

## **Abstract**

The European Union, when approaching its neighborhood, is faced with a foreign policy dilemma: democratization, or stability. This trade-off, which is a complex balance, is a particularly understudied field, especially in the EU enlargement scholarship. The countries waiting to join the EU often seem to be pushed in the direction of stability, at the expense of true democratization. This paper aims to apply the theory of stabilitocracy, one explaining that trend, on the official EU enlargement monitoring reports, as the theory has not yet been tested empirically that way. Focusing on the cases of Serbia and Montenegro, and utilizing qualitative content analysis, this paper finds that stability and democratization are intertwined as accession criteria, whereas the countries' progress is often put in the context of how internally stable they are, how much they contribute to regional cooperation and stability, and most importantly, how much they are geopolitically aligned with the EU.

Keywords: stabilitocracy, stability, democratization, enlargement, geopolitics