

Keeping up with the Neighbours

Using Bulgarian Advocacy in Serbian EU
Accession

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It is sensible to presume that having an insider advocate on your behalf is beneficial in the workings of everyday life. This would seem most appropriate if one were trying to obtain membership into an exclusive club or organisation. On a larger scale this dictum is especially true in the process of accession to the European Union. The 2007 accession of Bulgaria and the upcoming accession for Serbia are prime examples of the importance of ‘insider advocacy’ when making a nation’s case for membership in the ‘European club’. Why is having an ‘insider advocate’ so vital to the success of a state’s accession process, and what are the consequences of progressing without another state to advocate for your inclusion? A state serving as an ‘insider advocate’ for a candidate can help to counteract the potential subjectivity of the accession under the Copenhagen criteria and the *acquis*, and can effectively nullify the concept of a Member State veto of membership through lobbying efforts, information sharing and bilateral assistance. In contrast to its neighbour Romania, Bulgaria had a more difficult path to European integration because it lacked such a state as its advocate and thus had to move forward into the accession process independently. This lack of an advocate allowed for additional conditions to be applied exclusively to Bulgaria’s accession negotiations, and allowed for negative Western European perspectives regarding the Balkans to pervade the process and cloud Member State visions of positive growth and change in Bulgaria. Bulgaria’s disadvantage, however, may prove to be to Serbia’s benefit. Bulgaria has recently announced that it will support Serbian accession to the European Union, allowing Serbia the advantage of having a state as an advocate to avoid the imposition of unfair conditions and dilute the negative image of Serbia’s history in favour of acknowledgement of its future in Europe. This paper examines the dynamics of ‘insider advocacy’ and applies the lessons to be learned to policy recommendations to be used in developing Serbia’s accession strategy.

Nowhere in EU expansion literature is the impact of having a state ‘insider advocate’ explored despite much having been written about the Eastern expansion of the European Union during the 21st century. Such literature has discussed the importance of the new institutional demands and pre-accession processes implemented during the enlargement, as well as the use of European policy to stabilize and restructure Europeⁱ. It assesses the role of European identity, policy paradigms in the enlargementsⁱⁱ, and the theoretical approaches associated with European Union enlargement to the east, including the role of political and geopolitical factorsⁱⁱⁱ. The literature also examines the process and procedures behind the Association Agreements, as well as examining future options for alternative forms of integration, beyond the strategy used in ‘Agenda 2000’^{iv}. Others have written about specific cases of enlargement and the political and economic processes therein. However, none of the existing literature mentions the importance of the advocacy of a Member State within the EU on behalf of a candidate country.

The importance of an ‘insider advocate’ has been illustrated throughout each round of enlargement, in both a positive and negative capacity, as will be examined in the first section of this paper. The very nature of the accession process makes having an advocate highly beneficial. The pre-accession process, as well as the accession negotiation process, is characterized by a series of internal reforms that must take place before final negotiations can be closed. Additionally, the Copenhagen criteria, that helps to determine whether a state is allowed to gain membership in the EU, is highly subjective and unanimous voting by all Member States is required for a Candidate to join the EU. The subjectivity of the criteria exposed the ‘merit-based’ conditionality of accession as being clouded in ambiguity. Thus, having an advocate on the inside to promote a candidate country’s ability to fulfil the criteria and the requirements of the *acquis* can be a ‘make or break’ element of the granting final membership. The second section of

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this paper highlights the importance of ‘insider advocacy’ by examining the pitfalls and challenges of Bulgaria’s accession process without an advocate. Third, it will analyze the future prospects for Serbia’s integration process, the subjectivity of additional criteria added specifically to that process, and the role that Bulgaria can play as an ‘insider advocate’ on Serbia’s behalf. Finally, this paper will make policy recommendations aimed at further developing the diplomatic and economic ties between Bulgaria and Serbia in order for Bulgaria to begin to successfully lobby for Serbia’s EU membership within European institutions, and to provide necessary exchanges of information to aid in Serbia’s course toward the European Union.

Insider Advocacy: From Britain to the Baltic

The use of advocacy in various stages of the accession process proves to be a key element of the success of a country reaching the status of candidate country and throughout the accession process, through to the actual extension of membership. The 2004 and 2007 rounds of enlargement clearly illustrated this, but also impacted early rounds of accession as well. Advocacy, both in support and in protest of a country’s membership in the European Union has proven to be extremely effective in many cases. Greece, for example, played a key role in Cyprus’ accession to the EU in 2004, a role they took on partially to help appease the Greek-Turkish conflict in the country: If Cyprus joined the European Union Greece could be seen as a regional powerhouse. Additionally, if Greece went further and advocated for the accession of Turkey (as they began to in 1999) the relations between Ankara and Athens, with regard to Cyprus, would become more ‘Europeanized’^v. Greece is the single largest contributor of foreign direct investment, making up 24% of the level of FDI up to the year 2009. The next largest EU contributor to FDI is the UK, making up about 11%^{vi}.

German backing for Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia played a significant role in the success of these states’ integration processes. Beginning in 1995, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl attempted to use his influence on the European Council to persuade the EU member states that Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic should join in accession negotiations^{vii}. The economic, political and security benefits of these countries’ accessions to the EU were of great benefit for Germany; with Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic in the EU, German trading with those countries would be simplified and more open. While Kohl’s initial recommendations did not bring about immediate negotiations, they helped begin the discussion as to where and when accession could begin. Ultimately, the EU invited the countries Germany supported first to begin negotiations for membership, with Slovakia and Slovenia following shortly after^{viii}. During this period, Germany contributed significantly to Foreign Direct Investment levels in these three states, becoming the largest source of foreign investment in Czech Republic and Poland^{ix}. Between 1996 and 2000, Germany directed a total of 5.1 billion Euro to Poland, 3.9 billion Euro to Hungary, and 3.5 billion Euro to the Czech Republic^x. In Slovenia, 84% of total FDI inflows for the year 2000 came from the European Union, with Austria holding 45.6%^{xi}. For Slovakia, Germany makes up 22% of FDI inflows, followed by Austria with 20% of the total and the Netherlands with 15%^{xii}. Similarly, France supported Romania due to the historical ties between the two countries formed during the Cold War, and Austria tends to lend its support to Hungary because of historical ties from the Austro-Hungarian empire and business opportunities that could further flourish with Hungary as a member of the European Union^{xiii}. Germany and Austria contribute most to the FDI inflows in Hungary, contributing 22% and 10% of Hungary’s overall FDI inflows in 1997^{xiv}.

Sweden and Denmark played an important role in the successful accession of the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), providing bi-lateral assistance programs to the Baltics long before accession talks even began. In 1990, Denmark helped to start 872 projects in the Baltics through a bilateral assistance program, with a net worth of 2,256 billion Danish Krone and in 1992 Sweden, who had not yet become a member, signed an environmental protection agreement with the Baltic states as well as a 50 million dollar financial package intended back up the newly developed currencies in the region^{xv}. Denmark was the top source of FDI in Latvia in 1999, followed closely by Sweden and Finland^{xvi}. In Lithuania, contributed the most FDI, making up as much as 16.9% and 10.7% of total FDI in the country between 1995 and 1998^{xvii}; the two countries were also top sources of FDI inflows for Estonia between 1995 and 1999, providing up to 32.9% and 36.9% of Estonian FDI during the period^{xviii}. For the Nordic states, regional security relied upon EU enlargement into the Baltics to emerge out of the collapse of the Eastern Bloc: Sweden and Denmark witnessed the political, ethnic and economic instability that erupted in the Balkans and viewed enlargement as a way to prevent the same situation from emerging in the Baltics. Additionally, established EU members saw enlargement into the Baltic States as a way to establish links between the EU and Russia which could lead to greater cooperation on the continent^{xix}.

In its converse, a member state insider opposed to entry can have catastrophic effects on an accession application. In the 1960s Great Britain struggled from the effects of having advocates for their exclusion in what was then the European Economic Community (EEC). The post-war climate in Europe developed divergent foreign policies between Britain and their counterparts on the continent, the most divergent of these policies being between Britain and France. Britain sought a stronger alliance with the United States following the devastation of the war, while the French sought to eliminate international relationships that might lead to a reliance on other states, such as their reliance on Britain during the Second World War. French president Charles de Gaulle viewed the 'Anglo-Saxon domination in Europe' as a threat to French security. This perceived threat led de Gaulle to question the legitimacy of Britain's campaign for accession to the EEC. When British applications for EEC membership were submitted first in 1961 and then again in 1967, France acted unilaterally with its veto power to block British accession^{xx}. Despite Britain's financial and social stability, membership in the EEC remained out of reach because of the determination of the French to maintain French dominance in the EEC, as well as to prevent British membership from becoming a 'Trojan Horse' for U.S. influence. In their struggle against membership for Britain, France for a time at least prevented their Anglo neighbours from across the Channel from gaining a foothold in the EEC.

More recent examples of member state rejection of accession processes have been illustrated in two cases: Cyprus' blocking of Turkish accession and Greece's refusal to allow Macedonia to enter the accession process. In the case of Cyprus and Turkey, the Greek Cypriot government, while altogether fairly supportive of eventual membership for Turkey, took the stance that EU membership for Turkey must include provisions by which the divisions of the country can be addressed. Cypriot leaders view the accession process as a way to exert leverage over the government in Ankara, via their EU membership. Greek Cypriot leaders hope to place themselves in a greater position of power relative to the Turkish government and Turkish Cypriots, leading the Turks to realize the futility of their negotiation efforts and give up its claims over Cyprus in favour of their desire to join the EU^{xxi}.

In the case of Macedonia's struggle for accession, a name means everything. Greece, Macedonia's southern neighbour, believes that Macedonia's constitutional name, the Republic of

Macedonia, which was established after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, alluded to claims over territory within Greek borders, as well as historical and cultural claims exclusive to Greece. Greece refused to recognize Macedonia by its constitutional name, referring to it instead as 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' (FYR Macedonia). In 1994 Greece managed to convince the EU to initially not recognize the Republic of Macedonia. Negotiations between the countries, mediated by UN negotiators, have not produced a solution to the name crisis. In December of 2009, Greece's stance against Macedonia caused the European Council to postpone the discussions, which would have led to official negotiations between the EU and Macedonia. The European Council granted Macedonia candidate status, but Greece stands firm on its claims that it will veto Macedonian membership into the EU if FYR Macedonia continues to dismiss proposed solutions to the conflict^{xxii}.

Perhaps no country better understands the benefits that having an advocate during the accession process can bring than Bulgaria. During the lead up to its eventual accession to the EU in 2007, Bulgaria was the only country to lack the internal advocacy of a current member state of the European Union. In the 2004 and 2007 rounds of EU enlargement, the neighbours of the candidate countries internally advocated them (Germany for Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic; Sweden and Denmark for the Baltics; France for Romania; Greece for Cyprus.) Bulgaria lacked any such inside advocate^{xxiii}. The fundamental lack of support by member states created an accession process in which the European Council treated Bulgaria unfairly, subjected to additional criteria not applied to other candidates, and ultimately a three-year delay in its final membership. Bulgaria's experience of accession without internal support illustrates the importance of 'insider advocacy' in the process of accession to the European Union and makes Bulgaria an ideal advocate for Serbia in its progress towards EU membership.

Bulgaria Stands Alone: Complications and Consequences

Bulgaria, freed from communist rule shortly after the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the fall of the Berlin Wall, began its negotiations and diplomatic relationship with the European Union in 1989. After the signing of a Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU in 1990, Bulgaria progressed in its relationship with the EU enough for the two to sign an Association Agreement, which established the first true legal basis for Bulgaria's relationship with the European Union and interpreted major step forward in the preparations for accession. Unfortunately, however promising the association agreement seemed for Bulgaria's future aspirations in the European Union, the agreement itself had some courses for concern for Bulgaria. Firstly, the EU took a protectionist stance on trade aspects of the agreement, setting particularly high standards in trade liberalization as applied to goods in which Bulgaria might have a comparative advantage in relation to the EU member states, notably in the production of textiles, ferrous metals, wine and agricultural products. These products were left out of the trade liberalization aspects of the agreement altogether, which often became a problem in the negotiations of the agreement. At many points in the process the entire future of the agreement was dependent on minute disagreements about the so-called 'sensitive goods'^{xxiv}. Without an internal advocate, the EU largely ignored the economic and trade needs of Bulgaria and manipulated the requirements of the agreement to give member states a competitive edge.

A second set of problems arose for Bulgaria's future in the EU through restrictions on a special set of issues first laid out in Bulgaria's Association Agreement that were not applied to previous agreements for SEE states. The 'Bulgarian Clause' intended to protect ethnic minorities and ensure the integrity of a democratic system in Bulgaria; it provided that if there were any violation of human rights or democratic principles the agreement would be put into suspension.

As this clause did not appear in any of the other previously issued Agreements, fears arose that perhaps Bulgaria could face other similar types of discrimination as it moved through the accession process^{xxv}. In 1995 Bulgaria, along with its Balkan neighbour Romania, became the only EU associate members not included in the Schengen Agreement allowing for free travel. European Union members feared that allowing the two countries into the Schengen area would lead to problems with illegal immigration and border controls, particularly regarding the possibility that Bulgarian Roma would spread into Western Europe, or that poor immigrants would flood to European Union countries in waves. Many Bulgarian leaders saw this exclusion as a sign from the EU that the current EU member states did not have any interest in Bulgarian accession and that they simply viewed them as ‘third-rate Europeans’^{xxvi}.

The delay in the implementation of the Interim Agreement for trade liberalization caused Bulgaria concern for its future with the European Union. The full ratification process for the Association Agreement takes a great deal of time, as each individual member state, as well as Bulgaria had to ratify the multi-dimensional treaty. In order to begin trade liberalization within Agreement states in the meanwhile, the EU implements an interim trade agreement. Due to an unrelated internal EU conflict regarding anti-dumping competencies, which happened to be linked legislatively to the consideration of the Bulgarian interim trade agreement, the liberalization of trade in Bulgaria was delayed by nearly a year. Frustrated by the delay in progress toward a more liberalized economy and thus progress toward the EU, the former president of Bulgaria, Zhelyu Zhelev declared ‘Bulgaria has become a hostage in disputes between European Community ‘liberals’ and ‘protectionists’. The EU, realizing the damage that had been done, later determined that quotas would be reduced on Bulgaria to bring them into the same level of trade liberalization achieved by other associated states during the time of the delay of the interim agreement^{xxvii}.

It was only at the European Council meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark in June of 1993 when a clear course for accession was set, through the establishment of the Copenhagen criteria. The criteria, which outlines the necessary political and economic conditions that must be fulfilled before accession may take place, created a set of standards by which to monitor the progress and preparedness for membership of associated states in CEE. The establishment of the Copenhagen criteria largely eliminated some of the restrictions placed on Bulgaria in the Association Agreement (including the ‘Bulgaria Clause’) and led to a greater show of cooperation between the EU and Bulgaria. Following the meetings at Copenhagen, Bulgaria submitted for consideration their application for membership in 1995. Full accession negotiations for Bulgaria began with the opening of six chapters of the *acquis* in March 2000. The beginning of full accession negotiations helped to propel Bulgaria toward political, economic and social reforms that further contributed to a transition to a peaceful democratic government. But accession did not always progress smoothly. Problems arose throughout the accession process, typically surrounding factors either viewed as discriminatory on the part of the European Union, or which were outside of the direct control of Bulgarian authorities. It is in these elements of the accession process in particular where having an internal advocate to stand with Bulgaria and demand even-handed treatment would be beneficial.

In addition to meeting the Copenhagen Criteria and accomplishing the legal goals set out in the *acquis*, the European Union subjected Bulgaria to an additional requirement imposed in order for accession to take place: the closure of the Kozloduy nuclear power plant. The topic caused strain on both the relationship between the EU and Bulgarian leaders, as well as on public support for European integration. Kozloduy was Bulgaria’s sole nuclear power facility and made

significant contributions to the country's energy supply. Nuclear power is particularly attractive in Bulgaria because of a lack of natural resources to produce power, and because a nuclear system allowed Bulgaria to bring in about \$100 million every year through exporting electricity throughout the region. Bulgaria maintained that they updated and modernized the nuclear reactors throughout the 1990s using international funding and support, bringing them into full compliance with international nuclear regulations. The facility provided an inexpensive form of fuel in comparison to importing natural gas from Russia, which meant that closure would lead to an increase in fuel costs for consumers and could lead to social dissatisfaction^{xxviii}. The European Union, however, viewed Kozloduy as a hazard. The reactors at the plant were the same variety used at the Chernobyl reactor and the condition to close them thus became a key condition put in place by the EU in the 1999 negotiations leading up to the Helsinki Council invitation for Bulgarian membership, negotiated in March of 2000^{xxix}.

Bulgarian leaders grew increasingly frustrated as EU continued to stress that accession negotiations would be contingent upon timely closure dates being established for the plant. In 1999 Prime Minister Ivan Kostov stated that the EU conditionality for nuclear safety and standards for nuclear facilities, a requirement not set out in the Copenhagen criteria or the *acquis* (nuclear standards were handled by policies in place in individual member states), was a 'meaningless diktat' and popular opinion viewed the conditionality as discriminatory toward Bulgaria. The European Union, at the same time, encouraged Bulgaria to reform its economic structures and move further toward a market economy, which could be competitive in the European Common Market, an element negatively impacted by the investment that had to be put into closing the Kozloduy reactors. Additionally, the European Council gave greater consideration to other candidates for their nuclear structures and offered more agreeable negotiations regarding nuclear policy. Despite the public outcry and push-back by Bulgarian leaders, after the European Union applied increased pressure to comply Bulgaria eventually conceded to the conditionality and agreed to shutter two of the four reactors in 2003, with the other two to follow in 2006^{xxx}. In the case of the non-Copenhagen, non-*acquis* conditionality on the Kozloduy power plant, internal advocacy may have been able to provide backing for a more level-handed approach to the closure scheme, or may have helped to eliminate this unnecessary conditionality altogether, which may have helped the more vital aspects of the accession process move forward rather than being held up by the Kozloduy issue.

With the Copenhagen criteria being implemented during the 2004/2007 accession negotiations, the Council presented prospective member states with an extensive list of rules and regulations from the European Union and a tight timeframe to complete reforms. These factors create a situation where candidate states are under pressure to adapt their domestic political, social and economic systems to those recommended by the member states of the European Union. This process of 'Europeanization' involves a great deal of conditionality, creating a system by which the EU can influence states like Bulgaria to comply with their expectations by providing incentives such as financial assistance in exchange for sufficient levels of reform. Despite the creation of standards for consideration of candidate states, the laws, norms and institutions that make up the key components of the Copenhagen criteria still contain a degree of ambiguity to them. Many of the criteria cannot be quantified, and thus there still exists a significant level of discretion which is handled through the perspectives of the Commission and the Council as to whether rewards can be given for compliance or not. This creates a system where there is not always a straightforward, non-political motivation driving the outcome of criteria assessment^{xxxi}. This element of subjectivity in the accession process makes having an

advocate on the inside remarkably beneficial. Without a member state to represent the interests and true progress being made within candidate countries, political motivations and member state hesitation may overrule their perceptions of progress and lead to delays in the accession process. demonstrated when Bulgaria was linked to the progress in its neighbour Romania, despite Bulgaria's comparative progress in economic, political and social reforms The European Council moved both countries away from the 2004 accession group and into a separate group of their own, to gain full membership in 2007, with conditionality that could be implemented to push membership back yet another year if the EU member states saw it as necessary^{xxxii}.

Unlike many of its neighbours, who had devolved into ethnic violence and regional disputes in efforts to resolve the nationalistic conflicts arising after the fall of communism, Bulgaria peacefully resolved the disputes between ethnic groups and became a regional leader in providing stability. Bulgaria served as a model for other post-communist states in their road to development and recovery from the damage left by the collapse of the Eastern bloc. Yet, despite Bulgaria's support for NATO during the conflict in Kosovo, its participation in regional stability and economic organizations, its movement to integrate its ethnic minorities (the Turks and the Roma) and the peace within its borders following the collapse of communism (aside from the protests during the 1996-97 economic crisis), Western Europe still inextricably linked Bulgaria to the image of the Balkans. This false linkage to the violent tendencies of the states around it is yet another example of a disadvantage that may have been overcome had Bulgaria had an internal advocate to serve as their voice in the European Union.

Bulgarian and Romanian Accession: A Comparison

The depth of the challenge of negotiating membership and completing the various aspects of accession without an advocate becomes even more apparent when Bulgaria's process is compared to that of the other 2007 accession state, Romania. Although the council bumped both state back to a later accession date than their Central European counterparts, who achieved full membership in 2004, Romania and Bulgaria were by no means equally prepared to join in 2007, nor did the two receive equal treatment in the lead up to accession. As is noted by Phinnemore^{xxxiii}, Noutcheva and Bechev^{xxxiv}, Dimitrova and Dragneva^{xxxv}, and Giatzidis^{xxxvi} the EU had a preference to work with states in groups rather than individually. Thus, the EU lumped Romania and Bulgaria together despite the fact that Romania frequently lagged behind Bulgaria in the accession process. From the beginning of the EU's relationship with Eastern Europe, Bulgaria was politically more stable than Romania. Despite problems between opposing parties in Bulgaria, by 1995 Bulgaria functioned democratically, even being characterised as having 'over-performed' democratically, through the implementation of a parliamentary framework and the allowance of dissent by academics^{xxxvii}. Romania, on the other hand underwent a violent regime change in 1989, with the 'trial' and brutal execution of Ceausescu, and the lack of any democratic groups arising on the national level. This led to the rise of Iliescu's regime. While allowing more personal liberties to citizens than the prior regime, Iliescu's government still treated opposition parties undemocratically, going so far as to use violent forms of vigilante justice against protesters.

By 1995, Romania in comparison to Bulgaria, lacked a strong political society and did not maintain a successfully functioning democracy. In 1995, no leader had achieved a position of power in the Romanian government without having been a career member of the Communist party^{xxxviii}, in comparison to Bulgaria's successful efforts toward integrating its Turkish minority into the political system. Romania's government ruled in coalition with a set of highly

nationalistic, xenophobic politicians, suppressing the Hungarian minority. Yet another example of the difference in preparedness for integration with the European Union came during the process of visa liberalisation. After meeting security requirements (including new passports and identification cards conformed to Schengen standards) and implementing policies to curb immigration, the European Council granted Bulgaria visa-free travel throughout EU beginning in April 2001. Romania did not fulfil these requirements until nearly a year later, with visa restrictions lifted in January 2002^{xxxix}. Additionally, only weeks before the opening of accession agreements in 1999, the Romanian government appeared on the verge of collapse, yet member states sidestepped this uncertainty and opened the accession negotiations. Only two days after the opening of accession negotiations at the Helsinki European Council the government of Romania collapsed^{xl}.

Economically, the 2002 European Commission Regular Report named Bulgaria as ‘a functioning market economy’ on its progress toward fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria and the *acquis*, and despite the economic downturn, the Bulgarian economy achieved a high degree of macroeconomic stability, which was important for future success in the EU’s Common Market^{xli}. The European Union declared Bulgaria to be a ‘functioning market economy’ in 2001. During the same year the Commission Regular Report for Romania issued a more negative view of their market conditions, stating that Romania had ‘continued to make progress towards being a functioning market economy, for which the prospects have improved...’ Further economic growth continued and progress toward economic stability moved forward, however the important macroeconomic conditions within the country were still at very high risk^{xlii}. In 2004 the EU only officially named Romania as a ‘fully functioning economy’, just weeks before the closure of accession negotiations.

In June of 2002, Bulgaria had opened all 30 accession chapters, and closed twenty, while Romania only closed 11 of the 30 chapters needed for accession^{xliii}. Furthermore, the Commission Report made note of areas where Romania still lagged behind in meeting accession criteria, including the failure to fulfil obligations to 27 of the accession chapters which had already been concluded. After Bulgaria closed all of the accession chapters in June of 2004, the EU, seeing that Romania lagged behind Bulgaria in the accession process, began to fear the prospect of breaking up the ‘membership bloc’. Waiting too long for Romania to complete negotiations, while moving Bulgaria forward would likely mean that Romania would wait until another group of candidates, Turkey and Croatia, closed their accession negotiation, which could take years. Despite the concerns raised by a number of EU Member States following the release of this less than impressive report, the Council indicated that it would proceed with the closure of negotiations during the Council meeting in mid-December. To facilitate this, the Council sought Commission-developed safeguard clauses, which allowed closure of accession negotiations without the full closure of the two chapters (Justice and Home Affairs and Competition). Therefore, the closure of negotiations and the endorsement of Romania by the European Council occurred without the political endorsement of the European Commission, due partially by strong lobbying by the French delegation, for reasons unrelated to Romania’s level of preparedness^{xliv}. This decision meant that the conditionality ‘policy’ of European integration, was essentially ignored in favour of treating Bulgaria and Romania as a bloc, regardless of Romania’s ability to fulfil the requirements of membership.

Romania also was not subject to additional requirements during the accession process, as Bulgaria was. The nuclear power sanction placed on Bulgaria (as well as on Slovakia, Slovenia, Czech Republic, and Lithuania) placed a major form of the state’s energy supplies, as well as

imposed heavy financial burdens. The EU did not impose the nuclear power sanction on Romania, nor were any other additional conditions added to their path toward membership. Additionally, Romania benefitted from over twice as much Foreign Direct Investment as Bulgaria, receiving \$263 billion in 1996 (compared to Bulgaria's \$109 billion), and a massive FDI of \$1137 billion in 2001 (when Bulgaria only drew in \$689 billion), making Romania the third highest recipient of FDI of all new member states^{xlv}. Using FDI as an indicator of EU support, clearly Romania attracted a greater deal of financing, despite its less favourable and unstable economic conditions compared to Bulgaria.

Together, additional conditionality requirements applied arbitrarily on Bulgaria outside of the requirements of the *acquis* and the Copenhagen criteria, paired with the negative image associated with the Balkans and the European Union's fear of embracing such a 'dark' and 'backward' region created a complicated and drawn out accession process for Bulgaria. These complications could have well been avoided had an internal advocate been available to mitigate the situation and work toward a negotiation of terms and a fuller understanding of Bulgaria's position in the region as a regional leader, a country with a modern history of peaceful, reform and where ethnic nationalism and violent repression had been avoided during anti-government protests in favour of the government peacefully agreeing to early elections. These marked political, economic and cultural differences, went unnoticed and in turn, ultimately led to the three year delay in full membership for Bulgaria after over a decade of work.

Serbia's Accession: Problems and Challenges

Bulgaria's misfortune, however, may make them the best EU member state to serve as an advocate for Serbia's accession process. In December 2010, Bulgaria's foreign minister pledged to work with the foreign minister from Greece to support Serbia's accession bid. Bulgaria began by calling on the European Union to establish a timeline for Serbia's entry into the EU, preferably to occur during the Greek EU presidency in early 2014, in order to encourage Serbia, and other countries in the region 'to reach tangible progress in the accession process within a feasible timetable, on the basis of a targeted road map'^{xlvi}. Bulgarian support for Serbian accession is not only significant because of the regional ties between the two states, but it also provides Serbia the benefits that come along with having an internal advocate. Bulgaria recognizes these benefits as being vital to a successful, swift integration process and to overcoming the challenges and stereotypes faced by Balkan states in particular.

Serbia's integration into the EU is a key component of the EU enlargement process in the Balkans as a whole. Serbia is the largest country in the region and is slowly developing into a regional economic force. Serbia's inability to deal with its history of violent nationalism however, will inevitably hold back the accession process. History has serious ramifications for the current political structures and events at play, and ignoring the role the past has had only exacerbates the problem and leads Serbia toward greater isolation.

Serbia's history of instability dates back to the collapse of the former Yugoslavia. The former Yugoslavia's went through a slow transformation, characterised by a non-democratic government, resistant to any serious reforms. The Milosevic regime was highly authoritarian and many of its political and economic structures function today, proving very difficult to reform and dismantle. Additionally, the political ideologies and policies of the Milosevic regime led to violent wars against Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. The violence between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo ended in Western intervention in the form of NATO airstrikes and an eventual EU rule of law mission in Kosovo. Throughout the past two decades the behaviour of Balkan governments disappointed the EU, even after Milosevic was forced out. Politicians have

time and time again disappointed the EU because leaders held such high hopes for the region to finally come out of its state of perpetual conflict. The high turnouts of members of the Serbian Radical Party during election cycles and the assassination of Prime Minister Dindic in 2003 by members of Serbian organized crime disappointed EU leaders. These events highlighted the state of tensions in Serbia: resistance to having an honest conversation about Serbia's violent history and its lack of movement toward cooperation with Europe. The 2008 election of Boris Tadic, however, brought about a more pro-European government and although the government still contains elements of Milosevic's former party, the hope of EU member states that perhaps the future of European Union accession for Serbia is becoming more optimistic^{xlvii}.

Before the European Union can expand into Serbia, however, two major issues must be dealt with: compliance with the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia and a solution to the Kosovo situation. Both of these issues will benefit greatly from internal advocacy for Serbia in the European Union: on the issue of the ICTY, an internal advocate could help to create a standard by which 'compliance' could be defined, giving a standard of measure to a rather subjective condition for accession. In the case of Kosovo, an internal advocate in the EU can serve two purposes: first, to ensure that the total resolution of the Kosovo situation is not made a requirement for full accession for Serbia, in addition to the already long list of requirements under the *acquis* and the added criteria of ICTY compliance. Secondly, an internal advocate will be critical to ensuring that the EU involvement in mediating the Serbia-Kosovo issue is done in a way that ensures that neither party feels unfairly treated. Any fear of bias by the EU could spell disaster for the future of EU enlargement in the region. The accession of both Serbia and Kosovo is an important part of the EU's future, as both are key players in the process of ensuring peace and security in the Balkans and creating a situation that will keep both states in play for future accession will be vital for the future of the EU and the region.

Serbia's compliance with the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia has been designated as a requirement for Serbia's accession to the European Union in addition to meeting the Copenhagen Criteria and the requirements of the *acquis*. The EU delegation from the Netherlands has been particularly staunch in its position on Serbia's compliance, using the ICTY condition to block Serbia's Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) and Interim Agreement until they felt that compliance was being achieved, which only came about after a long cycle of negotiation within the EU^{xlviii}. The arrest of Radovan Karadzic, the former president of the Republika Srpska helped to affirm Serbia's efforts toward compliance, but many EU members still hold reservations about the level of support for the tribunal coming out of Serbia. Ratko Mladic, the former Commander of the Bosnian Serb Army is still at large. His absence does not sit well with many leaders in the European Union, especially the Netherlands. Furthermore, the delay in accession negotiations because of 'non-compliance' with the ICTY frustrates the pro-European forces in Serbia because they feel it ignores the progress that has been made in the state, in favour of dwelling on current deficiencies^{xlix}.

The condition of ICTY compliance is perhaps the most prevalent source of frustration for Serbs who are hoping for accession to occur in the coming years. In polling carried out among Serbian citizens, 49% of Serbs surveyed believe that EU conditions cause the most setbacks in the accession process, and 86% of those believe that the ICTY conditionality to be the most controversial of those conditions¹. The EU community sees the Serbian government's work in finding Mladic and Goran Hadzic, another Serbian politician accused of war crimes, as being serious and truly intent on finding the war criminals. However, member states are still in the process of determining whether the Serbian government achieved 'full compliance', a process

highly subjective and lacks a clearly defined set of standards. The advantage that could be offered by an internal advocate in this instance is the ability of Bulgaria to give voice to Serbia's frustration with the loosely defined criteria for 'compliance' being applied as a blocking mechanism by member states and push for a standard definition of 'compliance' to be applied to the ICTY conditions for Serbian accession.

A second key issue with serious implications for Serbia's European Union aspirations is that of the status of Kosovo. Serbia and Montenegro recently divided successfully and without much violence or political tension, however, Kosovo's decision to declare independence from Serbia is a more politically fraught process. The long history of territorial battles in the Balkans indicates that a simple solution does not exist to the Kosovo issue, primarily because for centuries Kosovo has lay in Serbian territory, and the government in Belgrade shows desire to keep in that way. Part of the problem underlying the Kosovo issue is that for decades Serbs failed to recognize how ruthless their policies toward Kosovars actually were, treating the region as a type of colonial holding and the ethnic Albanian Kosovars in the region as second class citizens. This lack of acknowledgement of past policies makes it even more difficult for Serbia to recognize why Kosovo so vehemently claims its independence from Serbia^{li}. This failure to recognize the consequences of past behaviour and reconcile the past with the present poses a challenge for Serbia's negotiations with the European Union.

The Kosovo issue not only impacts the accession process, but also significantly affects future EU aspirations in the Balkans. The arguments made to validate the necessity of Serbian membership in the European Union (regional security, economic development and the continued democratization of former Communist states) can be applied to Kosovo and thus EU member states will in the future be working to develop Kosovo to the point where it is strong enough politically and economically to apply for membership and go through the accession process. However, if made a member of the European Union before Kosovo's accession process can begin, Serbia would foreseeably do everything in its power to block Kosovo from membership. This conflict poses a serious challenge to the EU's membership offer for Serbia. In the case of Kosovo's future in the EU, offering membership to Serbia creates a real potential for serious conflicts within the EU in the future, and would essentially place the EU's Kosovo policy in the hands of Serbian leaders, including recognition of Kosovo's independence as well as the mission of the EULEX mission in Kosovo. Additionally, assuming that Serbia refuses to change its stance on Kosovo, it is reasonable to assume that once a member of the EU, Serbia will attempt to use its position in the Commission, the European Parliament, and special summit meetings to attempt to influence EU Member States to reverse their stance on the independence of Kosovo, a change in policy that will be wholly unacceptable to the 22 member states who have already recognized Kosovo as an independent state^{lii}.

Complicating the Kosovo issue is the fact that member states do not want to discuss the issue anymore for fear that the European Union would find itself in another Cyprus-style situation. Because of the EU's hesitance, full recognition of Kosovo's independence by Serbia will likely remain an impossibility in the current generation of political leaders and thus, a solution to the issue must not be a condition for EU membership for Serbia, but also must not allow for Kosovo's future to be blocked by Serbia. However, an interim solution which could serve as a stepping stone for both Serbia's and Kosovo's movement toward the European Union should be a goal for the present EU negotiations. If the issue remains wholly unresolved a threat will remain of either internal or external violence in Serbia or between Serbia and Kosovo, particularly if the Kosovo issue is approached in a way that Serbia finds unacceptable. Without

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solving the issues surrounding Kosovo's independence Serbia cannot claim to function as a whole state or as a full economy, both of which affect its ability to join the EU under the Copenhagen Criteria for democracy and economic development. Additionally, surrounding states including Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina face similar territorial challenges and will likely look to an interim solution from Serbia-Kosovo as a guide.

The key to an interim solution to the Kosovo issue, and thus to European Union accession is through a shift in the Serbian national dialogue which takes a less hostile and more realistic stance toward the Kosovo issue. Serbian leaders must take steps to recognize the reality of the Kosovo situation, move forward from their state of embarrassment and anger over the failings of the past and move forward on a path that will set Serbia up for a prosperous future. Surely, letting go of Kosovo will not be an easy, nor should it be and the recognition by Serbia's neighbours of Kosovo's independence makes the prospect of regional cooperation hard to swallow. However, if Serbia can focus on developing a positive relationship with its neighbours in the region, despite their disagreement on Kosovo, and building prosperity through regional cooperation and partnerships, the solution to the Kosovo crisis may begin to take form^{liii}. It is through regional cooperation that Bulgaria can again have an impact as an 'internal advocate' for Serbia. If Serbia and Bulgaria can cooperate at the regional level, then Bulgaria can take the process made at that level to the European Union and use their position to influence other member states toward recognizing the progress made by Serbia. Additionally, by interacting at the regional level in attempts to bring about an interim solution to the Kosovo issue, Bulgaria can play an important role in the EU's mediation process between Serbia and Kosovo, bringing deeper insight from the region that other states may not be as able to provide.

A final element that may impact Serbia's ability to gain membership to the European Union is the strained history between the EU and Serbia, which dates back to the collapse of the former Yugoslavia. For years, citizens and leaders of the European Union watched the violence and chaos spread throughout the Balkans everyday on their home televisions. In the same way, Serbians observed rough patches faced by the growth of the European Union. Serbs also fell 'victim' to the power of the West during the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo, when Serbian Troops became NATO bombing targets. This 'victimisation' is not lost on Serbs, many of whom still live with the shame and anger from their defeat at the hands of the West and their loss of territories they had so long held.

Further complicating matters is the 'expansion fatigue' on the part of the European Union. Most European Union member states hold a fairly ambivalent attitude toward membership expansion into the Balkans, while several others focus on blocking future expansion in favour of dealing with the internal issues facing the EU in the past few years, including the PIIGS crisis, the global financial crisis, the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty passed in 2009, and the recent crises arising in the Middle East and North Africa. As issues from the inside continue to take priority, further expansion, particularly into South-eastern Europe and the Balkans, moves further and further down the EU's 'To Do List'.

Further expansion with 27 member states will undoubtedly be a much more complicated and drawn out process than it was with a smaller field of players during the last rounds of enlargement. The addition of 12 more voices in the European Union in 2004 and 2007 not only expanded the borders of the European Union; it also created more potential for opposition to expansion, especially considering Serbia's fairly recent history of violent nationalism. This time around, power politics became more entrenched in the process: unilateral blockages occurred more often in recent years than in the past (Cyprus blocking Turkey, Greece blocking

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Macedonia, and Slovenia blocking Croatia), primarily for bilateral reasons, as opposed to reasons that would impact the European Union as a whole. Coupled with the concessions made to allow Romania to close negotiations despite not having fulfilled qualifications for membership illustrate that the 'merit based' process for accession is subject to loose interpretation or even a complete ignorance of conditionality^{liv}. This further infusion of power politics into the EU accession process raises an important question: 'Is EU accession a merit-based process, or has it been so manipulated that it is now a wholly political process?'^{lv}

Herein lies another important role for an 'insider advocate' for Serbia. In order for accession to take place, bilateral issues must be separated from integration issues. In order for this separation to take place, the European Union must make the decision as to whether having the Balkans in their 'club' is in their own long-term, strategic interests as a whole. In order to build a mutual relationship of trust, Serbia and the European Union must be able to understand one another's intentions and strategic needs: Serbia needs assurance that the EU sees a future in the Balkans to be sure that the changes being made, some of which will inevitably prove painful, are not being made in vain^{lvi}. To facilitate this trust, the EU must establish a timeframe for accession processes, as was developed for the 2004 and 2007 rounds of enlargement. Additionally, a firm set of rules needs to be set and guaranteed not to be expanded further: the current requirement proposals are the fulfilment of the *acquis* and the Copenhagen Criteria. In order for Serbia to feel secure in its progress toward eventual membership, these requirements must not be expanded further. A key in this regard will be for the EU to leave a solution to the Kosovo issue out of the requirements for membership, while still attempting to broker a solution in the interim, unattached to the accession process.

Further factors beyond Bulgarian and Serbian control concern the geopolitical position in which the two states found themselves during the accession process. Certainly their location in the Balkans can be considered as a detrimental factor for accession, with an assortment of unsavoury neighbours, including the states of the former Yugoslavia (of which Serbia was a part) where multiple armed conflicts throughout the 1990s and early 2000s raged. Because of their position in the Balkans, culturally, religiously, historically and geographically distant from the rest of Europe, Bulgaria and Serbia lacked and continue to lack the types of regional backing that were extended to the states of Central Europe (Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic). However, the positioning of Bulgaria and Serbia in the Balkans and the factors that set them apart from their neighbours can also be viewed as a positive development for European Union affairs in the region.

Perhaps the greatest non-criteria-based challenge faced by Bulgaria during the accession process was overcoming the stereotypes associated with the states of the Balkans. The generalization of all Balkan states as being violent and nationalistic damaged Bulgaria's image among EU member states: the overall perception of the region is one of violent, nationalistic populations who have no qualms about using war as a means of dealing with ethnic nationalism, an image that is viewed as 'un-European' in a post-World War II Europe. This type of identity politics frames the Balkan states as an 'other', allowing for easier distinction between Central European states and the states of the Balkans. The construction of this type of 'other' in the Balkans as compared to the rest of CEE states was helpful for states like Poland and Hungary in differentiating themselves from the region and arguing for their place in Western Europe for their accession negotiations, but was detrimental to the efforts of Bulgaria in establishing themselves as a peaceful, democratic state prepared for the process of accession^{lvii}. In this regard there

existed a false dichotomy between ‘Eastern Europe’ and ‘Central Europe’, much in the same way as a perceived differentiation between ‘Western Europe’ and the ‘Balkans’ exists.

The Western view of the Balkans as being warring, violent and unruly had taken root as early as the years following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, when each of the three major nations, Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia, attempted to claim greater amounts of land for themselves. The hunger for further territorial advancement often led to the use of extremely violent force at a level with shocked Western Europeans. Since this period, the Balkans have been in a constant state of change and transition, which frequently leads to instability and eventually into war, as was seen most recently in Bosnia and in Kosovo. The breakout of the First World War in Sarajevo did not help improve the Balkans image coming into the 20th Century, only further solidifying the idea that the Balkans was a place of untamed violence. In the past century, the word ‘Balkan’ has become synonymous with ‘backwardness’ and holds a highly negative connotation associated with the primitive and the barbarian, and with values mainly held by Orthodox peoples^{lviii}.

Because of the occurrence of both Orthodox religion and violence in the Balkans, many in the Christian West view the two as being inextricably connected; Western European Christianity views Orthodoxy as being contrary to the values and norms of Western civilization, and the EU by proxy. To be sure, if a line needed to be drawn to determine where Europe’s borders are and who is ‘European’ and who is not, it could be drawn between the Judeo-Christian/Roman Catholic West and the Orthodox Christian East. Religious, cultural and political perceptions are all lumped into one common sense of what is ‘Balkan’, and before religion and culture can be appreciated for what they are independently, the political aspect becomes the dominant feature in the ‘Balkan’ stereotype and pervades the true identity of the other two elements^{lix}.

Adding to the negative connotation associated with the term ‘Balkans’, are the arguments made by Robert Kaplan in his book ‘Balkan Ghosts’ in which he argues that heightened ethnic tensions in the Balkan region may have helped to inspire Hitler’s anti-Slavism and the intensity of its hatred: “Among the flophouses of Vienna, a breeding ground for ethnic resentments close to the southern Slavic world, Hitler learned to hate so infectiously”^{lx}. Kaplan also connects modern terrorism in the Middle East to the earliest forms of modern terrorism which he claims developed first in Bulgaria, with the founding of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO) which committed horrific acts of violence toward innocent civilians in their efforts to regain territory taken from Bulgaria by Greece and Yugoslavia following the Second Balkan War^{lxi}. The view of the Balkans today in comparison to Western Europe can be seen as having two divergent elements: Geographically the Balkans are ‘European’, but their deep history of conflict and ethnic turmoil showcase the darkest elements of society which have long come to pass in the West.

In the years following the collapse of Communism in the Eastern Bloc and the movement toward European Union accession for former Communist states, yet another dichotomy began to develop between ‘Central Europe’ and ‘Eastern Europe’, or the Balkans. The division of the former Communist states into two regions, with one being viewed more positively than the other was as deeply rooted in history as past divisions between the ‘West’ and ‘East’, but rather was more based on Western perceptions of the ability for the regions to overcome their Communist pasts.

In the Balkans, the leaders of post-communist governments failed to transform their economies and implement democracy as well as those in Central Europe. In Bulgaria, this could

be seen in the failure of the socialist government in the early 1990s to develop economic reforms to overcome a massive economic crisis and a fundamental lack of democratic reforms which helped corruption thrive and deepen the impacts of the financial crisis on the middle class and poor. The wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia during this period helped to further emphasize the perception of the 'warlike' and 'uncivilised' nature of the Balkans, rife with intolerant nationalism. Additionally, the legacy of communist rule in the Balkans was much more firmly held than in Central Europe, and this hold on the legacy came with the baggage of the former regime: political centralization, party control of state agencies, a command economy, and a ban on private enterprise and the silencing of dissent. Bulgaria, which held onto a Socialist government for nearly a decade after the fall of Communism, was seen as one of the most 'orthodox' Communist regimes and thus was even further characterised as being stuck in its past without a chance for escape. The states of the Balkans were seen as being so deeply entrenched in Communism that they simply had to hold onto the political and economic restrictions they had grown accustomed to, despite the negative impact it had on their development^{lxii}.

In comparison, the states of 'Central Europe' (namely Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia) were seen as having a greater success in overturning the remnants of their collapsed Communist societies, primarily because they had previous experiences with democratic regimes and market economies in their histories to fall back on for guidance. The ability to draw on historical knowledge allowed for the governments and economies in Central Europe to develop without the ethnic and nationalistic tensions that erupted in the Balkans. Unlike the Balkans, where political elites had been able to successfully manipulate political agendas by using ethno-nationalistic fervour, Central Europe was able to re-establish much of their old democratic political structure in ways that allowed for proper reforms to take place, and while they were by no means at the same level of economic and political development as the European Union in the run up to their accession, the states of Central Europe were ultimately seen as less of a threat for corruption and organized crime which had seemingly pervaded numerous facets of society in the Balkans^{lxiii}.

A final, more subjective, challenge faced by Serbia in its accession is one similar to that faced by Bulgaria nearly a decade ago: the false dichotomy dividing the 'Western Balkans' from the rest of South-eastern Europe. Just as the false dichotomy between 'Western Europe' and 'Eastern Europe' and 'Central Europe' and 'Eastern Europe' faced by Bulgaria, scholars and politicians have attempted to divide Serbia and the other states of the former Yugoslavia into a regional grouping they call the 'Western Balkans', as opposed to the other Balkan states, such as Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia. The differentiation between the two regions seems to lie in the events of recent history: Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovenia have all found a route out of the 'Balkan tradition' of ethnic conflict, violence and civil unrest and have worked their way into the institutions of the Euro-Atlantic structure, namely the European Union and NATO^{lxiv}. The 'Western Balkans' (typically considered as being made up of the former Yugoslavia, minus Slovenia) however, have continually faced challenges from ethnic nationalism, violence and civil unrest which have led to multiple wars throughout the past twenty years. Authoritarian government structures and Serbian nationalism in particular have predominantly been seen as the causes of the violence that erupted in the protests against Milosevic and the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo. As such, for many Serbia and the 'Western Balkans' are inextricably linked to elements of society which have long been eradicated in Western Europe and have even ceased to prevail in the states of the 'Balkans' which have successfully integrated themselves with the West in an irreversible course toward stability and prosperity.

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Serbia's challenge in breaking down this dichotomy will be to assert itself as a reformed state, set on a course toward peaceful resolution of issues and the elimination of ethnic nationalism as a part of its identity, as well as a dedicated orientation toward the values held by the European Union, mainly peace and democratic governance. Only when Serbia can illustrate its shift in national identity away from regional domination, violent nationalism and resistance to the West will the 'Western Balkans/Balkans' dichotomy be dissolved in favour of a more equitable and less discriminatory nomenclature. However, this shift in national identity faces a struggle within Serbian borders, where opponents of EU membership emphasize the idea of an 'imperilled national identity' and the gap between the Orthodox view of the world and the Western Judeo-Christian view held by most states in the European Union^{lxv}. For these opponents, the dichotomy serves as a defence against the intrusion of the 'West' into Serbian affairs and helps to establish a platform upon which 'Europeanisation' can be rejected in favour of retaining the Serbian national identity which has prevailed for centuries.

Policy Recommendations: A History of Conflict, a Future of Alliance

Bulgaria's commitment to Serbia's accession to the EU exemplifies the kind of dedication that South-eastern European EU Member States have to expanding the EU's borders to every corner of the continent and bringing with it stability, security and prosperity. But Bulgaria's relationship with Serbia is not without its own share of tension. Relations between the two states have been tenuous during multiple periods in history. In the medieval period, Serbs invaded Bulgaria, sparking a war between the Ottomans and the Serbs to determine who would control the territory. By the end of the conflict, the Serbs had been defeated and Bulgaria (along with defeated Serbia) lost its independence and became part of the Ottoman Empire. During the Congress of Berlin in 1878, a meeting to reorganize the Balkans after the decline of the Ottoman Empire, part of Bulgaria's territory was reassigned to Serbia, despite the fact that Bulgaria was not allowed to be party to the negotiations at the demands of the Russians. Due to this decrease in territory, several Bulgarian industries faced a steep decline as more of the productive and resource-heavy areas were those which were handed over to the Serbs^{lxvi}.

Tumult between the two countries again arose in the 20th century: in the Second Balkan War, the Bulgarian army attacked its former allies in Serbia and Greece because of dissatisfaction with the territory negotiations carried out after the end of the First Balkan War only months earlier, a war that Bulgaria ended up losing. After this humiliating loss, Bulgaria again lost territory, this time in Macedonia, because of Serbian refusals to give up additional land. The two states fought on opposite sides during World War I, Bulgaria siding with the Central Powers and Serbia with the Allies, ending in Bulgaria facing an embarrassing defeat and yet another loss of large parcels of land in their defeat. World War II saw the two states as adversaries once again: Yugoslavia, of which Serbia was a republic, sided with the Allied forces, while Bulgaria joined the Axis powers after a brief period of neutrality. During the initial stages of the War, Bulgaria occupied large areas of Yugoslavia, including the ever-disputed territory in Macedonia. Yet after another embarrassing defeat, this time at the hands of the Soviet Union, and a governmental overthrow, the Bulgarians joined the Allied powers, and thus Yugoslavia, for the remainder of the War^{lxvii}.

In the era spanning from the late stages of World War II, Bulgarian-Serbian relations were relatively positive, with no outright tensions emerging until 1997, when a new government came to power in Bulgaria. The new government, which had overthrown a Socialist regime in favour of further reforms and democratization, quickly became one of the greatest critics of the Milosevic regime. In response, the Milosevic government began to criticise Bulgaria as a traitor

of Balkan people and a servant of the West. Furthermore, attempts by Bulgaria to help resolve the Kosovo crisis prior to 1999 were repeatedly rejected by the Serbian government. Tensions came to a head in 1999 when Bulgaria assisted NATO forces in their airstrike campaign against Serbia in the Kosovo conflict^{lxviii}. To Serbia, this was an act of complete betrayal: rather than remain neutral and allow the West to act without regional support, Bulgaria chose to align with the West in a campaign against its Balkan neighbour.

The fall of Milosevic's government in 2000 improved relations between the two, but when Bulgaria recognized the independence of Kosovo in March of 2008, tensions began to build once again. The announcement was met with hostility in Belgrade, where Serbia's Foreign Minister noted that recognition of the 'illegal state' would mean that states such as Bulgaria 'cannot count on good relations' with Serbia^{lxix}. According to the 2009 European Commission Report, however, relations between Bulgaria and Serbia have begun to improve, with Bulgaria providing assistance to Serbia during its recent gas crisis and the two countries signing a number of bilateral agreements. This improvement in relations is only further validated by Bulgaria's decision to support Serbia's accession goals. As Serbia moves toward minimizing nationalist sentiment and transitioning away from an inward-oriented foreign policy driven by the idea of a 'Greater Serbia' and directing its course toward a dialogue with Europe and the Euro-Atlantic structures with the help of Bulgaria, the remaining tensions between Bulgaria and Serbia should begin to fade and an even stronger relationship will emerge.

An important next step in Bulgarian-Serbian relations to facilitate this partnership and advance Serbia's progress toward European Union accession is to strengthen the ties between the two states through regional cooperation organizations, bilateral action and the exchange of experiential information from Bulgarian leaders to their counterparts in Serbia. With an increased level of interaction at the regional level as well as through the development of a bilateral dialogue on the pitfalls of the accession process in the Balkans, Bulgaria and Serbia can begin to develop a successful EU membership campaign for Serbia featuring 'insider advocacy' from Bulgaria within the EU, which would ideally create a definitive roadmap for Serbian accession, including a timeline and a finalized, standard set of requirements for its accession.

Both Bulgaria and Serbia are full members of the South-East European Cooperation Process, the Regional Cooperation Council, and the Energy Community Treaty. Additionally, Serbia is a member of the Central European Free Trade Agreement, of which Bulgaria was a member until it became a Member State in the European Union in 2007. Membership in the South-East European Cooperation Process and the Regional Cooperation Council are among the most important bonds that these two states can share with regard to strengthening Serbia's position relative to other potential candidate countries and developing an economic and political structure which will meet the requirements of the *acquis* and the Copenhagen Criteria. The South-East European Cooperation Process during the 2011-2013 period has set a series of goals which are in line with those needed for a successful completion of the EU accession process, in areas including economic and social development, energy and infrastructure, justice and home affairs, security cooperation, building human capital and parliamentary cooperation^{lxx}. With both Bulgaria and Serbia actively participating in the Process, Bulgaria can further strengthen its ties to Serbia through the organization and help to ensure that Serbian leaders are provided with the support they need to reach a successful outcome in the SEECP, and thus on their road to the European Union. Additionally, the SEECP provides a way for Serbia to begin to build better relationships with its neighbours, relationships that have been strained over the past two decades through the collapse of the former Yugoslavia, the Milosevic regime, and the wars in Bosnia

Herzegovina and Kosovo. The development of such relationships will be an important aspect of the accession process as outlined in the yearly European Commission reports issued on candidate and potential candidate countries.

Participation in the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), an organization which operates under the SEECP, is beneficial to the Bulgaria-Serbia relationship as it develops a framework for regional cooperation in South-East Europe and aims to support European and Euro-Atlantic integration for countries hoping to begin the accession process. The RCC works to represent the region, provide for regional leadership and ‘provide a regional perspective in donor assistance’ primarily through the EU’s Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) programme. The RCC aims to coordinate projects between SEE States and help give these projects a regional character which will benefit every member and develop a political climate in the region which will allow for the implementation of such projects. The RCC works under the same priority areas as the SEECP and builds relationships with stakeholders and actors in those areas to facilitate the necessary action: this includes governments, international organizations, international financial institutions, other regional organizations and the private sector^{lxxi}. Through the RCC, Bulgaria can use its position as a current EU Member State both within the RCC, where it can share its experiences and the lessons it took away from its EU accession process and build relationships that can go on to benefit Serbia’s process; as well as in the EU, where it can use the knowledge and experiences from the RCC and its projects to lend credibility to Serbia’s progress toward the EU accession process.

The Energy Community Treaty (ECT) serves to not only link Serbia to one Member State, Bulgaria, but to the EU as a whole. The ECT commits the Contracting Parties, of which Serbia is a member to ‘implementing the relevant areas of the *acquis communautaire*, develop an adequate regulatory framework, and to liberalise their energy markets in line with the *acquis* under the Treaty’, including electricity, gas, environment, and renewable energy. These Contracting Parties also pledge to implement legislation regarding security of their energy supplies and energy efficiency^{lxxii}. The ECT extends from the European Union into South-East Europe and helps to create a stable climate for environmental investment based on EU criteria, and Serbia’s participation in the ECT will further benefit its accession process. Having Bulgaria involved in this Treaty as a member of the European Union creates one more arena where the two can cooperate and where Serbia’s preparedness for EU accession can be demonstrated.

Finally, Serbia’s membership in the Central European Free Trade Agreement will continue to benefit its progress toward European Integration. If Serbia and the other signatories of the CEFTA can continue to work together to develop their economies, Serbia’s economic progress within that body can help to serve as a roadmap for eventually meeting the economic requirements for EU accession. Additionally, Bulgaria may be able to provide some guidance on how to best utilize membership in the CEFTA to Serbia’s advantage, given their past experiences in both the CEFTA and in the EU accession process. The CEFTA also provides a market structure similar to the EU’s Common Market, which will be beneficial to proving that Serbia’s economy is prepared to take on the requirements of the Common Market in the future.

Serbia’s ability to learn from Bulgaria’s experience on the road to the EU, a willingness of both parties to use regional and bilateral cooperation to strengthen their relationship and cooperation in Serbia’s bid for the EU, and Bulgaria’s ability to help turn the EU conversation toward potential accession for Serbia can have an immensely influential effect on the future of Serbia in the European Union. Bulgarian ‘insider advocacy’ for Serbia can play four key roles in Serbia’s integration process. Firstly, Bulgaria can serve as a ‘mentor’ for Serbian leaders,

exchanging information regarding the Bulgarian accession process with Serbian leaders, helping to foresee potential pitfalls that may be faced in the process and helping to provide the necessary financial and political resources and information to cover come these obstacles.

Secondly, Bulgaria can serve to direct the conversation within the European Union toward further accession into the Balkans, namely Serbia. With the European Union's attention currently focused on internal reforms and international crises, Serbia's future in the EU now depends on the ability of a Member State to bring the conversation of expansion back to the table and remind the EU of the importance of bringing the Balkans in. Including the Balkans in the borders of the EU has economic, political and security benefits, but unless the conversation is brought back to the table, Serbia's future and the future of the Balkans as a whole in the European Union remains unclear. Along these same lines, Bulgaria, as Serbia's 'insider advocate', will need to ensure that the EU does not continue to lay out further requirements for Serbian accession, particularly by rejecting the addition of the solution to the Kosovo issue as a requirement for membership. Additionally, Bulgaria will need to aid in the EU's efforts to create a dialogue on the issue and strive to bring about a fair and equitable solution that will ease tensions in the region and allow Serbia to become an EU member without forcing its government to accept a solution to the Kosovo issue that is unfair to either party.

Finally, Bulgaria must use its position in the European Union to push Member States toward an establishment of a standard for 'compliance' with the ICTY so that the issue cannot be used as a blocking mechanism, as it has in the past. Without a clear definition for 'compliance', Member States could continue to block membership on the basis of ICTY conditions in the same way that the Netherlands blocked the signing of the SAA and Interim Agreement. To ignore the progress that Serbia has made toward compliance, through the increased vigilance by the Tadic government, would be a blow to Serbia's newly re-developed national identity and greatly disregard the reform efforts that have been made in the past several years with regard to abolishing the remnants of the Milosevic era and pressing forward into an era where the past is not forgotten but rather managed in ways that allow Serbia to learn from their experiences and find closure in the justice offered by the ICTY.

Conclusion

This paper has aimed to illustrate the importance of having an 'insider advocate' within the EU working with a European Union Candidate country in order to break through the subjectivity of the accession process and ease the path toward membership. Ideally, the 'insider advocate' and the candidate it backs would have historical links, economic and political ties, and/or common interests in regional organizations. Such links provide conditions under which a strong relationship and understanding of common goals can arise. A strong relationship between the two allows the advocate to be both highly aware of the Candidate's standing in relation to the requirements for accession and develop a stream of communication by which issues can be discussed and problems can be resolved. A strong bi-lateral relationship also provides an opportunity for the advocate to identify ways in which it would benefit from the accession of the Candidate, further incentivising its role in the process.

From the pre-accession process, to the fulfilment of the Copenhagen Criteria and the closing of chapters of the acquis, the role of an 'insider advocate' is highly important. Such an advocate can dispel any negative connotations about a Candidate's impact on the European Union if it was to become a member. It can lobby for issues vital to the Candidate's accession, raise awareness of problems in the process, encourage Foreign Direct Investment within a Candidate's borders, and provide Member States with first-hand information on a Candidate's

economic, political and social status. A Candidate may also benefit from institutional exchanges, expertise assistance and insider information from its advocate to assist in the accession process. As the final decision on membership requires a unanimous vote from Member States, and without an advocate a Member State could vote against a Candidate without a chance for the Candidate to defend itself or its position; with an 'insider advocate', the ability to lobby Member States for approval of membership can prevent this blockage of membership from occurring.

The use of 'insider advocacy' is not a new phenomenon by any means, and the impact it has on the accession process and the decision to grant membership can be significant. It is not impossible to successfully integrate into the European Union without an 'insider advocate' as illustrated by Bulgaria's 2007 accession, but the process can become much more flexible and conditionality much more lenient with an advocate to promote your commitment to eventual compliance, as could be argued for Romania. Bulgaria's declaration of support for Serbia in its accession process, and the strengthening of their relationship through regional organizations will ensure that the advantages of having an advocate will be in place for its accession. Serbia's challenges will provide plenty of fodder for critics within the EU, but with Bulgaria's advocacy, the process may become much more fluid.

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