THE ROLE OF THE BERLIN PROCESS IN PROMOTING REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS – A PATH TOWARDS EU INTEGRATION?

Abstract

This thesis studies the role of the Berlin Process in the efforts of EU member states to promote regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. The behaviour of these actors was analysed by using different logics of social action. These can help explain how norms, ideas, and practices spread in international relations. This research thereby fills a gap in the literature, as scholars have thus far only focussed on the role of the EU in promotion regional cooperation in international politics. It concludes that the objective of EU members states has been to enhance the EU integration of the Western Balkans by promoting regional cooperation through the Berlin Process. They have thereby used an inherently different approach compared to the EU-owned enlargement process. The Berlin Process has also been more successful in stimulating regional cooperation among the Western Balkan states. This shows the need for more research on the effect of EU member states-owned initiatives on the EU enlargement process.

MA Thesis International Relations in Historical Perspective

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January 15, 2020
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Word count excl. footnotes, table of content, and bibliography: 13495.

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List of Abbreviations

BFTA	Baltic Free Trade Agreement
BPIRC	Berlin Process Information and Resource Center
BPP	Brdo-Brijuni Process
CEE	Central Eastern Europe
CE	European Commission
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
EIB	European Investment Bank
EU	European Union
EP	European Parliament
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
MARRI	Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative
MAP-REA	Multi-annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area
RA-EU	Regional Approach
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RCYO	Regional Cooperation Youth Office
SEE	South Eastern Europe
SEECP	South East Europe Cooperation Process
SEETO	South East Europe Transport Observatory
SAP	Stabilisation and Association Process
SP	Stability Pact
V4	Visegrád Alliance

Visualisations

European Union 2019

European Union 2019
- Brexit
- EU member states
- Candidates for EU membership
- Potential candidates for EU membership
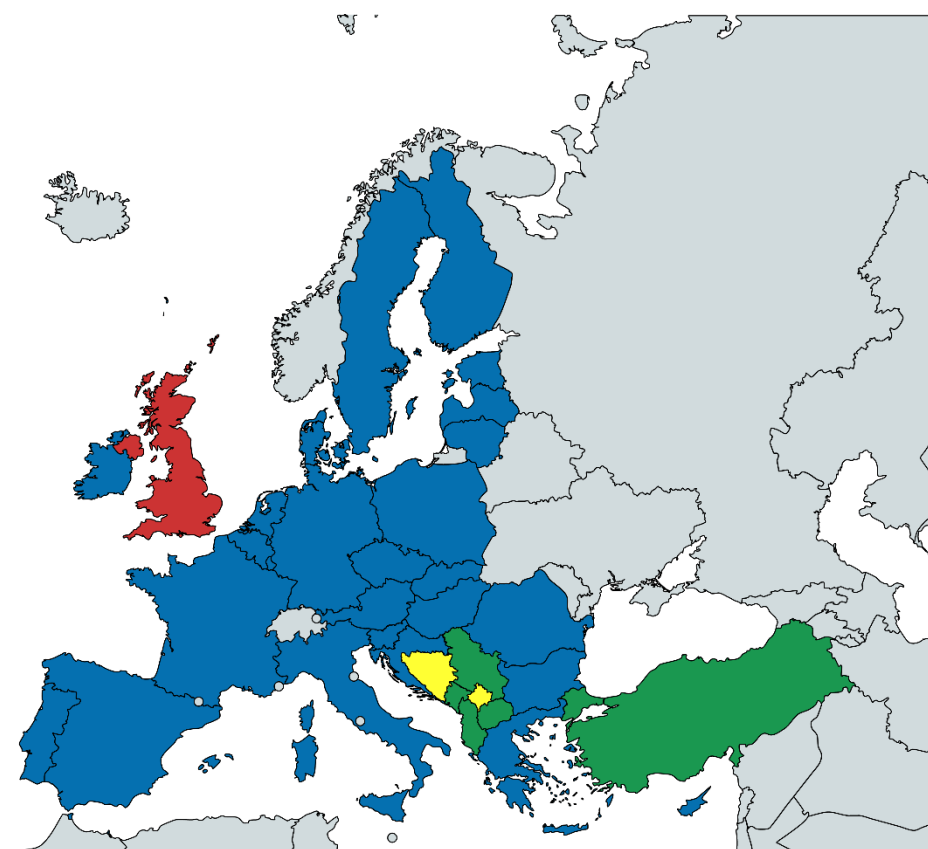
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Western Balkans 2019

Western Balkans

■ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia

■ Croatia joined the EU in 2013

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Introduction

Promoting regional cooperation is an important aspect of the European Union's (EU) external policy in the Western Balkans. The Western Balkans is a geopolitical area that refers to the six potential candidate and candidate states for EU membership in South Eastern Europe (SEE). These are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.[3] A considerable part of the EU's strategy in this region consists of promoting regional cooperation. For example, the EU demands from the Western Balkan states that they cooperate with each other before starting EU accession negotiations.[4] In addition, regional cooperation is also the core of many EU or EU member state-sponsored initiatives that focus on the EU integration of the Western Balkans.[5] This dual policy of promoting regional cooperation and EU enlargement is unique. There was no such emphasis on cooperation in earlier waves of EU enlargement.[6] Also, the effectiveness of this policy has been questioned. Some studies point out that the strategy of promoting regional cooperation has mostly just undermined the EU enlargement process.[7] The additional value of promoting regional cooperation as part of the EU enlargement process is therefore an interesting puzzle for scholars of EU external politics.[8]

One of the more recent major initiatives to promote regional cooperation in the Western Balkans was launched in 2014. In August that year, the heads of government, foreign ministers, and economic ministers of the Western Balkan states, as well as representatives from the European Commission (EC), and representatives from several EU member states met in Berlin to discuss the future of the Western Balkans in the EU. This conference was organized on the initiative of German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Her government had decided to create a platform for Western Balkan development.[9] This program was later named the 'Berlin Process'.

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[3] See visualisations.

[4] Dimitar Bechev, 'Carrots, Sticks and Norms: the EU and regional cooperation in Southeast Europe', *Journal Southern Europe and the Balkans* 8 (2006) 1, 27-43, p. 36.

[5] Bechev, 'Carrots, Sticks and Norms', 27.

[6] Alexander Rotta, 'Promoting Regional Cooperation: the EU in South Eastern Europe', *The International Spectator* 43 (2008) 1, 57-72, p. 57.

[7] Bechev, 'Carrots, Sticks, and Norms', 41.

[8] Martin Dangerfield, 'Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans: stabilisation device or integration policy?', *Perspectives on European Politics and* Society 5 (2004) 2, 203-241, p. 1.

[9] The Berlin Process Information and Resource Centre, 'Final Declaration by the Chair of the Conference on the Western Balkans' (Version August 28, 2014), https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Final-Declaration-by-the-Chair-of-the-Conference-on-the-Western-Balkans.pdf (Accessed on December 18, 2019).

Since 2014, multiple EU-member states have joined the Berlin Process and further annual summits were held in Vienna (2015), Paris (2016), Trieste (2017), London (2018), and Poznan (2019). According to the first official declaration, the purpose of the Berlin Process would be to intensify regional cooperation as an essential basis to enhance the integration of the Western Balkan states into the EU.[10] The Berlin Process therefore provides an interesting case study to study the interaction between promoting regional cooperation and EU integration.

Historiography

The Berlin Process takes place at an interesting time in the history of EU enlargement. For years, it seemed likely that the Western Balkan states would eventually join the EU.[11] In the wake of multiple violent crises after the fall of Yugoslavia, the Balkan peninsula became more and more regarded as an area of geostrategic importance for European states. As a result, they decided to launch a strategy of promoting regional cooperation and political reform with the purpose of stabilizing the Balkans. When this strategy failed to prevent the outbreak of the Kosovo War (1999), EU leaders began to argue that enhancing regional cooperation would only work if the Western Balkan states were promised EU membership.[12] Since then, EU member states have kept making decisions that showed willingness to integrate the Western Balkans in the EU.[13]

Nevertheless, the self-evidence of a European future for the Balkans appears to have come under pressure in the last years. The declining support for enlargement among EU member states, called 'enlargement fatigue', has led to scepticism about the credibility of a European future for the Western Balkans.[14] Also, it has been argued that there is a commitment deficit among EU and Balkan elites that hinders the EU integration of the Western Balkans.[15] The promise of membership for the Western Balkan countries has been, for example, much

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[10] BPIRC, 'Final Declaration'.
[11] See: Christian Pippan, 'The Rocky Road to Europe: The EU's Stabilisation and Association for the Western Balkans and the Principle of Conditionality', *European Foreign Affairs Review* 9 (2004) 2, 219-245.; Andrew Moravcsik, and Milada A. Vachudova, 'National Interests, State Power, and EU Enlargement', Eastern European Politics and Societies 17 (2003) 1, 42-57.; and, Milada A. Vachudova, 'EU Leverage and National Interests in the Balkans: The Puzzles of Enlargement Ten Years On', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 52 (2014) 1, 122-138.
[12] Pippan, 'The Rocky Road', 227-228.
[13] Vachudova, 'EU leverage', 126.
[14] Asya Zhelyazkova, Ivan Damjanovski, Zoran Nechev and Frank Schimmelfennig, 'European Union Conditionality in the Western Balkans: External Incentives and Europeanisation', in: Jelena Džankić, Soeren Keil and Marko Kmezić (ed.), *The Europeanisation of the Western Balkans: A Failure of EU Conditionality?* (London 2019)*,* 15-37, p. 26-27.
[15] Othon Anastasakis and Dimitar Bechev, 'EU Conditionality in South East Europe: Bringing Commitment to the Process', *South East European Studies Programme* (2003), p. 14.

looser and vaguer than the membership perspective in earlier enlargement waves.[16] Moreover, it has been said that the external and internal crises plaguing the EU since 2008, have made enlargement a secondary priority for EU leaders; a clear break from the much stronger EU commitment towards enlargement in past times.[17] This so called 'enlargement fatigue', has therefore resulted in scholars naming the EU strategy towards the Balkans one of: 'neither rapid exclusion nor rapid integration'.[18]

More importantly, this commitment deficit also has consequences for the future of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. Before the EU started to involve itself in the affairs of the Western Balkans, regional cooperation was almost non-existent among the Western Balkan states. The argument goes that cross-border cooperation has mainly been fuelled by the idea that regional cooperation can lead to EU membership.[19] This principle also worked vice versa. One study shows that the diminishing credibility of a European future, has resulted in a lack of compliance among Balkan state leaders to meet the EU membership criteria.[20] Regional cooperation has even been perceived as a strategy EU actors have used to delay enlargement.[21] It is thus the question whether regional cooperation in the Western Balkans can persist.

Research question and justification

There is no definite conclusion on the interaction between promoting regional cooperation and EU integration. In addition, it is not clear whether there is a future for regional cooperation considering the declining credibility of the EU enlargement process. The Berlin Process provides an interesting case study to approach these puzzles. The platform touches upon the interaction between promoting regional cooperation and EU integration, but it can also help understand the future relations between EU member states and the Western Balkans.

Namely, the Berlin Process was created by the German government and takes place outside the enlargement framework of the EU. As such, the platform has been met with both optimism and scepticism. One source argues that slightly against expectations the Berlin

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[16] Arolda Elbasani, 'EU Enlargement in the Western Balkans: Strategies of Borrowing and Inventing', *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans* 10 (2008) 3, 293-307, p. 306.

[17] Zhelyazkova, Damjanovski, Nechev and Schimmelfennig, 'European Union Conditionality', 27-28.

[18] Mustafa Turkes and Goksu Gokgoz, 'The European Union's Strategy towards the Western Balkans: Exclusion of Integration?', *East European Politics and Societies* 20 (2006) 4, 659–690, p. 690.

[19] See: Milada Delevic, 'Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans'. *Institute for Security Studies* 104 (2007), p. 37.

[20] Zhelyazkova, Damjanovski, Nechev and Schimmelfennig, 'European Union Conditionality', 31.

[21] Dangerfield, 'Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans', 206.

Process was warmly embraced by the Albanian and Serbian Prime Ministers. [22] They believed that the Berlin Process would give them more ownership in regional cooperation, in comparison to the strict conditionality-based EU enlargement process. Another article points out that it is precisely because of this freedom that national government's initiatives are often not successful. They provide new ideas but suffer from a lack of commitment.[23] For that reason, the purpose of this thesis is to study the role of the Berlin Process in the efforts of EU member states to promote regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. It will attempt to answer the following research question:

What is the role of the Berlin Process in the efforts of EU member states in promoting regional cooperation in the Western Balkans?

This question also advances a gap in the theoretical literature, considering the efforts of EU actors to promote regional cooperation as a foreign policy objective. There are multiple studies on the logic of EU actors to promote regional cooperation. These studies exclusively focus on the perspective of the EU. The general argument goes that EU actors perceive the EU as a successful example of regional cooperation and therefore use the EU as a tool to promote this governance model in other regions.[24] This is moreover beneficial to the strategic agenda of the EU.[25] None of these studies, however, have studied the purpose of EU member states-owned regional cooperation initiatives such as the Berlin Process.

Methodology, structure, and sources

This thesis will focus on different modes of social action to analyse the role of the Berlin Process in promoting regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. These are the logic of consequences, the logic of appropriateness, and the logic of arguing. These modes of action are used by scholars of International Relations to explain the behaviour of actors in

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[22] Ardian Hackaj, Gentiola Madhi, and Krisela Hackaj, 'Albania in the Berlin Process Current achievements and upcoming challenges for the Paris Summit' (Version 2015), http://shtetiweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ANGLISHT.pdf (Accessed on 16 December 2019), p. 11.

[23] Marija Vishinova, 'Comparison Between the Political Rhetoric of Thessaloniki Summit (2003) and the Sofia Summit (2018)', *Forum für Mittelost- und Südosteuropa* (Version 17 July 2018), https://www.fomoso.org/en/mosopedia/research/comparison-between-the-political-rhetoric-of-thessaloniki-summit-2003-and-the-sofia-summit-2018/ (Accessed on December 16, 2019).

[24] See: Karen Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy in a changing world* (Cambridge 2008), 80.; and: Tanja. A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, 'Diffusing (inter-) regionalism: the EU as a model of regional integration, *KFG Working Paper Series* 7 (2009), p. 22.

[25] Mary Farrell, 'From EU model to external policy', in: Kathleen R. McNamara and Sophie Meunier (ed.), *Making History: European Integration and Institutional Change at Fifty* (New York 2007), 299-316, p. 315.

international politics.[26] More importantly, they can help explain why and how actors promote certain ideas, such as regional cooperation.[27] The idea goes that the logic behind promoting certain norms, practices or ideas can be deduced from analysing the mechanisms that states use to promote these norms.[28] The key insights from these different theoretical perspectives shall further be elaborated in the theoretical framework of chapter one.

In line with the theoretical framework, policy analysis will be performed to understand the Berlin Process. The actors in question are mostly EU member states. These actors have hosted and chaired the Berlin Process. The first summit was attended by EU member states Croatia, France, Germany, Slovenia, and Austria. Others like Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom joined in consecutive years. The delegation of these states mostly consisted of government representatives such as prime ministers, ministers of foreign affairs and ministers of economics/finance or equivalents. Since the central objective of this thesis is to understand promoting regional cooperation as an external policy of EU member states, the behaviour of these actors is highly relevant.

To begin with, this thesis will thus analyse primary sources that directly relate to these actors. These include speeches, press releases, and executive documents that were released by the respective foreign ministries of the EU member states. Not only do these sources give insight in the decision of these actors to involve themselves in the Berlin Process, they also discuss different perspectives on the utility of promoting regional cooperation, and the mechanisms that should be used to implement this policy. Other actors that will be discussed are the representatives of the Western Balkan states, and the representatives of the EU. Their actions at the summits are relevant because their behaviour was sometimes indirectly or directly influenced by the actions of EU member states.

Secondly, this thesis will analyse the primary sources that were released in the context of the Berlin Process. These sources include final declarations, joint statements, political declarations, project agendas, and lastly the recommendations of several working groups. These sources are the result of negotiations that took place during and after the summits, and reflect the influence of EU member states on the agenda of the Berlin Process. They can also help track the progress of several mechanisms that were introduced to promote regional

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[26] See: Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'International Institutions and Socialization in Europe: Introduction and Framework', *International Organization* 59 (2005) 4, 801-826.; And: Thomas Risse, '"Let's Argue!": Communicative Action in World Politics', *International Organization* 54 (2000) 1, 1-39.
[27] See: Börzel and Risse, 'Diffusing (Inter-) Regionalism'.; And: Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, 'From Europeanisation to Diffusion: Introduction' 35 (2012) 1, 1-19.
[28] Börzel and Risse, 'Diffusing (Inter-) Regionalism', 6.

cooperation in the Western Balkans between 2014-2019. Lastly, this thesis will use publications that were released by thinktanks in the margins of the Berlin Process. These were collected by the Berlin Process Information and Resource Centre (BPIRC). Unlike the primary sources, these will not be subjected to the policy analysis because they do not directly demonstrate the policy of EU member states. They do however give useful insights regarding the significance of certain agenda items or policy plans.

This thesis continues as follows. Chapter one is dedicated to the theoretical framework. Next, chapter two introduces an in-depth discussion of the involvement of the EU and EU member states in the Western Balkans from the nineties till present. Because of the scope of this timeframe, this chapter relies on secondary sources. The purpose of this chapter is to answer the following sub question: *Why and how did EU actors chose to promote regional cooperation in the Western Balkans in the past?* This will show the undeniable connection between both policies of regional cooperation and EU integration in the Western Balkans. The third chapter continues with the analysis of the first three editions of the Berlin Process, which were the Berlin (2014), Vienna (2015), and Paris (2016) Summits. As the chapter explains, these summits were mostly used to set the agenda of the Berlin Process. The relating sub question is: *Why and how do EU members states promote regional cooperation through the Berlin Process?* Thereafter, the fourth chapter analyses the Trieste (2017), and London (2018) Summits. These were mostly used by the participating states for implementing and improving the Berlin Process agenda. This chapter will answer the last sub question: *What does the Berlin process add to the existing EU efforts of promoting regional cooperation in the Western Balkans?* The thesis ends with a conclusion.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss why and how EU actors promote regional cooperation. In the academic literature, regional cooperation is a rather vague concept. Scholars often differentiate between regionalism, regional cooperation, and regional integration.[29] These concepts have similar meanings but are used for different purposes. The academic studies that tend to use the concept of regionalism, almost exclusively focus on the rise of 'new regionalism' in international relations. 'New regionalism' refers to the worldwide emergence of regional cooperation schemes in the Americas, Asia, and the developing world after the Cold War.[30] This phenomenon was moreover, visible in transition economies in all parts of Europe.[31] New regionalism is explained as a reaction to globalization. The end of the Cold War announced a new period of intensified global socio-economic integration. As such, states opted for establishing reginal ties to gradually adapt to the pressures of globalization.[32] As one author notes: 'New regionalism is best understood as a state strategy designed to minimize risks in the uncertain conditions of economic globalization by promoting activities at the meso-level of the region'.[33] Regionalism is therefore not perceived as an alternative, but rather as a complementary model of governance to the global liberal order.[34]

1.1 Defining regional cooperation

The definition of regional cooperation closely mirrors the definition of regionalism. The former concept is however more used in studies that focus on promoting regional cooperation as a foreign policy objective.[35] The definition of regional cooperation is interrelated with the goal that countries that promote regional cooperation attach to it. For example, the EU commission (EC) defines regional cooperation as: 'a general concept that refers to all efforts on the part of

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[29] For 'New Regionalism' see: Jean B. Grugel, 'New Regionalism and Modes of Governance — Comparing US and EU Strategies in Latin America', *European Journal of International Relations* 10 (2004) 4, 603–626.; For 'Regional Cooperation' see: Karen E. Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy in a changing world* (Cambridge 2008).; For 'Regional Integration' see: Börzel and Risse, 'Diffusing (inter-) regionalism'.

[30] Grugel, 'New Regionalism', 604-605.

[31] Milica Uvalic, 'Regional Cooperation and the Enlargement of The European Union: Lessons Learned?', *International Political Science Review* 23 (2002) 3, 319-333, p. 319.

[32] Grugel, 'New Regionalism', 605.

[33] Ibidem.

[34] Louise Fawcett, 'Regionalism from a Historical Perspective', in: Björn Hettne, Luk van Langenhoven, and Mary Farrell (ed.), *Global Politics of Regionalism: Theory and Practice* (London 2005), 21-37, p. 37.

[35] See: Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy*.

(usually) neighbouring countries to address issues of common interests.[36] Like regionalism, regional cooperation thus also refers to a state strategy aimed at solving common problems. However, there is one important difference. The scholars on 'new regionalism' primarily tend to focus on the perspective of the states that engage in regional cooperation. Regionalism is seen as a policy of states or non-state actors in a given region.[37] This contrasts with the literature on promoting regional cooperation. These scholars analyse the logic of promoting regional cooperation from the perspective of the sender.[38] Since this thesis focuses on the efforts of EU member states to promote regional cooperation in the Western Balkans, it will therefore mostly borrow its theoretical framework from the literature that studies regional cooperation as a foreign policy objective.

Finally, it is useful to discuss the concept of regional integration. This refers to the economic dimension of regional cooperation. It can be defined as: 'those efforts whose objective is the elimination of policy-induced barriers to intragroup movement, goods, services, and factors of production.'.[39] Regional integration can therefore be seen as a more extensive institutionalised form of regional cooperation. Unsurprisingly, the EU promotes both regional cooperation and regional integration. Regional cooperation hereby includes all forms of cooperation between countries to solve common problems, and regional integration addresses the 'activities leading to the furthering interdependence of the economies and to the better management of common resources'.[40] Both political and economic cooperation are discussed in this thesis, but to avoid confusion these will generally be referred to as efforts to promote regional cooperation.

1.2 Why do actors promote regional cooperation?

The literature provides various insights on why especially EU actors promote regional cooperation. These studies mainly focus on EU foreign policy. This is most likely because the EU is one of the most active promoters of regional cooperation.[41] The literature on this topic is therefore mostly derived from the broader debate on the role of the EU as a rational or

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[36] European Commission (1995) quoted in: Ibidem, 98-99.
[37] Fawcett, 'Regionalism in Historical Perspective', 24.
[38] Börzel and Risse, 'Diffusing (inter-) regionalism', 5.
[39] Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy*, 98-99.
[40] Ibidem.
[41] Börzel and Risse, 'Diffusing (inter-) regionalism', 5.

normative actor in world politics.[42] There are multiple reasons why the EU promotes regional cooperation as a foreign policy objective.

In the first place, Karen E. Smith argues that the EU tries to share its own successful experiences with regional cooperation.[43] This policy is thereby closely linked to the historical identity of the EU. As Smith continues, most EU actors are well aware that 'Regional institutions are a means of overcoming historical grievances and guaranteeing security and peace; and regional economic agreements that help liberalize trade help foster economic growth and development as well as achieve peace and security'.[44] A second insight is that promoting regional cooperation is a relatively costless strategy for the EU. Its member states have had very different opinions on the scope and content of EU foreign policy. Promoting regional cooperation is a logical middle ground because it hardly interferes with the interests or sovereignty of EU member states.[45] The EU therefore never encountered much difficulty in expanding this policy area. The result was that promoting regional cooperation developed into an extensive foreign policy strategy designed to match the geopolitical, economic, and security interests of the EU.[46]

These arguments show that multiple considerations might have caused the EU to pursue regional cooperation as a foreign policy objective. This is not unlikely. In the literature, there is even some consensus that different interests overlap in the EU's efforts to promote regional cooperation. As one author notes, this policy is clearly meant to increase the global influence of the EU but is also deeply integrated in the identity of EU member states.[47] The literature thus provides interesting arguments why especially EU actors promote regional cooperation. None of these scholars, however, has attempted to explain why EU actors would promote regional cooperation outside the political framework of EU foreign policy. This thesis will attempt to fill this gap in the literature.

It will thereby focus on different logics of actions. These are used by scholars to understand the behaviour of actors in international relations. The major ones are the *logic of consequences,* the *logic of appropriateness*, and the *logic of arguing*. These modes of action

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[42] See: Adrian Hyde Price, '"Normative" Power Europe: A Realist Critique', *Journal of European Public Policy* 13 (2006) 2, 217-234.; And: Ian Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40 (2002) 2, 235-258.

[43] Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy*, 79-80.

[44] Ibidem.

[45] Mary Farrell, 'From EU model', 300.

[46] Mary Farrell, 'EU policy towards other Regions: policy learning in the external promotion of regional integration', *Journal of European Public Policy* 16 (2009) 8, 1165-1184, p. 1169.

[47] Börzel and Risse, 'Diffusing (Inter-) Regionalism', 22-23.

are ideal types and have different underlying assumptions about the social interactions between actors and institutions. These modes can be used to study why and how actors promote ideas, norms, or practices, such as regional cooperation.[48]

First, rational theories in International Relations are mostly derived from the logic of consequences. The underlying assumption of this mode is that actors are egoistic and have fixed identities and interests. As such, actions must be seen as cost-benefit calculations. The goal of social action is simply to maximize interests and preferences.[49] The behaviour of actors is guided by the outcome of social action. This logic predicts that actors promote ideas if it results in instrumental benefits, such as economic or security gains.[50] In addition, the interaction between states is often regarded as a one-sided process. Rational theories, for example, predict that actors manifest mainly non inclusive behaviour when promoting norms. The desires of the target actor are only taken into consideration when this is of interests to the sender.[51]

Second, the logic of appropriateness implies that 'actors seek to fulfil the obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, a membership in a political community or group, and the ethos, practices, and expectations of its institutions.'.[52] This mode of action assumes that actors follow rules because they are seen as legitimate. The logic of social action is thus not optimizing interests but simply doing what seems right.[53] In line with this argument, promoting norms tends to follow the rules of institutional isomorphism. This concept is used by scholars of sociological institutionalism to study the trend of rising similarities between international institutions. The argument that explains institutional isomorphism is that actors often unreflexively promote and copy norms without questioning their intrinsic or instrumental value, but simply because of their perceived legitimacy.[54]

Third, there is the logic of arguing. This logic is used in social constructivism studies and assumes that identities and norms are mostly contested and uncertain. Actors are open for persuasion but also engage in truth seeking and arguing during social interactions.[55]

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[48] Ibidem, 6.

[49] Thomas Risse, 'Let's argue!' Communicative Action in World Politics', p. 3-4.

[50] Federica Bicchi, ''Our size fits all': normative power Europe and the Mediterranean', *Journal of European Public Policy* 13 (2006) 2, 286-303, p. 291.

[51] Bicchi, 'Our size fits all', 291.

[52] James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, 'The Logic of Appropriateness' (Version September 2013), https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199604456.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199604456-e-024 (Accessed on 18-12-2019).

[53] Risse, 'Let's argue', 4.

[54] Bicchi, 'Our size fits all', 292.

[55] Risse, 'Let's argue', 33.

Constructivist studies therefore point out that promoting norms is indeed reflexive and inclusive. This is because actors have agency to challenge the intrinsic value of norms.[56]

1.3 How do actors promote regional cooperation?

Actors can use different types of instruments to promote regional cooperation. These instruments can be subdivided into five social mechanisms defined by Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse. The nature of these mechanisms originates from the three logics of action.[57] The first mechanism is *coercion*, which predicts that actors usually resort to physical or legal force to promote ideas.[58] Examples of coercion are economic sanctions or military power. According to Börzel and Risse, the EU rarely uses coercion in its external relations. Although they admit that the enlargement process technically forces state to comply with the EU accession conditions; states enter this process on a voluntary basis. [59]

Second, actors can promote ideas through the *manipulation of utility calculations*. This mechanism relates to the instrumental nature of the logic of consequences. Actors promote ideas by creating negative or positive incentives for other actors to adopt certain ideas.[60] In international politics, there are broadly two ways through which actors can manipulate the cost-benefit calculations of target actors. These are economic assistance and political conditionality. First, through economic assistance countries can promote regional cooperation projects. For example, the EU has promoted regional cooperation by financing projects that focus on rebuilding infrastructure between neighbouring countries.[61] Political conditionality goes one step further. This means that support is only given at the condition of adopting norms or ideas. Actors can thus create negative or positive incentives for target actors by providing or withholding financial or political rewards.[62] A reward that has often been used by the EU in the enlargement process is the promise of EU membership.[63] Chapter 2 will further elaborate on the link between EU enlargement and promoting regional cooperation.

Third, actors promote ideas through *socialization*. This mechanism stems from the logic of appropriateness. It means that when target actors are introduced to norms that are perceived

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[56] Bicchi, 'Our size fits all', 292.
[57] Börzel and Risse, 'Diffusion (inter-) regionalism', 5.
[58] Börzel and Risse, 'Europeanisation', 6.
[59] Ibidem.
[60] Ibidem, 6-7.
[61] Smith, *European Foreign Policy*, 99-100.
[62] Börzel and Risse, 'Europeanisation', 7.
[63] Farrell, 'From EU Model to External Policy', 306.

as legitimate, they tend to adopt them. This happens through a process of redefining identity or engaging in a gradual process of habitualization: 'By talking the talk, actors may change their social practices and dispositions, finally ending up walking the walk.'[64]

Fourth, actors can promote ideas through *persuasion*, which is sometimes also referred to as *normative suasion*. This mechanism relates to the logic of arguing. It means that actors can change the perception of what is 'normal' in international politics. EU actors are often described as textbook examples of actors that promote regional integration through arguing and persuasion.[65] Through instruments such as political dialogue, EU actors attempt to convince other states of the benefits of regional cooperation. This is because EU actors genuine believe that regional cooperation is the easiest path to prosperity, peace, and security. The purpose of political dialogue is thus to bring different actors together to discuss political and economic matters of common interest.[66] The fifth and last mechanism is *emulation*, which refers to the indirect influence of actors in promoting certain norms.[67] This mechanism has been used to explain the spread of the EU model in world politics. The success story of the EU as a model for economic integration has resulted in other actors attempting to copy the whole or parts of the EU's approach at regional cooperation.[68]

1.4 Effectiveness of promoting regional cooperation

The effectiveness of promoting ideas depends on the influence of actors to instigate institutional change in target states. A useful method to test the influence of promoting norms on target actors, is to study levels of emulation, which indicate the extent to which target states themselves are committed to adopt certain norms.[69] There are three factors that influence emulation.

First, *competition* can stimulate institutional change.[70] In earlier EU enlargement waves, states often competed with each other for EU membership. Because no state wanted to be left out, competition increased the adoption speed of institutional reform.[71] This is however mainly applicable to cases of national change. Competition is often detrimental to the adoption of institutionalized regional cooperation. This is because of the illogical combination of

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[64] Börzel and Risse, 'Diffusing (Inter-) Regionalism', 7.
[65] Börzel and Risse, 'Diffusion (inter-) regionalism', 8.
[66] Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy*, 102-105.
[67] Börzel and Risse, 'Europeanisation', 9.
[68] Börzel and Risse, 'Diffusion (inter-) regionalism', 9-10.
[69] Börzel and Risse, 'Europeanisation', 9.
[70] Ibidem.
[71] Ibidem.

competition and cooperation as a dual policy. For example, the EU has attempted to promote regional cooperation through the enlargement process. This was not always effective, because the bilateral accession negotiations encourage competition rather than cooperation.[72] It was therefore difficult to persuade potential member states to cooperate with each other.[73]

The second factor that influences emulation is *lesson-drawing*. Like competition, this factor is also based on rational logic. Actors sometimes perceive outside norms as solutions to internal problems.[74] This moreover suggests that the effectiveness of promoting norms depends on the individual circumstances of target states. Actors often show different levels of willingness to engage in regional cooperation. For example, promoting cooperation has proved to be more difficult in areas with a conflictful past.[75] Also, the presence or absence of stabilizing factors - such as economic or political security - influences the emulation of promoting regional cooperation through lesson learning.[76]

Lastly, the third factor is *normative emulation/mimicry*. This means that norm emulation is influenced by the logic of appropriateness. Actors adopt norms because of their inherent legitimacy.[77] One study, for example, argues that states tend to mostly adopt norms that are based on the principles of justice and fairness. [78]

To summarize, three factors influence the emulation of norms, ideas or practices. These factors can both increase and hinder the adoption speed of regional cooperation practices. Competition stimulates the adoption speed but limits cooperation between states. Lesson drawing can stimulate regional cooperation but is sometimes limited by external circumstances. Lastly, normative emulation can also enhance regional cooperation. The speed of emulation through this mechanism depends on the perceived legitimacy of certain norms.

1.5 Roadmap for analysing the Berlin Process

The goal of this chapter was to explain the conditions under which actors promote regional cooperation. Promoting regional cooperation can be defined as an external policy to make countries cooperate amongst each other to solve common problems. The rationale of promoting regional cooperation can be analysed through three different logics of social action. These are

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[72] Uvalic, 'Lessons Learned?', 330.
[73] Smith, *European Foreign Policy*, 106.
[74] Börzel and Risse, 'Europeanization', 9.
[75] Dangerfield, 'Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans', 231.
[76] Smith, *European Foreign Policy*, 107.
[77] Börzel and Risse, 'Europeanization', 10.
[78] Gergana Noutcheva, 'Fake, Partial, and Imposed Compliance: The Limits of EU's Normative Power in the Western Balkans', *Journal of European Public Policy* 16 (2009) 7, p. 1081.

reflected in the instruments that countries use to promote regional cooperation. Chapter 3 will therefore be used to analyse the instruments that were introduced during the Berlin Process summits. This will give insight in the rationale of EU actors to promote regional cooperation through the Berlin Process.

In addition, the logics of social action can be used to study the effectiveness of external policy. Factors such as competition, lesson-drawing, and normative emulation/mimicry indicate the likelihood that target states adopt certain norms. Each can limit or increase the speed of norm adoption. These will be used to analyse the added value of the Berlin Process to the existing EU efforts in promoting regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. The next chapter shall however first focus on the historical context of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans.

Chapter 2: The Road to Regional Cooperation

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the motivation of EU actors to promote regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. It will thereby focus on the history of EU involvement in SEE. The main focus lies with describing the interaction between promoting regional cooperation and EU integration. Therefore, the chapter will focus on the largest EU initiatives in the Balkans since the nineties. These are the Regional Approach (1996), the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (1999), the Stabilization and Association Process (1999).

2.1 Regional cooperation in Central Eastern Europe

The end of the Cold War fundamentally shifted the regional composition of Europe. Because of the collapse of state structures such as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, this period saw the rise of new trade alliances and regional cooperation schemes. Some initiatives such as the Visegrád Four (V4, 1991), Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA, 1992), and the Baltic Free Trade Area (BFTA, 1994) emerged in the former Soviet sphere. Yet, other initiatives were aimed at the SEE countries.[79] Although these initiatives were launched in different regions, they had one thing in common. They mainly focussed on promoting cooperation among neighbouring countries in the areas of peace, stability, development, and integration.[80]

The EU also stimulated regional cooperation. The enlargement wave in CEE, was the first time the EU combined promoting regional cooperation and EU integration in a single policy structure. There were geopolitical benefits for EU actors to promote regional cooperation in CEE as part of the enlargement strategy. Regional cooperation was brought up as a way to bring stabilization. EU actors were anxious about ethnic tensions remaining between the post-communist states. As such, the EU adopted the 'Good neighbourliness' accession condition in 1995. This meant that no state would be allowed to join the EU, as long as they had not resolved their border disputes or minority issues with neighbouring countries.[81] Promoting regional cooperation in CEE thus mostly originated from rational incentives. EU member states wished for stability, which established the link between promoting cooperation and EU integration. In CEE enlargement, this link was promoted using the mechanism of utility

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[79] For a more extensive list see: Uvalic, 'Regional Cooperation', 322.
[80] Ibidem, 321.
[81] Bechev, 'Carrots, Sticks and Norms', 31.

calculations. CEE states were offered the reward of membership in exchange for cooperation. EU integration was thereby used as a means to bring stability on the borders of Europe.

At the same time, the CEE enlargement period was also the first time that the undermining potential of promoting regional cooperation to the enlargement process manifested itself. The CEE enlargement process was by nature mostly a bilateral affair. According to the Copenhagen Criteria – the in 1993 adopted requirements for enlargement negotiations with the EU – the EU judged the applying member states on their individual merits to progress in the enlargement negotiations. As a result, CEE states did not really benefit from cooperation with each other during the enlargement process. Historical research shows that the efforts of the EU to promote regional cooperation even casted doubts in the CEE states. They started to question the intentions of the EU and some began to believe that regional cooperation was meant as a strategy to postpone enlargement.[82]

There are thus two important take-aways from the enlargement episode in CEE. First, it shows the rational logic of the EU to promote both regional cooperation and EU integration. Enlargement at the condition of regional cooperation between the CEE states was supposed to bring stability on the borders of Europe. Secondly, the EU enlargement in CEE demonstrates that using bilateral conditionality to promote regional cooperation did not always lead to the predicted result. Instead, it actually undermined cooperation. Ultimately, the EU also chose not to pay too much attention to promoting regional cooperation in the enlargement to CEE.

2.2 Regional cooperation in South Eastern Europe

At the start of the nineties, EU actors had few incentives to promote regional cooperation initiatives in SEE, let alone seek enlargement to this area of Europe. This perspective changed, however, due to the outbreak of widespread violence after the breakup of Yugoslavia. For almost three quarters of a century, Yugoslavia had been able to suppress the territorial claims – of multiple ethnic groups living in the Balkans – on several contested territories in Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia.[83] Yet, the collapse of Yugoslavia could not prevent the emergence of renewed territorial and ethnic warfare in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia (1991-95), Kosovo (1999), and Macedonia (2001) These events proved a serious threat to the stability of the rest of continental Europa as shown by the extensive reaction of EU state leaders. It is true that the initial response was mostly ad-hoc and meant to deal with imminent threats. To prevent the

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[82] Ibidem, 30.

[83] Misha Glenny, *Balkans: Nationalism, the Great Powers and War* (New York 2012), 636.

violence from spilling over to the rest of Europe, EU state leaders cooperated with the United States and launched several efforts to prevent the violence from spreading to EU territory. These first measures did not go beyond using diplomacy and stationing troops.[84]

However, EU leaders were also already considering a long-term strategy that would bring lasting peace to the Balkans. The core of this approach was promoting regional cooperation. The signing of the Dayton Accords (1995) by Former Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia – which effectively ended the immediate violence in the Balkans – gave EU actors some breathing space to start implementing their new policy.[85] In 1996, the EU launched the Regional Approach (RA-EU) in the Balkans. The underlying motivations for this initiative were clearly of geopolitical nature. The aim of the RA-EU was to secure the implementation of the Dayton Accords by increasing the regional cooperation between four former Yugoslavian states and Albania.[86]

In addition, it is also possible that the EU wanted to stimulate regional cooperation in the Balkans because of normative reasons. The RA-EU also called upon the Western Balkan states to work together on the return of displaced refugees and to cooperate in the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY).[87] One scholar argues that this reflected the normative agenda of the EU in the Balkans, which was aimed at reforming the Balkan states according to ethical or moral justifications.[88] Regardless of the underlying reason, the EU was clearly trying to expand its influence in SEE. The first step was to promote regional cooperation. Thereafter, the RA-EA was also used to establish EU-SEE relations

Engagement with the EU was offered through conditionality. Through the platform, the EU promised financial assistance, contractual relations, and bilateral trade-preferences at the conditionality of inter-Balkan relations.[89] This approach was similar to the approach in CEE. Promoting regional cooperation was again conducted in a rational manner. The EU depended on the manipulation of utility calculations to instigate reform in both CEE and SEE. Yet, there are also differences. The strategy in SEE did not create a link between regional cooperation and enlargement. Nowhere did the RA-EU promise EU membership. It has even been described as an alternative to enlargement: 'The contours of a distinctive model of EU-Western Balkans

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[84] Elbasani, 'EU Enlargement', 294.

[85] Rotta, 'Promoting Regional Cooperation'. 58

[86] Ibidem.

[87] Bechev, 'Carrots, Sticks and Norms', 32.

[88] Othon Anastasakis, 'The EU's Political Conditionality in the Western Balkans: Towards a More Pragmatic Approach', *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 8 (2008) 4, 365-377, p. 370.

[89] Pippan, 'The Rocky Road', 222.

relations became clear. While refraining from extending the offer of membership, Brussels developed relations with the regional states both on an individual and collective basis.'.[90] Nonetheless, the Regional Approach established promoting regional cooperation as the core of the EU's policy in SEE.

The Stability Pact

The Kosovo War in 1999 was a second turning point in the relations between the EU and the Western Balkans. After a relative quiet period, EU leaders were taken aback by the outbreak of yet another war. It was agreed that the RA-EU had not been sufficient to stabilize the Balkans. The EU therefore launched two new initiatives; the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (SP) and the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP).[91] At first sight, these initiatives simply extended the policy of promoting regional cooperation. Yet, the SP and SAP fundamentally altered the relationship between the EU and SEE. This is because the new strategy firmly established a link between regional cooperation and EU integration.

Behind the creation of the SP, were again mostly geopolitical considerations. The Pact was launched by the German EU-presidency to bundle the efforts to stabilize the Balkans. At the heart of the Pact was regional cooperation, which was presented as the solution that would finally bring stability and prosperity to the Balkan area.[92] This time, however, the SEE countries were not merely offered financial rewards in exchange for cooperation. Instead, the SP offered an EU perspective.[93] This made sense. After 8 years of failure to stabilize the Balkans, it was time for EU leaders to get the strongest tool out of the EU foreign policy toolbox; that of enlargement. The geopolitical risks of instability, economic collapse, ethnic conflict, and poor governance were a strong enough incentive to start seeking enlargement to SEE, because the EU would pay the price for instability at its borders.[94]

Stabilization and Association Process 1999-today

The other half of the EU's updated approach was the SAP. This approach still persists as the main EU's strategy towards the Western Balkan countries today. The most important

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[90] Anastasakis and Bechev, 'Commitment', 6.
[91] Rotta, 'Promoting Regional Cooperation', 59.
[92] Bechev, 'Carrots, Sticks and Norms', 34.
[93] Rotta, 'Promoting Regional Cooperation', 59.
[94] Vachudova, 'EU Leverage', 126.

contribution of the SAP to the EU efforts, was that it established bilateral relations with the Western Balkan countries. Through the SAP, they have been offered Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAA) with the EU. These have stimulated the Western Balkan states to fulfil certain conditions. The rewards are contractual agreements and a path to EU membership.[95] Although the main purpose of the SAP is to establish relations with the SEE states, it has done so by promoting stability and regional cooperation. Engaging in regional cooperation is unsurprisingly one the main requirements to enter the SAAs.[96] This was logical as common problems in the Western Balkans - such as infrastructural renewal, economic development, crime and corruption – needed regional solutions.[97] From a rational perspective, it therefore made sense to promote both regional cooperation and EU enlargement.

Yet, it is important to note that the SAP arguably also has a normative dimension. The emphasis on regional cooperation does reflect the common values of the EU.[98] As one author notes: 'the shared history of the SAP5 - especially the violence of the 1990s - is a negative and extremely painful one and stabilisation, reconciliation and learning to live with one another again however problematic and daunting - are simply *sine qua non* if the road to European integration is to be travelled.'.[99] Besides using conditionality, the SAP also reflects the mechanism of socialization. This means that actors sometimes adopt norms or practices to meet the expectations of their social environment.[100] Before being integrated, the Western Balkan countries were pushed to learn to act like European states.

With the launch of the SP and SAP, the EU's approach therefore started to mirror the earlier enlargement strategy in Eastern Europe. Both in nature and execution, the SAP is very similar to the strategy the EU used in its attempt to stabilize the CEE countries. The main motivations behind this initiative were once more geopolitical incentives. The EU wanted to prevent violence and instability in its border regions from spreading to other parts of Europe. In both cases, the EU therefore decided to promote regional cooperation. It has done so through the mechanism of utility calculations, and to a smaller extent socialization. Target states – whether Eastern European or Western Balkan – were asked to enhance regional cooperation. If done so, they were promised further bilateral negotiations with the EU, which could possibly lead to EU membership.

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[95] Elbasani, 'EU Enlargement', 299.
[96] Ibidem, 300.
[97] Martin Dangerfield, 'Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans?', 212.
[98] Helene Sjursen and Karen E. Smith, 'Justifying EU Foreign Policy', 315.
[99] (Italics in original) Martin Dangerfield, 'Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans', 211-212.
[100] Börzel and Risse, 'Europeanisation', 7-8.

While promoting regional cooperation in the SEE, the EU also encountered the same problem it had faced in CEE. The Western Balkan states were motivated by bilateral negotiations rather than regional cooperation. This led to concerns among EU leaders about the prospects of this dual strategy. One of the largest dilemmas was the status of Croatia. When the SAP was launched, Croatia was much further progressed in socioeconomic development compared to the other Western Balkan countries. The question was whether the EU should admit Croatia based on its economic prosperity if it had not yet reached its regional cooperation objectives – such as cooperation with the ICTY. Either option would undermine the legitimacy of the SAP.[101] The double approach of promoting cooperation and bilateral integration eventually did result in scepticism among the Western Balkan countries. Forcing fast-paced and slow-paced countries to work together, again created fears that the EU was trying to delay enlargement.[102]

2.3 The road to regional cooperation

The historical discussion offers useful insights on why and how EU actors have promoted regional cooperation in the Western Balkans in the past. First, the EU's strategy originated from cost-benefit calculations. Before the nineties, SEE integration was of little interest to EU actors. The Yugoslavian war changed this situation. The EU wanted to stabilize the Balkan to protect itself from possible violence spilling over into its member states. It therefore launched the RA-EU, and later the SP and SAP, which all promoted stabilization through cooperation. The EU thus mostly acted from the logic of consequences. In addition, there were also normative reasons to promote regional cooperation. Through regional cooperation, the EU tried to reform the Western Balkans according to its own image. These reasons were however of less importance. The RA-EU, SP and SAP were first and foremost aimed at bringing lasting peace to the Balkans.

The EU also mainly used rational methods to promote regional cooperation. The mechanism that was used to promote these initiatives has been conditionality. The Western Balkan states have been offered rewards in exchange for fulfilling conditions – such as regional cooperation. Eventually, this could lead to bilateral relations or membership. The link between promoting regional cooperation and EU integration is therefore obvious. The EU has wanted a stable Western Balkans in the EU, rather than an unstable Western Balkans outside the EU.

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[101] Ettore Greco, 'South-Eastern Europe: The expanding EU Role', in: Roland Dannreuther (ed.), *European Union Foreign and Security Policy: Towards a Neighbourhood Strategy* (London 2004), 62-78, p. 75.
[102] Rotta, 'Promoting Regional Cooperation', 63.

Chapter 3: The Road to the Berlin Process

Since the first edition in 2014, there has been much speculation among policymakers and thinktank analysts about the rationale of the Berlin Process. Among them, there are broadly three explanations on the decision of EU member states to establish the Berlin Process. The first explanation is that EU member states were seeking a less politicized solution to reconfirm their commitment to the enlargement process. The Berlin Process thereby offered a way to bypass the negative influence of 'enlargement fatigue' on the relation with the Western Balkans.[103] In contrast, another paper argues that the Berlin Process was the result of the deteriorating stability in the Balkans.[104] The EU enlargement process had been unsuccessful in stimulating the Western Balkan states to solve their remaining disputes or cooperate on mutual problems. A new solution was needed to tackle these problems. There is also a third explanation. The Berlin Process can also be perceived as a more general reaction to the changing geopolitical environment. The beginning of the last decade was a troubled period for EU member states. Crises such as the Ukraine Civil War, the Arab Spring, and growing Russian and Turkish assertiveness in the Balkans threatened the traditional influence of EU member states on their outside borders. It has therefore been argued that the Berlin Process was meant as a symbol to reconfirm the EU's political presence in the Western Balkans[105]

These reasons thus reflect different considerations. They also open the way for different arguments that explain the emphasis of the Berlin Process on promoting regional cooperation. The purpose of this chapter is to give more insight in this discussion. For that reason, it will analyse why and how EU member states used the Berlin Process to promote regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. The policy of EU member states will be explained along the lines of the different modes of action. First, the chapter will discuss the foundation of the platform. Thereafter, it will analyse the mechanisms that were introduced to promote regional cooperation during the first three Berlin Process summits.

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[103] Donika Emini, 'Berlin Process: Path to Europe or path to nowhere?', Kosovo Center for Security Studies (Version July 2016), http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/BerlinProcess-eng_417789.pdf (Accessed on December 19, 2019), p. 4.

[104] Marko Kmezić and Florian Bieber, 'Western Balkans and the EU: Beyond the Autopilot Mode', *Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group* (Version 2015), http://www.balkanfund.org/publib/biepag/BIEPAG-Western-Balkans-and-the-EU-Beyond-the-Autopilot-Mode.pdf (Accessed on December 19, 2019), p. 11.

[105] Cooperation and development institute ShtetiWeb, 'Albania in the berlin Process: Current achievements and upcoming challenges for the Paris Summit' (Version Fall 2015), http://shtetiweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ANGLISHT.pdf (Accessed on December 19, 2019), p. 10.

3.1 The Road to Berlin

The foundation of the Berlin Process reflects the logic of appropriation. This theory predicts that actors are rule followers. These rules are based on their identity as members of a certain community.[106] This was also true for the decision to create the Berlin Process. Hereby, Germany reflected its identity as an EU member state. The proposal for the Berlin Process was publicly mentioned in a press conference which took place after a European Council meeting on June 27, 2014. Chancellor Merkel was asked to respond to her decision to organize a conference for the Western Balkans later that year. She explained that the Berlin Process would be initiated by the German government to commemorate the First World War in a visible and practical way. In order to memorize the invaluable role of EU in establishing lasting peace in Europe, Germany would use the platform to facilitate cooperation among the Western Balkans, which would help them progress on their path to the EU.[107]

Normative considerations thus played a role in the establishment of the Berlin Process. The German government desired to help the Western Balkan countries integrate in the EU. This decision was to a much lesser extent influenced by geopolitical reasons, which was also explicitly confirmed by Merkel herself. During another press conference, she was asked whether the instability in the Middle East or the situation in Ukraine had guided the German government to initiate the Berlin Process. The answer was negative. Merkel explained that neither crises had played any role in making this decision.[108] Neither instability nor changing geopolitical circumstances therefore offer sufficient arguments that help explain the logic of the Berlin Process. To most extent, the German government did not act from the logic of consequences. Promoting regional cooperation was mainly meant to help the Western Balkan countries advance on their respective roads to Europe. Hereby, the EU identity of Germany played an important role. Their decision-making process reflects their wish to promote cooperation based on their own successful experiences with cooperation in the EU.

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[106] Börzel and Risse, 'Europeanisation', 5.

[107] The Federal Chancellor, 'Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel zum Europäischen Rat am 27. Juni 2014' (Version June 28, 2014), https://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/bkin-de/aktuelles/pressekonferenz-von-bundeskanzlerin-merkel-zum-europaeischen-rat-am-27-juni-2014-843608 (Accessed on 19-12-2019).

[108] The Federal Chancellor, 'Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel, Ministerpräsident Rama und EU-Kommissionspräsident Barroso am 28. August 2014' (Version August 28, 2014), https://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/bkin-de/aktuelles/pressekonferenz-von-bundeskanzlerin-merkel-ministerpraesident-rama-und-eu-kommissionspraesident-barroso-am-28-august-2014-846734 (Accessed on December 19, 2019).

3.2 Berlin Summit 2014

During the first summit, it quickly became evident that EU member states would be heavily involved in shaping the agenda of the platform. The first conference was attended by the heads of government, foreign ministers, and economic ministers of the Western Balkan states but hosted and chaired by the German federal government. Also, it was decided that Austria and France would consecutively chair the two upcoming summits in 2015 and 2016.[109] Although the Western Balkan states would be the subject of the Berlin Process, the agenda has been made by the EU members states. The first summit was thereafter also used to clarify the purpose of the platform. It was decided that EU member states would use the platform to promote regional cooperation. This in turn would enhance the EU integration of the Western Balkans.[110]

The main motivation of the platform was thus to help the Western Balkan countries. The Berlin Process would thereby focus on regional problems such as reform, reconciliation, and economic growth.[111] More importantly, regional cooperation was offered as a solution to solve the most persisting issues that plagued the stability in the Western Balkans. These included the Serbia-Kosovo dispute, the naming dispute between Macedonia and Greece, and the internal reform process in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[112] In addition, the first summit was used to promote economic cooperation. For example, the German government proposed several instruments to increase sustainable growth. These included launching a purchasing initiative for the Western Balkans; and organizing a regional conference in Montenegro that would focus on establishing regional chains.[113]

There are two mechanisms which EU member states used to promote regional cooperation. First, they used manipulation of utility calculations. The Western Balkan states were offered financial rewards for cooperating with the economic initiatives. The German government announced that the economic cooperation projects would be supported by funds from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) of the EU.[114] On the one hand, EU member states used a rational approach to promote economic cooperation through the Berlin Process. On the other hand, EU member states also relied on the mechanism of persuasion. Actors use this mechanism to promote ideas by pointing out the causal or legitimate validity of

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[109] BPIRC, 'Final Declaration'.
[110] Ibidem.
[111] Ibidem.
[112] Ibidem.
[113] Ibidem.
[114] Ibidem.

their statements.[115] On more than one occasion the Berlin Summit was used to convince the Western Balkan countries of the benefits of regional cooperation. EU member states hereby pointed out that cross-border cooperation could lead to EU integration. For example, Merkel opened the post-summit press conference by stating that the presence of EU commissioner José Barroso at the summit was a clear signal that the Western Balkan states have a European perspective. [116] This was logical. As shown in chapter two, regional cooperation initiatives have often been met with scepticism. Merkel clearly felt the need to emphasize that her initiative would bring the Western Balkans closer to the EU, and thereby showing that they had something to gain from cooperating under the Berlin Process.

3.3 Vienna Summit 2015

Further plans to implement the Berlin Process proposals, were made in Vienna. The conference was this time chaired by Austria. According to the Austrian Foreign Ministry, the summit was successful in promoting economic and political cooperation projects, and to involve civil society.[117] These efforts were included in the final declaration that was released after the summit. The EU member states used the conference to invite the Balkan leaders to solve the remaining disputes, and to focus on reconciliation. Apparently, they were successful. The final declaration included a promise of the participating states to increase regional cooperation with the aim of overcoming the legacy of the past and thereby creating lasting stability.[118]

For the execution of these promises, the Berlin Process moreover relied on the mechanism of socialization. EU member states used this principle to convince the Western Balkan states to stick to cooperation. Their commitments were formalized in two flagship initiatives: the 'Regional Cooperation and the Solution of Bilateral Disputes' and the 'Joint declaration on the Establishment of the Regional Cooperation Youth Office (RCYO)'. Both these initiatives had the purpose of increasing the stability in the Western Balkans. At first sight, these proposals therefore seemed to originate from the logic of consequences. Stability in the Western Balkans would in the long run be beneficial to the EU member states.

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[115] Börzel and Risse, 'Europeanisation', 8.

[116] The Federal Chancellor, 'Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel'.

[117] Federal Ministry Republic of Austria, 'Foreign and European Policy Report ' (Version 2015), https://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Zentrale/Publikationen/AEPB/Foreign_and_European_Policy_Report_2015.pdf (Accessed on January 14, 2020), p. 88.

[118] The Berlin Process Information and Resource Centre, 'Final Declaration by the Chair of Vienna Western Balkans Summit' (Version August 27, 2015), https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Final-Declaration-by-the-Chair-of-the-Vienna-Western-Balkans-Summit.pdf (Accessed on January 14, 2020).

However, it is more likely that the EU member states were simply trying to help the Western Balkan states to solve their common problems. As explained earlier, the logic of consequences foresees that actors use rational mechanisms – such as conditionality or financial assistance - to promote norms or practices. These flagship initiatives made no such promises. Instead, they reflect the use of normative persuasion. For instance, in the presence of the EU member states, the Western Balkan states were asked to make two normative commitments. These were included in the declaration of bilateral disputes. The Western Balkan leaders agreed to solve their remaining disputes through bilateral negotiations under international law. Moreover, they agreed to refrain from using the disputes to block each other's respective EU accession progress.[119] EU member states thereby asked the Western Balkan states to make some normative commitments. It had not been necessary to promise the Western Balkan states rewards for their cooperation. Instead, normative arguments were enough.

Furthermore, the decision to establish the RCYO also reflects the utilization of the socialization mechanism. This initiative would be used to promote reconciliation, cooperation, and EU values among the Balkan Youth. These were recognised as essential tools to prepare the Western Balkans for a future in the EU.[120] Hereby, the convincing power of the historical experiences of EU member states with regional cooperation played a convincing role. With the signing of this proposal, the Western Balkan states agreed to follow the best European practices in overcoming historical grievances. The RCYO would therefore be modelled after the Franco-German Youth Office.[121] Like the declaration on disputes, this reflects the idea that EU member states wanted to help the Western Balkan countries. The wish for stability did not originate from an immediate threat to the EU, but these proposals would help the EU integration of the Western Balkan countries.

In Vienna, serious progress was also made in making concrete plans for economic cooperation. For example, the Balkan states were asked to close the negotiations on the establishment of a Western Balkan free trade area under the CEFTA.[122] Also, the EU member states stimulated the Western Balkan states to prioritize ten transnational energy and

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[119] The Berlin Process Information and Resource Centre, 'Regional Cooperation and the Solution of Bilateral Disputes' (Version August 27, 2015), https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Regional-Cooperation-and-the-Solution-of-Bilateral-Disputes.pdf (Accessed on January 14, 2020).

[120] The Berlin Process Information and Resource Centre, 'Joint Declaration on the establishment of the Regional Cooperation Youth Office of the Western Balkans' (Version August 27, 2015), https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Joint-Declaration-on-the-establishment-of-the-Regional-Youth-Cooperation-Office-of-the-Western-Balkans.pdf (Accessed on January 14, 2020).

[121] BPIRC, 'Joint Declaration'.

[122] BPIRC, 'Chair of Vienna'.;

infrastructure projects for EU funding, which would help increase the connectivity within the Balkans and between the Balkans and the EU.[123] The goal of these integration projects was to bring the Western Balkan states closer to the EU. Unlike the political proposals, these economic initiatives were again promoted mostly through the mechanism of utility calculations. After the agreement, the energy and infrastructure projects would be recorded in the EU Connectivity Agenda 2015. The EU promised to provide 1 billion dollars for the period of 2014-2020 to finance Western Balkan integration initiatives.[124]

The last major addition of the Vienna process was promoting regional cooperation through involving civil society. During the forum, the Austrian Foreign Ministry in cooperation with a German and Austrian foundation, and an Austrian think-thank, presented a document with recommendations for the agenda of the Berlin Process.[125] These were the result of consultations with more than a hundred Western Balkan civil society activists, and members of media and thinktanks.[126] Their main advice was that the Berlin Process should focus on enhancing regional cooperation; securing freedom of expression and independent media; and the creation of jobs and developing prosperity in a common labour area. Including civil society networks could help strengthen regional cooperation.[127] This, moreover, stresses the normative functioning of the Berlin Process. Inclusiveness usually indicates the normative character of actor interaction. This because the actor that is promoting norms actually includes the target actor that it is trying to help.[128] EU member states were thus not using the Berlin Process merely to advance their own interests. The platform invited voices from the region to influence the decision-making process. This increased the legitimacy of the Berlin Process.

3.4 Paris Summit 2016

The Paris Summit was in many ways a repetition of Vienna. The final declaration again stated EU integration as the main objective of the Berlin Process, and the participating states

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[123] Ibidem.
[124] EC, 'Connectivity Agenda'.
[125] European Parliament, 'The Western Balkans 'Berlin process: A new impulse for regional cooperation' (Version July 4, 2016), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/586602/EPRS_BRI(2016)586602_EN.pdf (Accessed on January 14, 2020), p. 4.
[126] The Berlin Process Information and Resource Centre, 'Recommendations of the Civil Society Forum Organisations for the Vienna Summit 2015' (Version 2015), https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Civil-Society-Forum-Vienna-recommendations.pdf, (Accessed on January 14, 2020)
[127] BPIRC, 'Recommendations'.
[128] Bicchi, 'Our size fits all', 289.

reconfirmed the idea of regional cooperation as the best way to achieve EU membership.[129] The conference was thus mainly used to celebrate and extend the progress in the three key agenda items: regional cooperation, economic cooperation, and civil society. For example, the Paris Summit witnessed the finalization of the establishment of the RCYO. Moreover, the participating states progressed on implementing the proposed infrastructure and energy projects. They also agreed to list three new railway projects. These would be funded by international financial institutions and the national budgets from the Balkan states, as well as receive 100 million euros in co-funding from the EU.[130] In addition, the Paris Summit was used to congratulate the successful closure of trade negotiations under the CEFTA. Special attention was awarded to the assistance of the EU in lending its expertise on economic integration and the assistance of the EU in providing expertise on economic integration.[131] Lastly, the Paris Summit was also used to expand the involvement of civil society. The simultaneously organised Civil Society Forum expressed the wish to be involved in the official political debate of the Paris summit. This request was fulfilled as their recommendations were discussed with EU officials; and presented by the Austrian and French foreign ministers at the intergovernmental meeting of prime ministers during the Paris Summit.[132]

The Paris Summit also brought two new agenda items to the table; climate change and migration. Cooperation on these issues was promoted through the mechanism of manipulation of utility calculations. For example, the Western Balkan states were asked to sign the 'Western Balkan Sustainable Charter'. This meant – among other things – that they would commit themselves to make the regional energy market more sustainable and to step up the integration of the local energy market. They would receive EU funding to implement these measures. Primarily, this would help the Balkan states meet the objectives of the Paris Climate Agreement. Also, it should align them with EU regulation on energy markets.[133] This does raise the question why the EU felt the need to rely on financial means to stimulate cooperation on climate issues.

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[129] The Berlin Process Information and Resource Centre, 'Final Declaration by the Chair of the Paris Western Balkans Summit' (Version July 4, 2016), https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Final-Declaration-by-the-Chair-of-the-Paris-Western-Balkans-Summit.pdf (Accessed January 14, 2020).

[130] BPIRC, 'Chair of the Paris'.

[131] Ibidem.

[132] The Berlin Process Information and Resource Centre, 'Civil Society Forum of the Western Balkans Summit Series Paris' (Version July 2016), https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Civil-Society-Forum-Paris-recommendations.pdf (Accessed on January 14, 2020).

[133] The Berlin Process Information and Resource Centre, 'Western Balkan Sustainable Charter' (Version 2016), https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Western-Balkan-Sustainable-Charter.pdf (Accessed on January 14, 2020).

This can be explained by the fact that both climate change and migration posed more immediate dangers to the EU. These initiatives clearly stem from the logic of consequences. The Paris Summit happened against the background of the civil war in Syria and the refugee crisis in Europe. This clearly influenced the agenda of the Berlin Process. As the first page of the Final Declaration of the French Chair reads: 'The European continent is exposed to unprecedented security challenges, such as the large-scale terrorist attacks. The Western Balkans are encouraged to strengthen regional cooperation which remains a key element for the stability of the region and of the whole of Europe.'[134] Also, the rational method of manipulation of utility calculations was used to promote cooperation on the migrant question. Through the Berlin Process, the Western Balkan states were asked to cooperate on coordinating external border control, for which they could potentially receive funding from the European Investment Bank (EIB).[135] Technically, cooperation on migration would also support EU integration. For example, the participating states also agreed to establish closer cooperation between the EU and the Western Balkans to prevent radicalisation among youths.[136] This created new links between the EU and the Western Balkans. Yet, the primary goal of closer cooperation was evidently related to the geopolitical considerations of the EU member states. It cannot be denied that the Berlin Process in some cases promoted regional cooperation for self-centred reasons. The EU used the platform to gain ad-hoc goals such as security.

3.5 Assessment

The purpose of this chapter was to analyse why and how EU member states used the Berlin Process to promote regional cooperation. Therefore, the first three editions of the Berlin Process were analysed through the three logics of social action. The truth is that the EU member states' behaviour cannot be completely reduced to one logic of action. EU member states promoted regional cooperation because of normative and rational reasons. In the first place, the Berlin Process was clearly not founded to meet an urgent threat of instability or because of changing geopolitical circumstances. Chapter 2 showed that the Western Balkans are a region of strategic interest for EU member states, but the German government did not primarily take this into consideration, when it made the decision to launch the platform in 2014. However, the platform is not free from rational interests of EU member states. Their behaviour did reflect the logic of consequences. This is particularly visible in the initiatives that were proposed to

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[134] BPIRC, 'Chair of the Paris'.
[135] Ibidem.
[136] Ibidem.

promote cooperation on migration and climate change. These issues posed more urgent threats to the EU. This explains why EU members states relied on the manipulation of utility calculations – such as offering financial assistance – to promote these proposals.

Yet, - on many more occasions - the logic of promoting regional cooperation appeared to have a normative character. First, EU member states tried to promote their own successful experiences with EU integration. The Berlin Process was founded on the ideal to help the Western Balkan states on their path to Europe. Through the civil society forum, the Berlin Process also tried to include Western Balkan civil societies in the platform. In addition, the normative side is reflected in the mechanisms that were used to promote regional cooperation. EU member states often relied on persuasion. Multiple times EU member states explicitly argued that cooperation would logically lead to more prosperity, peace, and possibly EU membership or convinced the Western Balkans – as with the solution of bilateral disputes – to do the right thing.

It is important to note that rational methods were, however, also used to promote the economic agenda of the Berlin Process. The Western Balkan states were offered financial assistance to cooperate with initiatives such as the Connectivity Agenda. This does not necessarily mean that EU member states promoted economic cooperation because of self-interested reasons. The Connectivity Agenda, for example, would mainly support the EU integration of the Western Balkans. This is arguably more of interests to the Western Balkan states than to the EU.[137] It is more compelling to assume that EU member states relied on rational methods because of the easy access to the EU's IPA. Promoting regional cooperation therefore did not entirely derive from the logic of consequences. This is in contrast with the EU enlargement process – which as chapter 2 argued – originated from instrumental rational considerations.

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[137] Moravcsik and Vachudova, 'National interests', 49.

Chapter 4 The Road to Success

This last chapter will discuss the added value of the Berlin Process to the existing efforts of EU member states in promoting regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. As argued in chapter 3, the participating states of the Berlin Process have all agreed that regional cooperation should eventually lead to EU integration. However, studying the effect of the Berlin Process on the EU integration of the Western Balkans lies beyond the scope of this paper. This chapter is thus mainly intended to analyse the extent to which the Berlin Process has achieved its goal of promoting regional cooperation. For that purpose, this chapter focusses on emulation theory; the idea that actors can indirectly spread norms, ideas, or practices because other actors tend to copy these norms, ideas, or practices.[138] This theory can be used to test whether the Western Balkan leaders have become active themselves in promoting regional cooperation as a result of engaging in the Berlin Process. In order to provide some context, this chapter will thereby also focus on the similarities and differences between the Berlin Process and other regional initiatives.

4.1 Status of regional efforts in the Western Balkans

Regional efforts can be divided into broadly two categories. First, there are the efforts of the EU to promote regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. Chapter 2 already discussed the multiple initiatives that were launched by the EU. The most extensive program is the SAP, which also promotes regional cooperation with the purpose of EU enlargement. It is useful to study the interaction between the Berlin Process and the SAP. The EU-based approach has been said to facilitate but also restrain regional cooperation in the Western Balkans.[139] The interaction between the Berlin Process and EU integration is also a contested topic among policymakers. For instance, a 2017 report from the EU Parliament (EP) states that the Berlin Process had developed as a successful platform for political and economic dialogue and has given a boost to regional cooperation, but its larger success depends on implementing the current agenda and attracting more support for the Berlin Process from EU member states.[140]

Second, there are outsider regional cooperation initiatives. Among these are the South East Europe Transport Observatory (SEETO), the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), the South East Cooperation Process (SEECP), the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional

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[138] Börzel and Risse, Diffusing (inter-) regionalism, 8.
[139] Bechev, 'Carrots, Sticks and Norms', 41.
[140] European Parliament, 'The Western Balkans', 9-10.

Initiative (MARRI), the EU-Western Balkans Ministerial Forum, and the Brdo-Brijuni Process (BPP). Compared to the SAP, these initiatives enjoy higher levels of regional ownership, and like the SAP and the Berlin Process, focus more or less on promoting regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. The remaining of this chapter will be used to discuss the similarities and differences between these existing efforts and some Berlin Process initiatives that were launched during the Trieste and London Summits.

4.2 Trieste Summit 2017

At the time of the Trieste Summit, it had become clear that the Berlin Process had been effective in absorbing and exploiting the responsibilities of outsider regional initiatives. These other initiatives in the region usually had similar agendas. For example, the BPP – launched in 2013 by the Croatian and Slovenian Presidents– shares similar objectives with the Berlin Process. According to one source, the purpose of the BPP is to stimulate high political dialogue among Balkan elites, promoting regional cooperation, and the solvation of bilateral disputes.[141] The same applies to the RCC. The objective of this initiative is to enhance the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans. It thereby aims to: 'develop and maintain a political climate of dialogue, reconciliation, tolerance and openness towards cooperation, with a view to enabling the implementation of regional programmes aimed at economic and social development to the benefit of the people in the region'.[142]

Both these regional initiatives also reflect the emulation of practices. Hereby, the Western Balkan states themselves are involved in stimulating regional cooperation. Ownership in the regional cooperation effort is clearly present in the RCC. This platform was, for example, founded in 2008 as a replacement of the SP, with the purpose of giving the Western Balkan countries more control in promoting regional cooperation.[143] Although the RCC is still politically and financially supported by the EU, it is therefore presided by the Western Balkan states themselves.[144] Ownership is also present in the BPP. According to a declaration from 2018, regional inclusiveness was adopted as a future agenda item of the BPP. This would mean that the leaders of the platform would focus more on strengthening the presence of the Western

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[141] Cooperation and Development Institute / ShtetiWeb, 'Monitoring the Berlin Process: From Paris to Trieste' (Version January 2017), http://cdinstitute.eu/web/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Monitoring-the-Berlin-Process-From-Paris-to-Trieste.pdf (Accessed on January 14, 2020), p. 40.

[142] Regional Cooperation Council, 'About Us' (Version January 2019), https://www.rcc.int/pages/2/about-us (Accessed on January 14, 2020).

[143] Rotta, 'Promoting Regional Cooperation', 66.

[144] Ibidem, 69.

Balkan countries in regional cooperation initiatives.[145] Although the BPP was hosted by EU member states Croatia and Slovenia, Western Balkan states could use this platform to increase regional cooperation. This is another example of emulation of practices in SEE.

It is therefore the question what the Berlin Process adds to these existing efforts to promote regional cooperation. The platform seems to be nothing new. It shares the agenda of existing regional cooperation programmes – such as the RCC and the BPP. Also, the toolbox is comparable. Like these other initiatives, the Berlin Process also stimulates cooperation through political dialogue and EU assistance. More importantly, both the RCC and the BPP show that Western Balkan states themselves have to some extent already adopted the idea that regional cooperation is a useful method to achieve EU integration.

Nevertheless, the Berlin Process has certainly added value. In contrast to these other regional cooperation initiatives, the Berlin Process has carried more diplomatic weight, which is necessary to achieve tangible results. Three years after its foundation, the Berlin Process had already been able to generate 1.4 billion euros for twenty investment programs relating to the Connectivity Agenda.[146] This already equalled the total amount of assistance the RCC had received since 2008.[147] Other initiatives have certainly not been useless. Yet, it is not surprising that the leadership of regional cooperation efforts in the Western Balkans has more or less been assumed by the Berlin Process. The intent was not to replace these existing initiatives but rather to buddle and combine their individual strengths.

Namely, during the Trieste Summit, the participating states took the time to applaud the role of other initiatives- such as the BPP and the RCC- in implementing the agenda of the Berlin Process.[148] Some of these would even be adopted in the functioning of the platform. This indicates that EU member states were also trying to intensify the regional ownership of the Berlin Process. For example, during the Trieste Summit it was decided that the RCC would be asked to monitor and report on several economic integration programs, and in addition, would be involved in the organization of several business-related summits.[149] To summarize,

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[145] Office of the President of the Republic, 'President Pahor at the meeting of the leaders of the Brdo Brijuni Process in Skopje' (Version April 27, 2018), http://www.up-rs.si/up-rs/uprs-eng.nsf/pages/48C6E81CC6DFA3AAC12582CD002A51C8?OpenDocument (Accessed on January 14, 2020).

[146] The Berlin Process Information and Resource Centre, 'Declaration by the Italian Chair' (Version July 12, 2017), https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Declaration-by-the-Italian-Chair.pdf (Accessed on January 14, 2020).

[147] This number is based on the total calculation in the Projects per Sector Report released by the Regional Cooperation Council; See: Regional Cooperation Council, 'SEEDAD Projects by Sector' (Version 2020), https://www.rcc.int/seedad/reports (Accessed on January 14, 2020).

[148] BPIRC, 'Italian Chair'.

[149] Ibidem.

the approach of the Berlin Process to promote regional cooperation does not inherently differ much from earlier regional initiatives. The platform has been however more influential than prior regional cooperation initiatives, which is shown in the ability of the Berlin Process to delegate certain tasks and responsibilities of other regional platforms. The goal of this strategy was to transfer the implementation of Berlin Process initiatives to some extent to the Western Balkan states themselves.

The Trieste Summit also gives insight in the interaction between the Berlin Process and the EU's SAP. There were also similarities between these two approaches. The participating states reconfirmed in Trieste that the EU perspective of the Western Balkan states was the ultimate objective of promoting regional cooperation. The Berlin Process moreover adopted some of the most important ideas and principles of the EU enlargement strategy. For example, the Trieste conference expressed the principle that each Western Balkan country should be judged on its own merits in the EU enlargement negotiations, but also the idea that including the Western Balkans in the EU is an strategic investment in the security, stability, prosperity, peace and democracy of the EU itself.[150] These ideas also form the basis of the EU enlargement strategy in the Western Balkans.[151]

Despite these similarities, the Berlin Process was not meant as an alternative for the EU enlargement process. The participating states agreed that the purpose of promoting regional cooperation would not extend beyond helping the Western Balkan states meet the EU accession conditions.[152] The added value of Berlin Process was thus primarily to complement the EU enlargement process. EU actors deemed it necessary to give an additional boost to the enlargement process because of multiple reasons. Firstly, EU actors recognised the need to reassure the Western Balkan countries of their commitment to integration. As argued in the introduction of this thesis, the credibility of the enlargement process has been negatively influenced by the effects of 'enlargement fatigue'. The participating states in Trieste were clearly aware of this problem. For example, the Italian Foreign Minister opened the conference by stating that the door to Europe is still wide open. The Western Balkan countries should not let themselves be guided by the slow integration process of the past. But, continuing, he argued that the Berlin Process proves that EU member states are still absolutely and unequivocally

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[150] BPIRC, 'Italian Chair'.
[151] European Commission, 'A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans' (Version February 2, 2019), https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans_en.pdf (Accessed on January 14, 2020).
[152] BPIRC, 'Italian Chair'.

interested in the EU enlargement in the Western Balkans.[153] This also explains the second reason that shows that the Berlin Process has been used to boost the EU enlargement process. EU actors wanted to recapture the attention of Western Balkan leaders for EU conditionality-based reform. This need was widely acknowledged by the participating states of the Trieste Summit. [154] The main issue was that the lack of regional cooperation undermined the enlargement process. The Berlin Process intended to be a solution for this problem. It was therefore agreed that the Western Balkan states should put more effort towards regional cooperation, so that individual reform efforts in the areas of democratisation, stabilisation and association would not be hampered.[155] To none extent, the Berlin Process was thus meant to replace the SAP. Instead, the Berlin Process was mostly meant to optimize and speed up the EU enlargement process. This was mainly because of the slow declining credibility of the EU's conditionality approach and the subsequent slow reform process in the Western Balkans.

The approach of the Berlin Process to promote regional cooperation is also inherently different compared to the EU's SAP approach. The SAP is based on strict conditionality. Candidates have to fulfil certain conditions – such as regional cooperation – to obtain EU membership. However, the EU has often abandoned these regional efforts to further bilateral negotiations under the SAP. [156] Also, this approach has never really resulted in more initiative of the Western Balkan countries to undertake regional cooperation themselves.[157] Competition might have stimulated the emulation of other EU norms but not the practice of cooperation. Even though the SAP promotes regionalism, candidate states do not benefit from emulating this practice.

In contrast, the Berlin Process did stimulate emulation of regional cooperation. The Trieste Summit shows that this process has involved mostly lesson learning. One of the major initiatives that was launched during the Trieste Summit was the 'Consolidated Multi-annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area in the Western Balkans Six' (MAP-REA). The signing of the MAP-REA shows two things. In the first place, the MAP-REA clearly reflects emulation of practices of EU models. The purpose of the MAP-REA was to create a common market in the Western Balkans. It would be shaped according to the principles of the EU single

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[153] Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, 'Address by the Hon. Minister at the Welcome Reception at the Trieste Summit on the Western Balkans' (Version July 11, 2017), https://www.esteri.it/mae/en/sala_stampa/interventi/2017/07/discorso-dell-on-ministro-al-ricevimento.html (Accessed on January 14, 2020).
[154] BPIRC, 'Italian Chair'.
[155] Ibidem.
[156] Bechev, 'Carrots, Sticks and Norms', 42.
[157] Ibidem.

market, and thereby provide the unobstructed flow of goods, services, capital and high skilled labour between the Western Balkan countries.[158] This also shows that the Western Balkans had become active themselves in promoting regional cooperation. Namely, unlike most Berlin Process initiatives, the MAP-REA was not initiated by EU member states but requested upon by the leaders of the Western Balkan states themselves. The plans for the MAP-REA were developed at a – Berlin Process related – heads of state meeting in Sarajevo, 2017. Later that year, the agreement was presented during the Trieste Summit.[159] Regional cooperation was not imposed from above. Western Balkan leaders took the initiative to further institutionalize the ties between their countries. Not coincidentally, it was also agreed that the implementation and ownership of the MAP-REA should lie with the Western Balkan countries.[160]

In the second place, the signing of the MAP-REA agreement indicates emulation through lesson-learning. Emulation of norms increases when actors perceive these norms as solutions for domestic problems.[161] This also applied to this integration initiative. The Western Balkans were searching for a solution to tackle the slowing growth rate of their economies. Closer economic integration was decided to bring economic growth, which was desperately needed to enhance the EU integration of the Western Balkan countries.[162] The EU hereby indirectly influenced the adoption of ideas. This would however not have happened without the Berlin Process. The platform was therefore successful in facilitating the emulation of regional cooperation practices.

The Berlin Process has thus certainly provided added value to the existing EU efforts to promote regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. In spirit and approach, the platform might appear similar to other regional initiatives, but it is certainly more influential. It improved the functioning of smaller regional initiatives and was more successful in attracting donors. More importantly, through the Berlin Process EU member states have been able to stimulate regional cooperation practices in the Western Balkan countries. Where the EU's SAP approach mostly enhances competition, the Berlin Process has actually been able to motivate the Western Balkan leaders to take ownership over regional cooperation efforts. The EU member states were able to indirectly influence cooperation.

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[158] The Berlin Process Information and Resource Centre, 'Consolidated Multi-annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area in the Western Balkans Six' (Version July 6, 2017), https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Consolidated-Multi-annual-Action-Plan-for-a-Regional-Economic-Area-in-the-Western-Balkans-Six.pdf (Accessed on January 14, 2020), p. 1.
[159] BPIRC, 'Multi-annual Action Plan', 6.
[160] Ibidem.
[161] Börzel and Risse, 'Europeanisation', 9-10.
[162] BPIRC, 'Multi-annual Action Plan', 2.

4.3 London Summit

After the Trieste Summit, the added value of the Berlin Process only continued to grow. Arguably, the most high-profile event concerning the European future of the Western Balkans that took place in 2018 was not the London Summit. On May 17 that year, the leaders of the EU members states, the leaders of the Western Balkan states, and the leaders of the EU, met in Sofia to discuss the future of the Western Balkans. This event had on an organizational level nothing to do with the Berlin Process. However, it did show the increasing influence of the platform in promoting regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. This is mostly visible in the Sofia Declaration that was released after the summit. This demonstrates that even EU member states that did not participate in the Berlin Process could not ignore the initiatives that were launched during earlier summits. With the declaration, EU member states called upon the Western Balkan states to increase the implementation of Berlin Process initiatives – such as the Regional Electricity Market and the MAP-REA.[163] In addition, the EC emphasized the expansion of the RCYO as a priority agenda item, which would support the socio-economic development of the Western Balkans.[164] The platform was thus clearly accepted by the EU and EU member states alike, as a way to promote development and regional cooperation in the Western Balkans.

Two months later, the efforts of the Berlin Process to promote regional cooperation also continued as usual. The London Summit among other things welcomed the signing of the 'Joint Declaration on Regional Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations in the Framework of the Berlin Process'. With this document the Berlin Process build further on the declaration of disputes signed at the summit in 2015. The document therefore reconfirmed the promise made in Vienna that the Western Balkan states would not use their bilateral disputes to block each other's EU enlargement negotiations. This time the document was however also signed by EU member state Croatia.[165] One source argues that this document was thereby a considerable improvement because Croatia had – in the past – hinted to use its veto to block the accession

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[163] European Council, 'Sofia Declaration 17 May 2018' (Version May 17, 2018), https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/34776/sofia-declaration_en.pdf (Accessed on January 14, 2020).
[164] EC, 'Sofia Declaration'.
[165] The Berlin Process Information and Resource Centre, 'Joint Declarations signed at the Leaders Meeting of the Western Balkans Summit by Berlin Process Participants' (Version July 10, 2018), https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Joint-Declarations-signed-at-the-Leaders-Meeting-of-the-Western-Balkans-Summit-by-Berlin-Process-participants.pdf (Accessed on January 14, 2020).

negotiations with neighbouring Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina.[166] Thereby, the Berlin Process continued to provide added value towards cross-border cooperation in the Western Balkans.

In addition, the London Summit again showed the willingness of the Western Balkan countries to engage in regional cooperation. Since Trieste, regionally owned organizations had become even more active in implementing the Berlin Process initiatives. During the London Summit, special attention was paid to welcome the role of the RCC and the CEFTA secretariat in the monitoring and coordinating of the MAP-REA.[167] Also, the Western Balkan states had individually made efforts to expand economic integration. The leaders used the London conference as an opportunity to talk about the further implementation of the MAP-REA. Adopting practises was again influenced by lesson learning. The Western Balkan states recognised the importance of transformational power of the MAP-REA for further reform in the Balkans. This conclusion was again repeated at the Head of States meeting.[168]

Lastly, regional cooperation actually led to domestic change in the Western Balkans. The proposals made at the Berlin Process did not only consist of empty promises. Further regional cooperation actually required domestic change. According to a report from the RCC, most countries had made significant improvement in changing domestic legislation to expand regional integration. For example, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North-Macedonia had all ratified Additional Protocol 5 of the CEFTA agreement, which opened the possibilities for regional trade.[169] The Western Balkan countries also passed laws to increase integration in other areas. The report mentions improvements along the four pillars of the MAP-REA; including trade, investment, mobility, and digital integration.[170]

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[166] Zoran Nechev, Ivan Nikolovski, Jelica Minić, Mariola Qesaraku and Adnan Ćerimagić, '2018 Western Balkans Summit: 3 key takeaways from London' (Version December 2018), https://idscs.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/%D0%A4%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B7%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%84-%D0%B2%D0%B5%D0%B1-2.pdf (Accessed on January 14, 2020).

[167] The Berlin Process Information and Resource Centre, 'Chairs' Conclusions of the Economy Ministers' Meeting of the London Western Balkans Summit, 4 July 2018' (Version July 4, 2018), https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Chairs%E2%80%99-Conclusions-of-the-Economy-Ministers%E2%80%99-Meeting-of-the-London-Western.pdf (Accessed on January 14, 2020).

[168] The Berlin Process Information and Resource Centre, 'Chair's Conclusions of the Heads' meeting of the London Western Balkans Summit, 10 July 2018' (Version July 10, 2018), https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Chair%E2%80%99s-Conclusions-of-the-Heads%E2%80%99-meeting-of-the-London-Western-Balkans-Summit-10-July-2018.pdf (Accessed on January 14, 2020).

[169] Regional Cooperation Council, 'Economies at a Glance: State of Play and Way Forward' (Version June 2018), https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/MAP-brochure-03072018 web.pdf/585cfd904553fdbe253f811d8b33bd37.pdf (Accessed on January 15, 2020).

[170] RCC, 'Economies at a glance'.

4.4 Assessment

The Berlin Process certainly provided added value to the efforts of EU member states to promote regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. The analysis in this chapter shows that the Berlin Process indeed stimulated the emulation of regional cooperation. At the Trieste Summit, the Western Balkan states independently proposed to implement deeper economic integration through the MAP-REA. They had adopted the idea that regional cooperation could be a solution for domestic problems. Among other things, this resulted in the passing of legislation in several countries to facilitate cross-border trade. The Berlin Process was therefore once more not only successful in spreading the practice of regional cooperation but also regional ownership over these efforts.

It is true that the regional initiatives like the RCC and the BPP, also show these levels of emulation. However, the Berlin Process has been more influential. The Berlin Process was able to combine the strengths of these other efforts in order to reach their mutual objective of increased regional cooperation. In addition, the Berlin Process also benefited the EU enlargement process. The SAP succeeded to promote certain norms, but to most extent has failed to stimulate regional cooperation among the Western Balkan countries. The Berlin Process has thereby been a welcome contribution. This was also recognised by EU member state leaders and Western Balkan leaders alike. The last summit took place in Poznan in 2019. This conference concluded with the observation of the participating states that the Berlin Process had delivered in promoting both economic and socio-economic integration.[171]

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[171] The Berlin Process Information and Resource Centre, 'Western Balkans Summit Poznań. Chair's conclusions' (Version July 15, 2019), https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/chairs_conclusions.pdf (Accessed on January 15, 2020).

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to analyse the role of the Berlin Process in the efforts of EU member states to promote regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. The analysis rested on the explanatory power of three different modes of social action; the logic of consequences, the logic of appropriateness, and the logic of action. These were used to explain why and how EU member states have promoted regional cooperation through the Berlin Process. Multiple insights emerge from this analysis.

First, the historic approach of the EU towards the Balkans mainly stemmed from the logic of consequences. An unstable Balkans posed a threat to the EU member states. From the nineties onwards, the EU has promoted regional cooperation among the Western Balkan countries to enhance stability. The EU thereby relied on the rational conditionality approach. Through several initiatives, the Western Balkan countries were promised rewards – and possibly EU membership – in exchange for regional cooperation. Yet, this approach stimulated competition rather than cooperation.

In contrast, the Berlin Process to most extent originated from the logic of appropriateness. EU member states promoted regional cooperation based on a desire to help the Western Balkan states advance on their path to the EU. Thereby, they mostly relied on the mechanisms of persuasion and socialization. With powerful arguments, based on their own experience with successful integration or because of their normative character, EU member were able to motivate the Western Balkan countries to adopt proposals such as the RCYO and a declaration to end disputes. To a lesser extent, the Berlin Process also reflected the rational interests of EU member states.

Thirdly, the Berlin Process approach has provided added value to the efforts of EU member states to promote regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. It was able to optimize existing regional efforts, but also succeeded in emulating regional cooperation practices. Through the platform, the Western Balkan leaders adopted economic integration as a solution for domestic problems; which resulted in the MAP-REA. The Berlin Process has thereby also optimized the functioning of the EU enlargement process, which to most extent has not been able to emulate regional cooperation practices.

The Berlin Process therefore distinguishes itself as the most influential EU member state-owned platform to promote regional cooperation with the purpose of enhancing the EU

integration of the Western Balkans. This conclusion can help us understand the historical debate that was mentioned in the introduction. First, it shows that the willingness to include the Western Balkans in the EU still exists. During the Summits, EU member states such as Germany and France – but also others – reconfirmed many times their support for enlargement. More importantly, it is not soon enough to declare that there is no future for regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. The Berlin Process clearly shows the engagement of Western Balkan states to enhance cross-border cooperation.

Lastly, this conclusion gives insight in the reason why EU member states decided to interact with the Western Balkans outside the framework of the enlargement process. The literature has thus far only focussed on the role of the EU in promoting regional cooperation. The Berlin Process shows that the legitimacy to spread regional cooperation practices is not only an attribute of the EU, but also of individual member states. Further research is therefore needed to study the effect of the EU member states on promoting regional cooperation in international politics. Such a study could, for example, focus on effect of EU owned initiatives on accelerating the EU enlargement process.

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