa liberalization process and the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue impact the contestation of the EU actress in Kosovo by these actors?

The answers to these questions help verify the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis I: The trust of political elites, experts, and citizens in the EU actress in Kosovo has been declining, and the EU has been contested for its ineffectiveness to deal with Kosovo's main processes such as visa liberalization and Kosovo-Serbia dialogue.

Hypothesis II: The visa liberalization process has directly impacted, while the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue has indirectly influenced, the contestation of the EU actress in Kosovo by political elites, experts, and citizens.

In terms of content, the article starts with research methodology applies. After that, it continues with literature review on explaining the term Kosovo as a peripheral country and the EU contestation, the EU's actress and its effectiveness on

²⁴ D. Bechev, *The Periphery of the Periphery: The Western Balkans and the Euro Crisis*, ECFR, United Kingdom, 2012, pp. 1–11.

²⁵ J. Ker-Lindsay, S. Economides, *Standards before Status before Accession: Kosovo's EU Perspective*, "Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies" 2012, 14(1), 77–92.

²⁶ W.C. Müller, M. Jenny, A. Ecker, *The Elites–Masses Gap in European Integration*, [in:] H. Best, G. Lengyel, L. Verzichelli (eds.), *The Europe of Elites: A Study into the Europeaness of Europe's Political and Economic Elites*, Oxford, 2012; online edition, Oxford Academic, 24 May 2012.

²⁷ N. Chaban, A. Niemann, J. Speyer, *Changing Perceptions of the EU at Times of Brexit*, New York. Routledge, 2021, pp. 1–297; N. Chaban, A. Miskimmon, B. O'Loughlin, *Understanding EU Crisis Diplomacy in the European Neighbourhood: Strategic Narratives and Perceptions of the EU in Ukraine, Israel and Palestine*, "European Security" 2019, 28(3), pp. 235–250.

Kosovo-Serbia dialogue and visa liberalisation process for Kosovo citizens. After, the research is focused on qualitative and quantitative findings research about the EU's actress and effectiveness on Kosovo-Serbia dialogue and the visa liberalization process. These two processes are critical for Kosovo's European perspective. As, the EU has conditioned visa liberalization with progress on Kosovo and Serbia dialogue, the opinion of Kosovo citizens about the EU actress and effectiveness becomes very relevant too.

Methodology

Two research methods are employed to test the above hypotheses.

The qualitative method that made possible the Gathering of diverse views from Kosovar political elites and twenty experts on the European integration process in Kosovo. Only secondary data are used and this involves analysing various sources such as books, scientific articles, media article, speeches by political leaders, and official documents from the Kosovo government and the EU. A selection of above thirty-five media articles published between 2015 and 2022 is based on credibility and the volume of content related to the EU actress in Kosovo with focus on visa liberalization and Kosovo-Serbia dialogue as the dominating and sensitive topic of public and political discussion.

The quantitative method helps measuring Kosovo citizens' trust in the EU through the analysis of surveys conducted by credible organizations and researchers between 2015 and 2022 (the same period selected for articles). This quantitative method complements the qualitative analysis. Both methods made possible to measure perceptions of the EU as not sufficiently effective in Kosovo as a peripheral country based on the opinions of political elites, experts, and citizens.

Kosovo as a Peripheral country, EU Actress and the EU Polity Contestation

There is no unified definition of EU peripheral countries, but several researchers use this term in various contexts.²⁸ Concerning Kosovo, it can be considered a peripheral country from several perspectives. For the purposes of this research, Kosovo

²⁸ C. Sin, D. Antonowicz, J. Wiers-Jenssen, *Attracting International Students to Semi-peripheral Countries: A Comparative Study of Norway, Poland and Portugal*, "Higher Education Policy" 2021, 34, pp. 297–320; B.B. Sahin, R. Brooks, *Nation-bounded Internationalization of Higher Education: A Comparative Analysis of Two Periphery Countries*, "Higher Education Research & Development" 2023, 42(5), pp. 1071–1085.

is positioned as a peripheral country within the context of EU integration and the visa liberalization process within the broader framework of EU affairs. As indicated in this study, Kosovo, as a potential candidate country to join the EU, has made progress in its European integration path and visa liberalization discussions, but it still faces significant hurdles. These challenges position Kosovo as a peripheral country.

Similar to Barcevičius et al.'s study, the actorness perspective is used to analyse what kind of actor the EU is perceived in Kosovo, whether is it effective, fair and reliable.²⁹

The term *contestation* has garnered the attention of various scholars, each offering unique insights. Wiener presents a conceptualization of *contestation* as a mode of critique, emphasizing its proactive nature.³⁰ Michailidou sheds light on the evolving role of citizens in shaping and commenting on news within the EU polity contestation – a sphere traditionally dominated by journalists and political elites.³¹ Beha highlights the contestation surrounding the EU actress in the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia.³² Troncotă contends that the EU's mediation strategy, characterized by 'constructive ambiguity', can inadvertently provoke resistance among local political actors, particularly during the implementation phase.³³ Ivic contested the EU's visa liberalization process for Western Balkan countries, arguing that it contributed to the division of people in the region rather than fostering unification.³⁴ Contestation, as understood here, seeks to analyse the stances of Kosovo politicians, assessments by political media analysts (experts), and the claims made by Kosovar citizens regarding the EU actress in the visa liberalization process and the Kosovo-EU dialogue.

²⁹ E. Barcevičius, B. Haroldas, E. Caicedo, N. Chaban, J.C. Günther, M. Holland, A. Lutz, M.-B. U. Stumbaum, *Analysis of the Perception of the EU and EU's Policies Abroad*. The European Commission's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, 2015, https://fpi.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2018-11/eu_perceptions_study_executive_summary_with_country_fiches_0.pdf (access: 1.09.2023).

³⁰ A. Wiener, *A Theory of Contestation – A Concise Summary of Its Argument and Concepts*, "Polity" 2017, 49(1), pp. 1–184.

³¹ A. Michailidou, *The Role of the Public in Shaping EU Contestation: Euroscepticism and Online News Media*, "International Political Science Review" 2015, 36(3), pp. 324–336.

³² See supranote 23.

³³ M. Troncotă, *The Association That Dissociates' – Narratives of Local Political Resistance in Kosovo and the Delayed Implementation of the Brussels Agreement*, "Southeast European and Black Sea Studies" 2018, 18(2), pp. 219–238.

³⁴ S. Ivic, *The EU Visa Liberalisation Process for Western Balkan Countries as a Reflection of the Politics of Modernity*, "The Romanian Journal of European Studies" 2009, 7–8, pp. 121–128.

The Effectiveness of the EU as Mediator for the Never-Ending Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue and Visa Liberalization Process

Barcevičius et al. tie EU effectiveness to its actorness but delve deeper into the EU's success in specific areas and on particular issues. Since 2011, the EU has been mediating the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, resulting in over ten agreements on several sectors, including the one on establishing the Association of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo.³⁵ EU officials lauded these as significant EU accomplishments.³⁶

As Bergmann contends, the EU's full effectiveness was hindered by unimplemented agreements and unresolved issues in northern Kosovo.³⁷ Kosovo grapples with the 2015 First Agreement and constitutional disparities, impeding the Association's establishment.³⁸ On the flip side, Serbia did not meet its obligations, maintaining parallel institutions, opposing Kosovo's UNESCO membership in 2015, and refusing to acknowledge Kosovo's independence. In the 2020 Washington Agreement, Serbia vowed a one-year halt to opposing Kosovo's independence.³⁹ Kosovo reciprocated by postponing international organization membership for that period. Yet, Serbia vehemently opposed Kosovo's Council of Europe membership in 2021, persistently lobbied against recognizing Kosovo's independence, even threatening the international community.⁴⁰ A similar response followed Kosovo's EU application in December 2022. Tadić highlights Serbia's hindrance and oversight of past

³⁵ R. Muharremi, *The "Washington Agreement" Between Kosovo and Serbia*, "The American Society of International Law Insight" 2021, 25(4), pp. 1–7, https://www.asil.org/sites/default/files/ASIL_Insights_2021_V25_I4.pdf (access: 19.06.2023).

³⁶ K. Gashi, V. Musliu, J. Orbie, *Mediation through Recontextualization: The European Union and the Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia*, "European Foreign Affairs Review" 2017, <https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/8554525/file/8554529.pdf> (access: 18.09.2022).

³⁷ J. Bergmann, *The EU as a Mediator in the Kosovo–Serbia Conflict*, [in:] *The European Union as International Mediator: Palgrave Studies in European Union*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2020.

³⁸ R. Muharremi, *Asociacioni ndihmon shtrirjen e sovranitetit të Kosovës në gjithë vendin*, Klan Kosova TV, 2022, https://klankosova.tv/kolumne/111asociacioni-ndihmon-shtrirjen-e-sovranitetit-te-kosoves-ne-gjithe-vendin/?fbclid=IwAR1cif0B0FouhrjiXSrRrMPFv7SfFZ-NFmTE9YD_xEHQyByP8a2Ta73clJ4 (access: 19.06.2023).

³⁹ M. Stojanovic, *Serbia to Resume Kosovo Derecognition Campaign, Minister Says*, Balkan Insight, 2022, <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/05/13/serbia-to-resume-kosovo-derecognition-campaign-minister-says/> (access: 26.07.2023).

⁴⁰ K. Bender, *ESI Report: Balkan Turtle Race – a Warning for Ukraine – on Montenegro*, European Stability Initiative, 2022, <https://policycommons.net/artifacts/2621391/esi-report/3644063/>; A.C. Heather, D. Saric, *The Serbia-Kosovo Normalization Process a Temporary U.S. Decoupling*. Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep32258> (access: 18.09.2022).

achievements,⁴¹ while Heather and Saric argue that the Serbian government, under Vucic, presents conflicting statements, supporting dialogue and EU membership while challenging Kosovo's independence.⁴²

As a result, the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue stalled, and visa liberalization in January 2024 may be delayed due to Kosovo and Serbia's dialogue and northern Kosovo situation.⁴³ The EU now conditions visa liberalization on Kosovo-Serbia dialogue progress, having previously linked it to the ratification of the border agreement with Montenegro, another dialogue-related obligation.⁴⁴

Indeed, the visa liberalization is another process that has been lasting for more than ten years and Kosovo citizens are the only ones in the Western Balkan countries, who cannot travel to the EU countries without Schengen visa. In 2023, the EU required all Western Balkan countries, including Kosovo, to fulfil conditions in order to benefit from a visa-free regime. Today, all these countries benefit except Kosovo.⁴⁵ Additional criteria were established for Kosovo by the EU, and the European Commission recommended the removal of visa requirements for citizens of Kosovo, assessing it positively since 2018. However, the Council of EU did not approve this recommendation and only this year took a decision to remove visa requirement for Kosovo citizens no later than on 1 January 2024. Brezar rightly stated 'Kosovar visa woes are as old as the country itself.'⁴⁶ Unfortunately, this process will last further if EU continues to link it with Kosovo-Serbia dialogue. It is crucial to consider the views of political elites, experts and Kosovo citizens regarding the EU's actress in Kosovo, as these processes dominate in public and political debates.

⁴¹ K. Tadić, *Understanding the Internal Dialogue on Kosovo in Serbia*, [in:] I. Armakolas, A. Demjaha, A. Elbasani, S. Schwandner-Sievers (ed.), *Local and International Determinants of Kosovo's Statehood*, Kosovo Foundation for Open Society, 2019, pp. 239–270.

⁴² See supranote 40, Heather and Saric (2021).

⁴³ S. Kllokoqi, *Kosovo's President Lashes Out at Macron for Saying France May Review Visa-Free Travel for Kosovars*, ABC News, 2023, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/kosovos-president-lashes-macron-france-review-visa-free-102711888> (access: 20.03.2023).

⁴⁴ I. Czerny-Grimm, *Kosovo a Step Closer to Visa Liberalisation with the EU*, Socialists and Democrats, 2018, <https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/kosovo-step-closer-visa-liberalisation-eu> (access: 1.07.2023).

⁴⁵ L. Lika, B. Reka, *The European Union's Relations with the Republic of Kosovo*, [in:] A. Hajrullahu, A. Vukpalaj (red.), *Forging Kosovo: Between Dependence, Independence, and Interdependence*, 2021, pp. 229–250.

⁴⁶ A. Brezar, *Europe's Worst Passport: Why Has Kosovo Still Not Been Given Visa-Free Access to the EU?* Euro-news, 2022, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/08/03/europes-worst-passport-why-has-kosovo-still-not-been-given-visa-free-access-to-the-eu> (access: 12.07.2023).

Research Results and Discussions

Political Elites and Experts Contesting the EU Actress in Kosovo

All political parties in Kosovo have unanimously made European integration a top priority in their daily operations. However, when it comes to the intricate issues of visa liberalization and the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, divisions have arisen. Historically, the opposition parties have been vocal critics of the government's approach. Even today, the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue remains a subject that elicits diverse opinions among political parties, regardless of whether they are in power. Nevertheless, there is a remarkable consensus regarding the visa liberalization process.

The current political landscape in Kosovo comprises several key parties in the Kosovo Parliament:⁴⁷

- ❑ Self-Determination Movement (LVV) – currently in power.
- ❑ Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) – the largest opposition party.
- ❑ Kosovo Democratic Movement (LDK) – another opposition party.
- ❑ List of Serbs – a coalition.
- ❑ Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) – an opposition party.
- ❑ Multi-ethnic (Parliamentary Group) – a coalition.

Previously, while in opposition, the LVV strongly criticized the government's handling of the dialogue, particularly for its lack of transparency and the perceived detrimental impact of agreements such as the First Agreement for Association, which the LVV viewed as a step towards the 'Bosnification of Kosovo'.⁴⁸ However, as the party in power today, the LVV, led by Prime Minister Kurti, has been urged by the EU and the USA to advance the dialogue process and establish the Association in Kosovo, as it represents an international obligation for Kosovo.⁴⁹

On the other hand, opposition parties have criticized the government's management of the dialogue and have called for US involvement, in addition to the EU's

⁴⁷ Kosovo Parliament, *Parliamentary Groups*, 2022, <https://www.kuvendikosoves.org/eng/parliamentary-groups/#> (access: 20.08.2022).

⁴⁸ F. Salihu, *The Association That Dissociates: On the Kosovo-Serbia Agreement*, 2015, <https://lefteast.org/the-association-that-dissociates-on-the-kosovo-serbia-agreement/> (access: 25.07.2023).

⁴⁹ Xh. Bami, P. Isufi, *Kosovo Feels US, EU, Heat on Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities*, *Balkan Insight*, 2021, <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/07/05/kosovo-feels-us-eu-heat-on-association-of-serb-majority-municipalities/> (access: 9.03.2023); E. Vllahiu, *US, EU Again Press Kosovo to Form Serb Municipal Association*, *Prishtina Insight*, 2022, <https://prishtinainsight.com/us-eu-again-press-kosovo-to-form-serb-municipal-association/> (access: 11.08.2023).

mediation.⁵⁰ While opposition party leaders have not openly criticized the EU actress as a mediator, they have advocated for greater US engagement. In contrast, Bislimi, the First Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo for European Integration and Dialogue, recently voiced criticism of both the EU and Serbia, alleging that 'They are only interested in signing the agreement, not its implementation'.⁵¹

Regarding the visa liberalization process, political parties in Kosovo have for the first time achieved unanimity across the spectrum. Initially, during the early stages of the process and when Kosovo had to fulfil additional criteria, opposition parties closely monitored the government and other Kosovo institutions to ensure compliance. While they did criticize the government for delays in meeting the EU's prescribed benchmarks for progress in the visa liberalization process, politicians in Kosovo also shifted their approach by directly requesting the EU to treat Kosovo's citizens on par with others in the region.

Prominent political figures, including Çitaku, Tahiri, Haradinaj, Abdixhiku, Gërvalla, Kurti, and Osmani, expressed disappointment with the EU for not delivering on visa liberalization despite Kosovo's fulfilment of all requirements.⁵² Mustaf, a former Prime Minister and member of the LDK, criticized the current Prime Minister and President for delays in the visa process, alluding to their previous hindrances, particularly regarding the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro.⁵³

Experts Contesting the EU Actress in Kosovo

Media outlets in Kosovo consistently report on developments in the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue and the visa liberalization process, frequently seeking insights from national and international experts. Beyond traditional print and social media coverage, these topics have also been subjects of live debates, featuring input from national experts.

⁵⁰ Prishtina Insight, *Opposition Call for US Involvement in the Dialogue*, 2021, <https://prishtinainsight.com/opposition-call-for-us-involvement-in-the-dialogue/> (access: 22.09.2023).

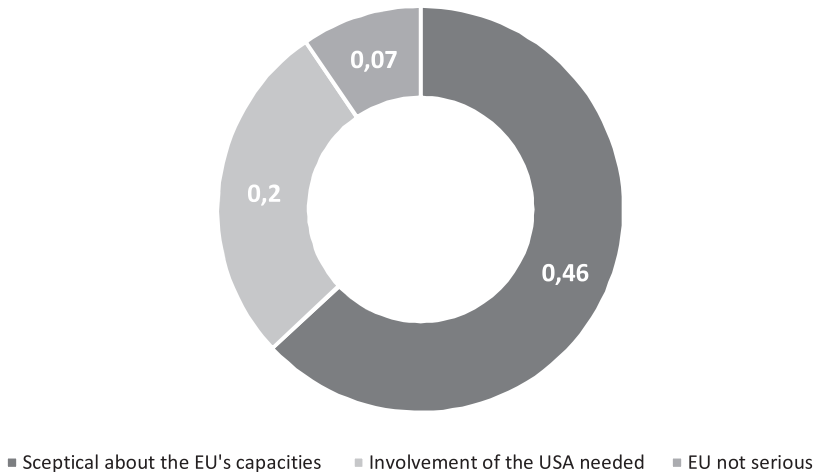
⁵¹ *Bislimi kritikon BE-në: Janë të interesuar vetëm për nënshkrimin e marrëveshjes, jo zbatimin e saj*, Demokracia.com, 2022, <https://demokracia.com/bislimi-kritikon-be-ne-jane-te-interesuar-vetem-per-nenshkrimin-e-marrevshjes-jo-zbatimin-e-saj/?fbclid=IwAR371n-CdQB8AWaXUW-gPub6Z2K4jfUY0uH4epq7NeG7x3SshUF9O1aUx1Y> (access: 12.07.2023).

⁵² V. Çitaku, *Freedom of Movement Is a Basic Fundamental Human Right and EU Has Failed to Deliver*, The Balkan Forum, 2021, <https://thebalkanforum.org/en/vlora-citaku-freedom-of-movement-is-a-basic-fundamental-human-right-and-eu-has-failed-to-deliver> (access: 15.06.2023); *Edita Tahiri e quan zhgënjyjes samitin e BE-së: S'ka viza, s'ka hapje negociatash*, Demokracia.com, 2022, <https://demokracia.com/edita-tahiri-e-quan-zhgenjyjes-samitin-e-be-se-ska-viza-ska-hapje-negotiatash/> (access: 18.09.2022); *Abdixhiku: Mos liberalizimi i vizave, lajm që Kosova nuk e meriton*, KosovaPress.com, 2022, <https://kosovapress.com/abdixhiku-mos-liberalizimi-i-vizave-lajm-qe-kosova-nuk-e-meriton/> (access: 10.02.2023); *Vjosa Osmani flet për liberalizimin e vizave*, Bota Sot, 2020, <https://www.botasot.info/aktuale-lajme/1237851/vjosa-osmani-flet-per-liberalizimin-e-vizave/> (access: 09.10.2023).

⁵³ See supranote 52, Demokracia 2022.

Over 20 political analysts express scepticism about the EU's ability to solve Kosovo-Serbia dialogue without US involvement (Figure 1). Professor of International Law, Hasani, while acknowledging the importance of the United States in the process, remains sceptical about Serbia's recognition of Kosovo resulting from EU-facilitated dialogue.⁵⁴ Peci, a renowned political media analyst in Kosovo, shares a similar perspective. Other analysts have expressed similar views.⁵⁵ Figure 1 shows that 46% are sceptical of the EU's dialogue-solving ability, 20% are in favour of US involvement, and 7% question EU sincerity.

Figure 1. Opinions of experts about the EU actress in the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia



Source: own elaboration, using data collected from the following sources: Abdyli (2021); Ademi et al. (2022); Bislimi (2022); EKONOMIA (2022); Radio Evropa e Lirë (2021a, b, 2021b); Gashi, Musliu, and Orbie (2017); Hoxhaj (2022); Infokus (2018); Istrefi (2022a, 2022b); Koci (2022); Konushevci (2017); KosovoTwo-PointsZero (2021); Peci (2022); TRT Balkan (2022); Zeqirja (2022).

Turning to the EU's role in the visa liberalization process, analysts have offered varying assessments over the years, particularly since 2016. In 2016, for the first time, the European Commission confirmed that Kosovo had met all the necessary criteria for visa-free travel, signalling a significant turning point.

⁵⁴ A. Hoxhaj, *Enver Hasani: Pritja që Serbia do ta njohë Kosovën është iluzion, BetimipërDrejtësi*, 2022, <https://betimiperdrejttesi.com/enver-hasani-pritja-qe-serbia-do-ta-njohe-kosoven-eshte-iluzion/> (access: 20.03.2023).

⁵⁵ L. Peci, *Peci: Komuniteti serb në veri duhet të shkëputet nga kontrolli i Vuçiqit*, *Koha.net*, 2022, <https://www.koha.net/arberi/347301/peci-komuniteti-serb-ne-veri-duhet-te-shkeputet-nga-kontrolli-i-vuciqit/> (access: 19.05.2023).

In 2015, analysts such as Ujkani and Hoti held that Kosovar institutions needed to intensify their efforts to advance the visa liberalization process, with Hoti suggesting that Kosovar institutions bore partial responsibility for the lack of progress.⁵⁶

In 2019, Rexha, a senior researcher from GLPS, expressed disappointment at the EU Council's failure to confirm visa liberalization for Kosovo despite positive evaluations by the EC and parliamentary support.⁵⁷

In 2020, Emini characterized the EU's role in the visa liberalization process as sluggish, while Mehmetaj placed blame on the Kosovo Government for perceived delays.⁵⁸ Bujani echoed this sentiment, emphasizing that Kosovar institutions had not enacted necessary reforms.⁵⁹ However, Vasolli suggested that, despite meeting the criteria, Kosovo needed to lobby EU countries that remained unconvinced by the EC's favourable assessment.⁶⁰

By 2022, Smajllaj attributed the lack of visa liberalization for Kosovars to France and the Netherlands, stressing the need for Kosovo institutions to engage in diplomatic efforts targeting these countries.⁶¹

Raci,⁶² Sarrazin,⁶³ and Shasha⁶⁴ all shared the perspective that the EU conditioned visa liberalization for Kosovars on the resolution of the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue.

Kosovo Citizens' Opinions for the EU's Actress in Kosovo

The citizens of Kosovo have consistently demonstrated strong support for Kosovo's European integration and EU membership aspirations. They have consistently

⁵⁶ B. Malici, *EU Snubs Kosovo over Visa Liberalisation*, Balkan Insight, 2015, <https://balkaninsight.com/2015/12/17/eu-visa-liberalisation-failure-causes-disappointment-in-kosovo-12-16-2015/> (access: 19.06.2023).

⁵⁷ *Analistët: Premtimet e politikanëve për liberalizim të vizave, joserioze dhe qesharake*, Ekonomia Online, 2019, <https://ekonomiaonline.com/politike/analistet-premtimet-e-politikanëve-per-liberalizim-te-vizave-jo-serioze-dhe-qesharake/> (access: 12.02.2023).

⁵⁸ *Is the Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue Really Reaching an Historic Moment?* KosovoTwoPointsZero, 2020, <https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/is-the-kosovo-serbia-dialogue-really-reaching-an-historic-moment/>; *Kush është fajtor për mos liberalizim të vizave për Kosovën?* Gazeta Infokus, 2020, <https://gazetainfokus.com/kush-eshte-fajtor-per-mos-liberalizim-te-vizave-per-kosoven/> (access: 20.08.2022).

⁵⁹ See supranote 58, Gazeta Infokus.

⁶⁰ *Kushtet që duhet t'i plotësojë Kosova për heqjen e vizave*, Fakteplus.net, 2020, <https://fakteplus.net/kushtet-qe-duhet-ti-plotesoje-kosova-per-heqjen-e-vizave/> (access: 20.08.2022).

⁶¹ *The European Union Continues to Stall Visa Liberalization for Kosovo*, Global Voices, 2022, <https://globalvoices.org/2022/09/12/the-european-union-continues-to-stall-visa-liberalization-for-kosovo/> (access: 9.08.2023).

⁶² Ibidem.

⁶³ *Analistët e lidhin liberalizimin e vizave për Kosovën me dialogun, kërkojnë lobim tek vendet bllokuese*, Nacionale.com, 2022, <https://nacionale.com/politik%C3%AB/Analistet-e-lidhin-liberalizimin-e-vizave-per-Kosoven-me-dialogun-kerkojne-lobim-tek-vendet-bllokuese-6873> (access: 12.02.2023).

⁶⁴ *Analistët e lidhin liberalizimin...*

expressed a desire to join the EU, with an emphasis on the potential economic benefits. However, it is vital to provide a comparative analysis of public opinion regarding EU integration, drawing from research conducted by credible organizations and researchers over the past eight years.

In 2015, Kosovo's public opinion regarding EU membership was overwhelmingly positive, with 89% of respondents viewing the process as beneficial for the economy.⁶⁵ While this percentage dropped to 80% in 2016, it remained the highest in the region.⁶⁶ Support for EU accession rebounded to 90% in 2017, again marking Kosovo as the Western Balkans leader in support for EU membership.⁶⁷ In 2018, despite a slight dip from 90% to 84%, Kosovo still maintained the highest level of support in the region.⁶⁸

Another survey conducted in 2018 by the International Republican Institute (IRI) found that 85% of respondents in Kosovo were ready to vote in favour of Kosovo's accession to the EU in a hypothetical referendum.⁶⁹

In 2019, support for EU integration showed a significant decrease, dropping from 84% to 69%.⁷⁰ This decrease was closely linked to the EU's indecision on visa liberalization, as suggested by the same source.⁷¹

Conversely, in 2020, a study by Kosovar researchers Rexhepi, Sahiti, and Rullani reported that 87.3% of respondents believed that EU integration was in Kosovo's best interests, and 86% favoured Kosovo's accession to the EU.⁷² These findings closely aligned with those of the European Fund for the Balkans in 2020, where approxi-

⁶⁵ E. Turbedar, *Balkan Barometer 2015: Public Opinion. Survey*, Regional Cooperation Council. Sarajevo, 2015, p. 45, https://www.rcc.int/seeds/files/RCC_BalkanBarometer_PublicOpinion_2015.pdf (access: 8.08.2023).

⁶⁶ E. Turbedar, *Balkan Barometer 2016: Public Opinion. Survey*, Regional Cooperation Council. Sarajevo, 2016, p. 51, https://www.rcc.int/seeds/files/RCC_BalkanBarometer_PublicOpinion_2016.pdf (access: 7.08.2023).

⁶⁷ T.M. Handjiska, *Balkan Barometer 2017: Public Opinion Survey*, Regional Cooperation Council. Sarajevo, 2017, p. 54, https://www.rcc.int/seeds/files/RCC_BalkanBarometer_PublicOpinion_2017.pdf (access: 18.09.2023).

⁶⁸ P.M. Talevska, *Balkan Barometer 2018: Public Opinion Survey*, Regional Cooperation Council. Sarajevo, 2018, p. 51, <https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/PUBLIC%20OPINION%20-%20RCC%20Balkan%20Barometer%202018.pdf/b56d30eb1af53ab00d6eb30cfcbaad304.pdf> (access: 9.08.2023).

⁶⁹ International Republican Institute, *Public Opinion in Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia. Center for Insights for Survey Research*. A project of the International Republican Institute, 2018, p. 64. https://www.iri.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/pdf_beacon_w_balkans.pdf (access: 20.03.2023).

⁷⁰ P.M. Talevska, *Balkan Barometer 2019: Public Opinion Analytical Report*. Regional Cooperation Council. Sarajevo, 2019, p. 37, https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/Balkan-Barometer_Public-Opinion-2019-07-03.pdf/adad30ca8a8c00a259a1803673c86928.pdf access: 9.08.2023).

⁷¹ Ibidem.

⁷² R. Rexhepi, V. Sahiti, F. Rullani, *Kosovo Integration in EU*, "Prizren Social Science Journal" 2020, 4(3), pp. 11–23.

mately 94% of respondents supported Kosovo's accession to the EU.⁷³ However, it is worth noting that the National Democratic Institute's research indicated that only 48% of interviewed Kosovar citizens thought that the EU treated Kosovo as an equal partner.⁷⁴

In 2021, both the IRI and the European Fund for the Balkans (EFB) reported high levels of support for EU membership among Kosovo citizens, with 91% and 90% in favour, respectively.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, they also expressed concerns about the EU institutions' sluggishness in Kosovo's integration process.

Kosovar public opinion in 2022, as reported by the Voice of America, showed a decline in support for the EU's work. Only 42% of respondents had a positive attitude towards the EU compared to NATO and the USA, with 64% believing that the EU and EULEX exhibited bias. Furthermore, 77% of respondents felt that Kosovo's foreign policy was more positively oriented towards the EU, marking a decrease from previous years.⁷⁶

In the same year, the RCC highlighted that regional support for EU membership experienced its first decline since 2015, with 60% of respondents indicating that EU membership was good for the economy.⁷⁷ For Kosovo specifically, the data showed that 73% of those surveyed believed EU membership was beneficial for the economy.⁷⁸

According to Figure 2, the trend of Kosovo citizens' trust towards the EU's institutions was not constant and decreased year to year, with an exception in 2019.⁷⁹ So, the EU actress is contested by the Kosovo citizens, considering the decrease of trust towards the EU (from 89% in 2015 to 73% in 2022).

⁷³ C. Stratulat, M. Kmezić, N. Tzifakis, M. Bonomi, Z. Nechev, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Public Opinion and Integration in the Western Balkans*, European Fund for Balkans, 2020, p. 2, <https://www.epc.eu/content/PDF/2020/Between-a-rock-and-a-hard-place-English.pdf> (access: 26.07.2023).

⁷⁴ National Democratic Institute, *Kosovo Public Opinion Survey*, 2021. <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20Kosovo%20Public%20Opinion%20Poll%20-%20April%202021.pdf> (access: 19.05.2023).

⁷⁵ International Republican Institute, *Kosovo Citizens Show Strong Support for Western Institutions Despite Kosovo's Slow Progress Towards EU Integration*, 2021, <https://www.iri.org/news/kosovo-citizens-show-strong-support-for-western-institutions-despite-kosovos-slow-progress-towards-eu-integration/> (access: 20.03.2023).

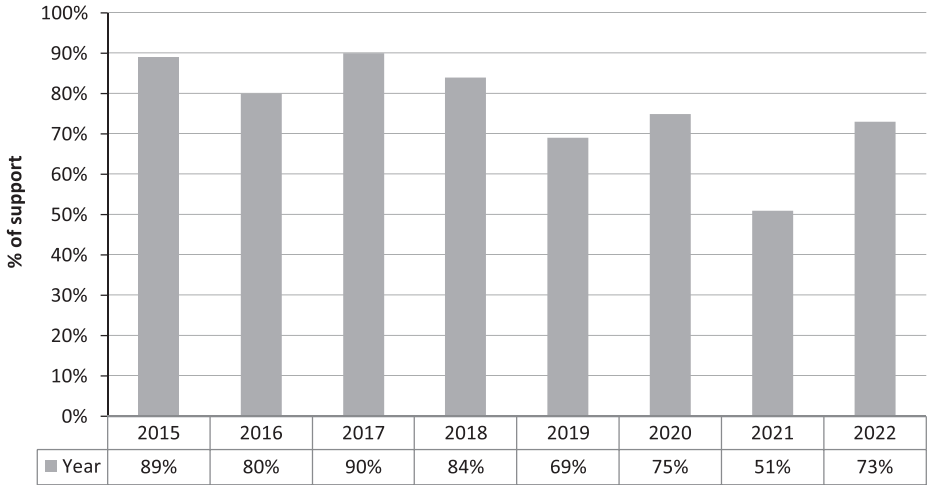
⁷⁶ A. Haraqija, *Anketa: Bie përkrakraja për Bashkimin Evropian në Kosovë, Zëri i Amerikes*, 2022, https://www.zeriamerikes.com/a/6776883.html?fbclid=IwAR2v9Jo0_aK13oDxOYc-0zdc9FTkaLvZDHNLVogiSmGagzKHmKQIXIZbXw0 (access: 18.05.2023).

⁷⁷ Regional Cooperation Council, *Balkan Barometer 2022: Infographics Pocket Edition*, 2022. https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/BalkanBarometer2022_pocket_edition_final_prw.pdf/de9bb8ca08d8e2c1c696e25df7d0605c.pdf (access: 19.05.2023).

⁷⁸ B. Zoric, *Balkan Barometer 2022: Public Opinion. Analytical Report*. Regional Cooperation Council. Sarajevo, 2022, p. 47. <https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/Balkan%20Barometer%202022%20-%20PO.pdf/21e2192c1d34cc6194ecb029d7b5997f.pdf> (access: 4.08.2023).

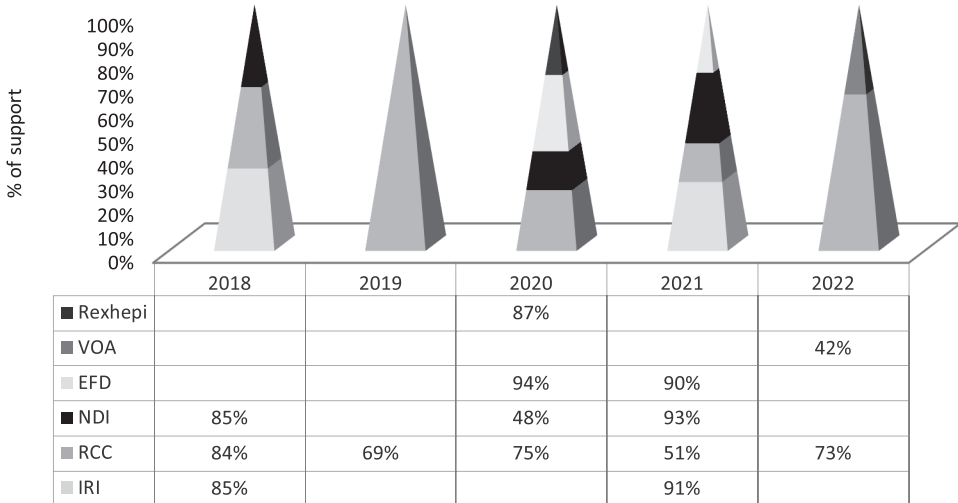
⁷⁹ Standard Eurobarometer, *Summer Eurobarometer 2022*, 2022.

Figure 2. The trend of Kosovo citizens' opinions about the EU (2015–2022)



Source: own elaboration. The data are based on Handjiska-Trendafilova (2017, p. 54); Talevska (2018, p. 51); Talevska (2019, p. 37); Sarrazin (2022); Talevska (2020), Turbedar (2015, p. 45); Turbedar (2016, p. 51; p. 41; Zoric, 2021, p. 44; Zoric, 2022, p. 47).

Figure 3. Kosovo citizens' opinion about the EU according to several research organizations and researchers from 2018 to 2022



Source of data: own elaboration. The data are based on reports by Handjiska-Trendafilova (2017, p. 54); European Fund for the Balkans (2021); Haraqija (2022); International Republican Institute (2018; 2021); National Democratic Institute (2021); Rexhepi, Sahiti, Rullani (2020); Stratulat et al. (2020, p. 2); Talevska (2018, p. 51); Talevska (2019, p. 37); (Talevska 2020, p. 41); Turbedar (2015, p. 45); Turbedar (2016, p. 51); Zoric (2021, p. 44); Zoric (2022, p. 47).

After comparing data from Figure 2 with the dates published by other organizations, a similar trend is noticed. Figure 3 shows that Kosovo citizens' support towards the EU increased when the EU promised the visa liberalization process in 2021 and decreased when the EU promise was not kept in 2022. So, the Kosovo citizens' contestation about the EU varied from year to year, pending on the EU promise regarding the visa liberalization process.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this analysis, it can be concluded that political elites, experts, and citizens of Kosovo perceive the EU actress in Kosovo as not enough effective. These qualitative and quantitative research results prove the European Union actress in Kosovo is perceived as immensely important in Kosovo but has been marred by ineffectiveness. The trust of political elites, experts, and citizens in the EU actress in Kosovo has been declining, and the EU has been contested for its ability to deal with Kosovo's essential processes such as the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue and the visa liberalization process. Notably, the involvement of the United States has been increasingly sought after by all major political parties in Kosovo, underscoring the growing frustration with the protracted nature of EU-mediated negotiations, which have spanned over a decade with no clear resolution in sight.

The link between the visa liberalization process with the progress of Kosovo-Serbia dialogue has been contested by political elites, experts and citizens. Namely, they are contesting the EU using the visa liberalization process as a 'stick and carrot' policy with regard to the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. All political leaders in Kosovo unanimously assert that Kosovar institutions have fulfilled the requisite criteria for visa-free travel within the EU. The European Commission's positive assessment since 2018 serves as a clear endorsement of Kosovo's readiness for this privilege. However, experts' opinions have varied in early stage, with some attributing delays to Kosovar institutions and others assigning partial blame to the EU for its failure to grant visa-free access. In 2022, experts recommended ongoing efforts by the Kosovo government to lobby EU countries hesitant about granting visa-free travel to Kosovars. Some experts have linked the visa liberalization process with the broader discussions surrounding the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, suggesting that the EU employs it as a 'stick and carrot' policy to incentivize progress in the dialogue. Unfortunately, these processes remain entrenched, and experts express deep scepticism about the EU's approach. So, it can be stated that this link between visa liberalization and Kosovo-Serbia dialogue progress impacts the contestation of the EU actress in Kosovo. Public support for European integration,

which was largely positive until 2019, saw a significant decline that year. Although the situation improved in 2021, the most recent international research report reveals a substantial drop-in support, with only 42% of the population expressing a positive opinion about the EU's work, and 73% according to Eurobarometer data. This decline in support is likely attributable to the EU's prolonged indecision on visa liberalization and the resulting lack of freedom of movement within Europe.⁸⁰

Bibliography

- Abdyli D., *Kosovo and Serbia dialogue on "normalization of relations" or "mutual recognition?"*, <https://dialogue-info.com/kosovo-and-serbia-dialogue-on-normalization-of-relations-or-mutual-recognition-the-eu-approach-and-elements-of-the-legally-binding-agreement-between-parties/>
- Ademi, Z., Sulaj J.A., Aliju D., Stojkovic A., Ozturk T., *Meeting between leaders of Serbia, Kosovo in Brussels unlikely to produce concrete results: Experts*, 2022, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/meeting-between-leaders-of-serbia-kosovo-in-brussels-unlikely-to-produce-concrete-results-experts/2663037>
- Abdixhiku: Mos liberalizimi i vizave, lajm që Kosova nuk e meriton*, KosovaPress.com, 2022, <https://kosovapress.com/abdixhiku-mos-liberalizimi-i-vizave-lajm-qe-kosova-nuk-e-meriton/> (access: 10.02.2023).
- Analistët e lidhin liberalizimin e vizave për Kosovën me dialogun, kërkojnë lobim tek vendet bllokuese, Nacionale.com, 2022, <https://nacionale.com/politik%C3%AB/Analistet-e-lidhin-liberalizimin-e-vizave-per-Kosoven-me-dialogun-kerkojne-lobim-tek-vendet-blokuese-6873> (access: 12.02.2023).
- Analistët: Premtimet e politikanëve për liberalizim të vizave, joserioze dhe qesharake*, Ekonomia Online, 2019, <https://ekonomiaonline.com/politike/analistet-premtimet-e-politikanëve-per-liberalizim-te-vizave-jo-serioze-dhe-qesharake/> (access: 12.02.2023).
- Bami Xh., Isufi P., *Kosovo Feels US, EU, Heat on Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities*, Balkan Insight, 2021, <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/07/05/kosovo-feels-us-eu-heat-on-association-of-serb-majority-municipalities/> (access: 9.03.2023).
- Bandow D., *The U.S. Role in Kosovo*, CATO Institute, 1999, <https://www.cato.org/testimony/us-role-kosovo#> (access: 9.07.2023).
- Barcevičius E., Haroldas B., Caicedo E., Chaban N., Günther J.C., Holland M., Lutz A., Stumbaum M.-B.U., *Analysis of the Perception of the EU and EU's Policies Abroad. The European Commission's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments*, 2015, https://fpi.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2018-11/eu_perceptions_study_executive_summary_with_country_fiches_0.pdf (access: 1.09.2023).

⁸⁰ B. Zoric, *Balkan Barometer 2021: Public Opinion. Analytical Report*. Regional Cooperation Council. Sarajevo, 2021, p. 45. <https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/PUBLIC%20OPINION%20-%20RCC%20Balkan%20Barometar%202018.pdf/b56d30eb1af53ab00d6eb30cfcbad304.pdf>

- Beha A., *Disputes over the 15-Point Agreement on Normalization of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia*, "Nationalities Papers" 2015, 43(1), pp. 102–121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2014.990367>.
- Bechev D., *The Periphery of the Periphery: The Western Balkans and the Euro Crisis*, ECFR, United Kingdom, 2012, pp. 1–11.
- Bender K., *ESI Report: Balkan Turtle Race – a Warning for Ukraine – on Montenegro*, European Stability Initiative, 2022, <https://policycommons.net/artifacts/2621391/esi-report/3644063/> (access: 12.07.2023).
- Bergmann J., *The EU as a Mediator in the Kosovo–Serbia Conflict*, [in:] *The European Union as International Mediator: Palgrave Studies in European Union*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2020. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-25564-0_4.
- Bergmann J., Niemann A., *The European Union as an Effective Mediator in Peace Negotiations? Conceptual Framework and Plausibility Probe*, 2013/01, Chair of International Relations, Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz.
- Bislimi kritikon BE-në: Janë të interesuar vetëm për nënshkrimin e marrëveshjes, jo zbatimin e saj, Demokracia.com, 2022, <https://demokracia.com/bislimi-kritikon-be-ne-jane-te-interesuar-vetem-per-nenshkrimin-e-marreshjes-jo-zbatimin-e-saj/?fbclid=IwAR371nCdQB8AWaXUW-gPub6Z2K4jfUY0uH4epq7NeG7x3SshUF9O1aUx1Y> (access: 12.07.2023).
- Brezar A., *Europe's Worst Passport: Why Has Kosovo Still Not Been Given Visa-Free Access to the EU?* Euronews, 2022, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/08/03/europes-worst-passport-why-has-kosovo-still-not-been-given-visa-free-access-to-the-eu> (access: 12.07.2023).
- Capano F., Greiff T., *Challenges to European Unity During Conflict in its Neighbourhood: The Yugoslav Wars*, "JIOS" 2019, 10(1), pp. 11–27.
- Chaban N., Niemann A., Speyer J., *Changing Perceptions of the EU at Times of Brexit*, Routledge, New York 2021.
- Chaban N., Miskimmon A., O'Loughlin B., *Understanding EU Crisis Diplomacy in the European Neighbourhood: Strategic Narratives and Perceptions of the EU in Ukraine, Israel and Palestine*, "European Security" 2019, 28(3), pp. 235–250. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2019.1648251>.
- Czerny-Grimm I., *Kosovo a Step Closer to Visa Liberalisation with the EU*, Socialists and Democrats, 2018, <https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/kosovo-step-closer-visa-liberalisation-eu> (access: 1.07.2023).
- Çitaku V., *Freedom of Movement Is a Basic Fundamental Human Right and EU Has Failed to Deliver*, The Balkan Forum, 2021, <https://thebalkanforum.org/en/vlora-citaku-freedom-of-movement-is-a-basic-fundamental-human-right-and-eu-has-failed-to-deliver> (access: 15.06.2023).
- Edita Tahiri e quan zhgënjyes samitin e BE-së: S'ka viza, s'ka hapje negociatash, Demokracia.com, 2022, <https://demokracia.com/edita-tahiri-e-quan-zhgenjyes-samitin-e-be-se-ska-viza-ska-hapje-negotiatash/> (access: 18.09.2022).

- EKONOMIA, *Dialogu Kosovë - Serbi, përmbillet me njohje reciproke*, 2022, <http://ekonomia-ks.com/?page=1,20,392446> (access: 18.09.2022).
- European External Action Service, *Who We Are: European Union Office in Kosovo*, 2021, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/kosovo/who-we-are_en?s=321 (access: 18.09.2022).
- European fund for the Balkans, <https://www.epc.eu/content/PDF/2020/Between-a-rock-and-a-hard-place-English.pdf> (access: 26.07.2023).
- Fischer S., *The European Union and Security in the Black Sea Region after the Georgia Crisis*, "Southeast European and Black Sea Studies" 2009, 9(3), pp. 333–349. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683850902934325/>.
- Gashi K., Musliu V., Orbie J., *Mediation through Recontextualization: The European Union and the Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia*, "European Foreign Affairs Review" 2017, <https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/8554525/file/8554529.pdf> (access: 18.09.2022).
- Istrefi A., *Kosovo-Serbia dialogue: A catch-22 or a dead-end*, 2022a, <https://dialogue-info.com/kosovo-serbia-dialogue-a-catch-22-or-a-dead-end/> (access: 18.09.2022).
- Istrefi A., *Dialogu Kosovë-Serbi: paradoks apo rrugë pa krye*, 2022b, <https://dialogue-info.com/sq/dialogu-kosove-serbi-nje-paradoks-apo-rruge-pa-krye/> (access: 18.09.2022).
- Handjiska T.M., *Balkan Barometer 2017: Public Opinion Survey*. Regional Cooperation Council. Sarajevo, 2017, p. 54. https://www.rcc.int/seeds/files/RCC_BalkanBarometer_PublicOpinion_2017.pdf (access: 18.09.2023).
- Haraqija A., *Anketa: Bie përkrahja për Bashkimin Evropian në Kosovë, Zëri i Amerikes*, 2022, https://www.zeriamerikes.com/a/6776883.html?fbclid=IwAR2v9Jo0_aK13oDxOYc-0zdc9FTkaLvZDHNLVogiSmGagzKHmkQIXIZbXw0 (access: 18.05.2023).
- Heather A.C., Saric D., *The Serbia-Kosovo Normalization Process a Temporary U.S. Decoupling*, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 2021. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep32258> (access: 18.09.2022).
- Hisari L., Kalliopi F., *Post-war Cultural Heritage Preservation in Kosovo: Rethinking the Implementation of Ahtisaari Plan Annex V*, "Heritage" 2020, 3, p. 98–115.
- Hoxhaj A., *Enver Hasani: Pritja që Serbia do ta njohë Kosovën është iluzion, Betimi për Drejtësi*, 2022, <https://betimiperdrejtesi.com/enver-hasani-pritja-qe-serbia-do-ta-njohe-kosoven-eshte-iluzion/> (access: 20.03.2023).
- International Republican Institute, *Public Opinion in Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia. Center for Insights for Survey Research*. A project of the International Republican Institute, 2018, p. 64, https://www.iri.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/pdf_beacon_w_balkans.pdf (access: 20.03.2023).
- International Republican Institute, *Kosovo Citizens Show Strong Support for Western Institutions Despite Kosovo's Slow Progress Towards EU Integration*, 2021, <https://www.iri.org/news/kosovo-citizens-show-strong-support-for-western-institutions-despite-kosovos-slow-progress-towards-eu-integration/> (access: 20.03.2023).
- Is the Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue Really Reaching an Historic Moment?* KosovoTwoPointsZero, 2020, <https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/is-the-kosovo-serbia-dialogue-really-reaching-an-historic-moment/> (access: 20.04.2023).

- Ivic S., *The EU Visa Liberalisation Process for Western Balkan Countries as a Reflection of the Politics of Modernity*, "The Romanian Journal of European Studies" 2009, 7–8, pp. 121–128.
- Jakupi A., *Stabilization and Association Agreement between Kosovo and the European Union*, James Madison University, Max Weber Programme Graduate Symposium, EUJ, Fiesole, Italy, 2019, <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1032&context=ese> (access: 20.09.2023).
- Ker-Lindsay J., Economides S., *Standards before Status before Accession: Kosovo's EU Perspective*, "Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies" 2012, 14(1), 77–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2012.656939>.
- Kllokoqi S., *Kosovo's President Lashes Out at Macron for Saying France May Review Visa-Free Travel for Kosovars*, ABC News, 2023, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/kosovos-president-lashes-macron-france-review-visa-free-102711888> (access: 20.03.2023).
- Koci M., *Analistët: Nuk priten rezultate të shpejta në dialogun Kosovë – Serbi*, 2022, <https://www.epokaere.com/analistet-nuk-priten-rezultate-te-shpejta-ne-dialogun-kosove-serbi/>
- Konushevci A., *Analistët: Të ridefinohet dialogu Kosovë-Serbi, përpara se të vazhdojë*, 2017, <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/28460229.html>
- Kosovo Parliament, *Parliamentary Groups*, 2022. <https://www.kuvendikosoves.org/eng/parliamentary-groups/#> (access: 20.08.2022).
- Kush është fajtor për mos liberalizim të vizave për Kosovën?, *Gazeta Infokus*, 2020, <https://gazetainfokus.com/kush-eshte-fajtor-per-mos-liberalizim-te-vizave-per-kosoven/> (access: 20.08.2022).
- Kushtet që duhet t'i plotësojë Kosova për heqjen e vizave*, *Fakteplus.net*, 2020, <https://fakteplus.net/kushtet-qe-duhet-ti-plotesoje-kosova-per-heqjen-e-vizave/> (access: 20.08.2022).
- Lika L., Reka B., *The European Union's Relations with the Republic of Kosovo*, [in:] A. Hajrullahu, A. Vukpalaj (red.), *Forging Kosovo: Between Dependence, Independence, and Interdependence*, 2021, pp. 229–250.
- Lisbon Treaty (2007). *The Treaty of Lisbon (2007/C 306/01)*. Council of Europe and the European Parliament, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3AC2007%2F306%2F01> (access: 19.06.2023).
- Michailidou A., *The Role of the Public in Shaping EU Contestation: Euroscepticism and Online News Media*, "International Political Science Review" 2015, 36(3), pp. 324–336. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512115577230>.
- Malici B., *EU Snubs Kosovo over Visa Liberalisation*, *Balkan Insight*, 2015, <https://balkaninsight.com/2015/12/17/eu-visa-liberalisation-failure-causes-disappointment-in-kosovo-12-16-2015/> (access: 19.06.2023).
- Marolov D., *Understanding the Ohrid Framework Agreement*, [in:] S.P. Ramet, O. Listhaug, A. Simkus (eds.), *Civic and Uncivic Values in Macedonia*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2013. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137302823_8.
- Maurer H., Whitman R.G., Wright N., *The EU and the Invasion of Ukraine: A Collective Responsibility to Act?*, "International Affairs" 2023, 99(1), pp. 219–238. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iac262.4>.

- Muharremi R., *Asociacioni ndihmon shtrirjen e sovranitetit të Kosovës në gjithë vendin*, Klan Kosova TV, 2022, https://klankosova.tv/kolumne/111asociacioni-ndihmon-shtrirjen-e-sovranitetit-te-kosoves-ne-gjithe-vendin/?fbclid=IwAR1cif0B0FouhrjiXScRrMPFv7SfFZ-NFmTE9YD_xEHQyByP8a2Ta73cIj4 (access: 19.06.2023).
- Muharremi R., *The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) from the Perspective of Kosovo Constitutional Law*, "Zeitschrift für ausländisches öffentliches Recht und Völkerrecht" ("Heidelberg Journal of International Law") 2010, 70, pp. 357–379.
- Muharremi R., *The "Washington Agreement" Between Kosovo and Serbia*, "The American Society of International Law Insight" 2021, 25(4), pp. 1–7, https://www.asil.org/sites/default/files/ASIL_Insights_2021_V25_I4.pdf (access: 19.06.2023).
- Müller W.C., Jenny M., Ecker A., *The Elites–Masses Gap in European Integration*, [in:] H. Best, G. Lengyel, L. Verzichelli (eds.), *The Europe of Elites: A Study into the Europeaness of Europe's Political and Economic Elites*, Oxford, 2012; online edition, Oxford Academic, 24 May 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199602315.003.0008>.
- National Democratic Institute, *Kosovo Public Opinion Survey*, 2021, <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20Kosovo%20Public%20Opinion%20Poll%20-%20April%202021.pdf> (access: 19.05.2023).
- Orenstein M.A., Kelemen R.D., *Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy*, "JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies" 2017, 55, pp. 87–102. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12441>.
- Peci L., *Peci: Komuniteti serb në veri duhet të shkëputet nga kontrolli i Vuçiqit*, Koha.net, 2022, <https://www.koha.net/arberi/347301/peci-komuniteti-serb-ne-veri-duhet-te-shkeputet-nga-kontrolli-i-vuciqit/> (access: 19.05.2023).
- Prishtina Insight, *Opposition Call for US Involvement in the Dialogue*, 2021, <https://prishtinainsight.com/opposition-call-for-us-involvement-in-the-dialogue/> (access: 22.09.2023).
- Qorraj G., *Integrating the Western Balkans into the European Union: Overcoming Political and Economic Constraints*, "Europe and Perspectives: Journal on Europe and Perspectives of the Western Balkans" 2010, 2(2), pp. 79–92.
- Rabinovych M., *Failing Forward and EU Foreign Policy: The Dynamics of 'Integration Without Membership' in the Eastern Neighbourhood*, "Journal of European Public Policy" 2021, 28(10), pp. 1688–1705. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2021.1954066>.
- Radio Evropa e Lirë, *Pafuqia e BE-së në dialogun Kosovë-Serbi*, 2021a, <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/bashkimi-evropian-dialogu-kosove-serbi-/31599686.html>
- Radio Evropi e Lirë, *Për Kosovën, "ende nuk është momenti" për liberalizimin e vizave*, 2021b, <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/viza-kosova-be/31621554.html>
- Regional Cooperation Council, *Balkan Barometer 2022: Infographics Pocket Edition*, 2022. https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/BalkanBarometer2022_pocket_edition_final_prw.pdf/de9bb8ca08d8e2c1c696e25df7d0605c.pdf (access: 19.05.2023).
- Rexhepi R., Sahiti V., Rullani F., *Kosovo Integration in EU*, "Prizren Social Science Journal" 2020, 4(3), pp. 11–23.
- Sahin B.B., Brooks R., *Nation-bounded Internationalization of Higher Education: A Comparative Analysis of Two Periphery Countries*, "Higher Education Research & Development" 2023, 42(5), pp. 1071–1085. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2023.2193723>.

- Salihu F., *The Association That Dissociates: On the Kosovo-Serbia Agreement*, 2015, <https://lefteast.org/the-association-that-dissociates-on-the-kosovo-serbia-agreement/> (access: 25.07.2023).
- Schulze R.A., *Perspectives for Kosovo's Accession to the EU*. University of Szczecin, "Reality Politics" 2018, 9, pp. 98–11, <https://czasopisma.marszalek.com.pl/images/pliki/rop/2018/rop201807.pdf> (1.07.2023).
- Sin C., Antonowicz D., Wiers-Jenssen J., *Attracting International Students to Semi-peripheral Countries: A Comparative Study of Norway, Poland and Portugal*, "Higher Education Policy" 2021, 34, pp. 297–320. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41307-019-00135-3>.
- Shala S., Gërbeshi D., Hyseni M., *Cost and Benefits of Signing SAA Agreement with EU Immediate Results for Kosovo Business–Producers' Community* (Conference Proceedings), Management, Knowledge and Learning International Conference, 2018, pp. 98–106, <http://www.toknowpress.net/ISBN/978-961-6914-23-9/papers/ML2018-011.pdf> (access: 26.07.2023).
- Sima R., *Fatigue Within the EU's Eastern Partnership: The EU Role in the "Neighbourhood of Crisis"*, "Baltic Journal of Law & Politics" 2018, 11(2), pp. 127–154. <https://doi.org/10.2478/bjlp-2018-0013>.
- Standard Eurobarometer, *Summer Eurobarometer 2022*, 2022.
- Stojanovic M., *Serbia to Resume Kosovo Derecognition Campaign, Minister Says*, Balkan Insight, 2022, <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/05/13/serbia-to-resume-kosovo-derecognition-campaign-minister-says/> (access: 26.07.2023).
- Stratulat C., Kmezić M., Tzifakis N., Bonomi M., Nechev Z., *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Public Opinion and Integration in the Western Balkans*, European Fund for Balkans, 2020, p. 2. <https://www.epc.eu/content/PDF/2020/Between-a-rock-and-a-hard-place-English.pdf> (access: 26.07.2023).
- Tadić K. *Understanding the Internal Dialogue on Kosovo in Serbia*, [in:] *Local and International Determinants of Kosovo's Statehood*, ed. I. Armakolas, A. Demjaha, A. Elbasani, and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers. Kosovo Foundation for Open Society, 2019, pp. 239–270.
- Talevska P.M., *Balkan Barometer 2018: Public Opinion. Survey*. Regional Cooperation Council. Sarajevo, 2018, pp. 1–144, <https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/PUBLIC%20OPINION%20-%20RCC%20Balkan%20Barometar%202018.pdf/b56d30eb1af53ab00d6eb30cfcbad304.pdf> (access: 9.08.2023).
- Talevska P.M., *Balkan Barometer 2019. Public Opinion Analytical Report*. Regional Cooperation Council. Sarajevo, 2019, https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/Balkan-Barometer_Public-Opinion-2019-07-03.pdf/adad30ca8a8c00a259a1803673c86928.pdf (access: 9.08.2023).
- Talevska P.M., *Balkan Barometer 2020. Public Opinion Analytical Report*. Regional Cooperation Council. Sarajevo, https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/2020-06-Balkan-Barometer-Public-Opinion_final.pdf/bf27f9fc10de8a02df9db2b60596f0cd.pdf (access: 10.08.2023).
- The European Union Continues to Stall Visa Liberalization for Kosovo*, Global Voices, 2022, <https://globalvoices.org/2022/09/12/the-european-union-continues-to-stall-visa-liberalization-for-kosovo/> (access: 9.08.2023).

- Troncotă M., *The Association That Dissociates' – Narratives of Local Political Resistance in Kosovo and the Delayed Implementation of the Brussels Agreement*, "Southeast European and Black Sea Studies" 2018, 18(2), pp. 219–238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2018.1474585>.
- TRT Balkan, *Analistët skeptik nga takimi Vuçiq-Kurti në Bruksel*, 2022, <https://albanian.trtbalkan.com/region/analistet-skeptik-nga-takimi-vuciq-kurti-ne-bruksel-9868456>
- Thorburn C., *Building Blocks and Stumbling Blocks: Peacebuilding in Aceh, 2005–2009*, "Indonesia" 2012, 93, pp. 83–122.
- Turbedar E., *Balkan Barometer 2015: Public Opinion. Survey*, Regional Cooperation Council. Sarajevo, 2015, https://www.rcc.int/seeds/files/RCC_BalkanBarometer_PublicOpinion_2015.pdf (access: 8.08.2023).
- Turbedar E., *Balkan Barometer 2016: Public Opinion. Survey*, Regional Cooperation Council. Sarajevo, 2016, https://www.rcc.int/seeds/files/RCC_BalkanBarometer_PublicOpinion_2016.pdf (access: 7.08.2023).
- Vjosa Osmani flet për liberalizimin e vizave, Bota Sot, 2020, <https://www.botasot.info/aktuale-lajme/1237851/vjosa-osmani-flet-per-liberalizimin-e-vizave/> (access: 9.10.2023).
- Vllahiu E., *US, EU Again Press Kosovo to Form Serb Municipal Association*, Prishtina Insight, 2022, <https://prishtinainsight.com/us-eu-again-press-kosovo-to-form-serb-municipal-association/> (access: 11.08.2023).
- Wiener A., *A Theory of Contestation – A Concise Summary of Its Argument and Concepts*, "Polity" 2017, 49(1), pp. 1–184. <https://doi.org/10.1086/690100>.
- Zeqiraj D., *Analistët thonë se përfshirja më e madhe e SHBA-së në dialog do të jepte progres në marrëveshjen përfundimtare*, 2022, <https://telegrafi.com/mosmarreveshja-ne-bruksel-analistet-kritikojne-ne-ska-kapacitet-ta-zgjidhe-problemin-kosove-serbi/>
- Zoric B., *Balkan Barometer 2021: Public Opinion. Analytical Report*. Regional Cooperation Council. Sarajevo, 2021, <https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/PUBLIC%20OPINION%20-%20RCC%20Balkan%20Barometer%202018.pdf/b56d30eb1af53ab00d6eb30cfcbad304.pdf> (access: 9.08.2023).
- Zoric B., *Balkan Barometer 2022: Public Opinion. Analytical Report*. Regional Cooperation Council. Sarajevo, 2022, <https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/Balkan%20Barometer%202022%20-%20PO.pdf/21e2192c1d34cc6194ecb029d7b5997f.pdf> (access: 4.08.2023).