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Two steps forward one step back: what shapes the process of EU enlargement in South-Eastern Europe?

Oliver Schwarz

Institute of Political Science, University of Duisburg-Essen, Duisburg, Germany

ABSTRACT
Which factors shape the process of EU enlargement in South-Eastern Europe? This question continues to be a puzzling subject of scholarly debate. A set of hypotheses can be derived from current literature on EU enlargement. Broadly speaking, these hypotheses fall into two general categories: internal and external factors. Building on these factors, the analysis elaborates on the idea of different paths of EU enlargement, adopting a qualitative comparative perspective. More specifically, the study applies fuzzy-set QCA to eight candidate states from South-Eastern Europe. The results show that the factor of political transformation is a necessary condition for EU enlargement in South-Eastern Europe. However, political transformation is not individually sufficient for the outcome of enlargement, but only in conjunction with other factors. The results also demonstrate that what explains the lack of enlargement process is not automatically the negation of the conditions that explain progress in enlargement.

1. Introduction

Enlargement has always been an integral part of the European integration process. Since its early days in the 1950s, the former six-nation European Coal and Steel Community successively reshaped and expanded to the current EU with its 28 member states. The first enlargement round took place only two decades after France, Germany, Italy and the three Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) agreed on the Treaty of Paris. In 1973, Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom entered the European Economic Community (EEC). Greece joined the EEC in 1981, followed by Portugal and Spain in 1986. Due to the geographical location of these latest additions, the second and third enlargement round were subsumed under the term of the so-called 'Mediterranean' enlargement. In 1995, Austria, Finland and Sweden entered the EU, marking the fourth enlargement round in European history. The 2004 enlargement has been the largest of all until now: 10 new member states, predominantly from Central and Eastern Europe, acceded to the EU and increased its population to more than 450 million people. This fifth and so-called 'Eastern' enlargement was followed by the accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007. The accession of Croatia marked the EU seventh enlargement round in July 2013.

Currently, the enlargement process of the EU concentrates on the region of South-Eastern Europe. Since 2005, accession negotiations have been taking place with Turkey, a candidate for EU membership since 1999. After Slovenia, Croatia was the second former Yugoslav country which entered the EU and the first one that had been deeply involved in the Balkan Wars in the 1990s. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, violent developments erupted and resulted in a decade of trial and error attempts with regard to conflict resolution and external state building in the region. In 1999, the Kosovo crisis led to a more coherent European policy approach towards the Western Balkans. Due to the adoption of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and the initialisation of the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), the prospect of EU membership became a significant mainstay of stability and peace for the region (Renner and Trauner 2009, 454). With the exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, all Western Balkan states have officially expressed their will to join the EU by filing an application for membership until today. Among them, Macedonia gained candidate status in December 2005. The Commission gave its recommendation for the opening of accession negotiations in October 2009, but accession talks have stalled due to the ongoing name dispute with Greece (Axt and Schwarz 2006). Montenegro became an official candidate in December 2010. The accession negotiations were launched in June 2012. Serbia applied for EU membership in December 2009 and accession negotiations were opened in January 2014. Most recently, Albania gained candidate status in June 2014. The country had applied for EU membership in April 2009.

Against its historical background, EU enlargement is widely considered to be a 'success story' (European Council 2007, 2) in bringing about fundamental reforms beyond European borders. Indeed, it can hardly be questioned that EU enlargement is decisive in the process of Europeanisation of South-Eastern Europe (Schwarz 2011, 638–640). Thus, it can be argued that the EU's enlargement policy is designed to promote peace, stability and prosperity in the region. However, in light of the most recent accession of Croatia to the EU, an important question arises: Which factors shape the process of EU enlargement in South-Eastern Europe?

To answer this question, the current study focuses on the accession process of eight countries in South-Eastern Europe, namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. Methodically, this contribution employs Qualitative Comparative Analysis, commonly known under its acronym QCA, which is based on the seminal work by Ragin (1987, 2000, 2008). Although QCA was developed more than 25 years ago and since then has continually gained recognition as an accepted research approach (Marx, Rihoux, and Ragin 2014), QCA did not fully outgrow its relative novelty in social sciences. In point of fact, the major approaches in the field of enlargement studies are still single-case studies or comparisons of a few cases with few exceptions of larger statistical analyses (Mattli and Plümper 2002; Schimmelfennig 2005). To the best knowledge of the author, only one scholar has applied QCA to the analysis on the factors determining enlargement decisions (Jano 2014) to date. Such a research gap in the literature calls for a more systematic approach.

The following section of this article outlines the theoretical foundations from which the hypotheses are derived. After that, section 3 introduces the fuzzy-set methodology employed in this study and describes the operationalisation of the conditions. The following section presents the main findings in regard to necessity and sufficiency for EU enlargement. Finally, in section 5, the study concludes with some reflections and implications for future research.

2. Theoretical foundations

The enlargement policy of the EU has evolved during each enlargement round (Hillion 2010). In spite of the distinct changes, there is a consistent pattern of previous enlargement rounds which constitutes the 'classical Community method' of EU enlargement (Preston 1995). This consistent pattern is related both to the 'formal accession procedures adopted, and to the implicit assumptions and principles which have shaped the expectations of the participants and the progress of negotiations' (Preston 1997, 9). Academic literature includes a wide variety of factors that are linked to EU enlargement (Schimmelfennig 2014). However, one scope condition appears to be more prominent than others to explain the accession process in South-Eastern Europe: statehood. This argument is endorsed by Börzel (2011, 9), who stresses that 'limited statehood is the main impediment for the Western Balkans on their road to Brussels', since it 'affects both the capacity and the willingness of countries to conform to the EU's expectations for domestic change'. However, as Schimmelfennig (2014, 10–11) argues, it needs to take into account factors both at the domestic level of the applicant country and at the European level. The theoretical framework of this analysis encompasses both of these factors. It is based on five conditions which reflect the so-called 'Copenhagen criteria'. The Copenhagen criteria were defined by the European Council in June 1993 and strengthened by the Madrid European Council in December 1995 (Kochenov 2004). For more than two decades now, the Copenhagen criteria set out the main principles for the EU's enlargement policy. Therefore, these principles will be briefly described. The measurement, or more precisely, the calibration of these conditions is then discussed in section 3.

2.1. Political transformation

The most straightforward hypothesis has been put forward by Schimmelfennig (2001, 2003). Schimmelfennig (2001, 48) interprets the EU as an 'organization of the European liberal community of states'. This hypothesis has been referred to as the 'liberal-democratic community hypothesis' (Jano 2014, 71) because it implies that it is obligatory for any potential member state to reach the EU's constitutive norms and values before accession. Indeed, Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) provides that any state which applies for membership must respect the norms and values set out in Article 2 TEU: 'respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities'. These fundamental principles have also been included in the Copenhagen criteria. According to the conclusions of the European Council (1993, 13), EU membership requires 'that the candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities'. Empirical studies have shown the outstanding importance of the political criteria for the EU's 10 post-communist Central and Eastern European states (Pridham 2002, 2005; Schimmelfennig 2005; Vachudova 2005). Therefore, it is worth to assume that the EU still links the progress in political transformation with the progress in the accession process.

2.2. Economic transformation

Surprisingly, Article 2 TEU does not contain any references to economic norms and values. The so-called 'competitive social market economy' of the EU is elaborated in the following Article 3 TEU. However, the fact that a candidate country satisfies the political criteria does not mean that it can enter the EU without meeting certain economic conditions as well (Kochenov 2004, 5). On the contrary: the Copenhagen European Council (1993, 13) explicitly concluded that 'the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union' is a prerequisite for EU accession. Indeed, a number of scholars have provided evidence that the process of EU enlargement has enhanced economic policy liberalisation (Cameron 2009; Jacoby 2014; Kopstein and Reilly 2000). Based on this, it is assumed that the EU enlargement process is conditional not only on the political but also on the economic transformation of the candidate states.

2.3. Reform policy

Furthermore, the Copenhagen European Council (1993, 13) has underlined that 'membership presupposes the candidate's ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union'. In other words, candidates must have the administrative capacity to comply with the whole body of EU law and practice, known as the *acquis communautaire* (Grabbe 2002). The *acquis* criterion is of course related to political and economic transformation. As Epstein and Jacoby (2014, 7) point out, on the adoption of the acquis, almost all of the 35 negotiation chapters somehow relate to the economy and about two-thirds are centrally concerned with it. Thus, it is hypothesised that EU membership also substantially depends on a sound reform policy implementing the EU *acquis*.

2.4. Conflict settlement

In previous enlargement rounds, the EU has developed an even more complex accession procedure, reinforced by strict, increasing conditionality. The conditionality principle works in a top-down manner. Following the logic of reinforcement by reward, 'a government adopts EU rules if the benefits of EU rewards exceed the domestic adoption costs' (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005, 12). Researchers have identified several mechanisms applied by the EU to affect domestic rule adoption through the accession process, but the 'the most important mechanism is the EU's gate-keeping role in determining when each candidate can progress to the next stage towards accession' (Grabbe 2001, 1019–1020). In the case of South-Eastern Europe, the EU has incorporated regional cooperation and full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia into its enlargement strategy. These conditions have been labelled as the 'Copenhagen-plus criteria' (De Vasconcelos 2009, 7; Richter 2009, 6). Primarily, this enhancement of the Copenhagen criteria can be seen as a kind of lessons learned from the failed resolution of the Cyprus conflict (Axt, Schwarz, and Wiegand 2008). As Grabbe (2014, 40) points out, the unresolved Cyprus conflict has caused a myriad of problems for the EU as Cyprus used its membership to pursue the interests

and concerns of the Greek Cypriot community. So, it is reasonable to postulate that the EU enlargement process is conditional to progress in conflict settlement.

2.5. Attention to enlargement

Besides the applicants' obligations, the EU itself must fulfil one criterion. The Copenhagen criteria underline that 'the Union's capacity to absorb new members, while maintaining the momentum of European integration, is also an important consideration in the general interest of both the Union and the candidate countries' (European Council 1993, 13). This criterion can be labelled as the 'forgotten criterion' (Schwarz 2010, 23) because it represents a frequently unconsidered element of the Copenhagen criteria. However, there is empirical evidence that the EU takes care of its absorption capacity – despite the vagueness of this category (Emerson et al. 2006). This argument matches the theory of liberal intergovernmentalism, which explains the major turning points in EU enlargement by member states' preferences and the outcome of negotiations being substantially determined by the states' relative bargaining power (Moravcsik 1993, 1998). The importance of member states' decision-making is even more pronounced in EU enlargement policy because it is a policy area in which the member states particularly have the final word (Müftüler-Bac and Mclaren 2003). Based on this theoretical prospective, Schimmelfennig (2003, 166) distinguishes between 'drivers' and 'brakemen' of enlargement among the member states. Furthermore, Hillion (2010) has shown the 'creeping nationalization' of the enlargement process which the member states introduced following the 2004 and 2007 enlargement rounds. The context of the member states' preferences and the resulting attention of the European Council to the issue of enlargement thus is hypothesised to be configurationally important for the dynamics of EU enlargement.

The basic argument of this study is that these criteria represent five conditions which can be linked set-theoretically to the process of EU enlargement. However, the study does not expect them to be independent conditions. They should rather be seen as interacting parts of a complex causal configuration: a combination of internal and external factors which are situated at the national level of the applicant state as well as at the level of the EU.

3. Research design

3.1. Fuzzy-set analysis and configurational logic

The current study employs QCA as its method of analysis, more specifically: the fuzzy-set version of QCA (fsQCA). A fuzzy-set can be seen 'as a fine-grained, continuous measure that has been carefully calibrated using substantive and theoretical knowledge relevant to set membership' (Ragin 2000, 7). In fsQCA, a case does not necessarily have to be a full member or a full non-member of a set, but can also be a partial member. The partial membership scores can fall anywhere in an interval between 0 (non-membership) and 1 (full membership). As a set-theoretic approach, fsQCA focuses on the analysis of subset relations, particularly the configurations of conditions which are necessary and/or sufficient for a specific outcome. For a condition to be necessary, the outcome set must be a subset of the condition set. Or, in other words, the outcome cannot be achieved without the condition. This subset relation can be visualised in an XY plot. In such a plot, the y-axis represents the outcome and the

x-axis represents the condition. The fuzzy-set membership score of the outcome should be lower or equal to the score of the necessary condition (Y ≤ X for all cases). For a condition to be sufficient, the condition set must be a subset of the outcome set. In other words, there should not be any single case which shows the condition but not the outcome. More formally, the fuzzy-membership scores of the condition should be lower or equal to the scores of the outcome (X ≤ Y for all cases).

To assess whether cases fit a relation of necessity or sufficiency, fsQCA provides two central parameters: consistency and coverage. Consistency indicates the degree to which the empirical data is in line with a postulated subset relation. Consistency values range from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating no consistency and 1 indicating perfect consistency. Unfortunately, there are no absolute standards to set the values of consistency. Generally, the consistency scores for necessary conditions have to be higher than those for sufficiency. Schneider and Wagemann (2012, 278) recommend a threshold of 0.9 or even higher for a reliable analysis of necessity. For the analysis of sufficient conditions, a minimum cut-off point of 0.8 is seen as an adequate value (Ragin 2009, 121). Coverage assesses the relation in size between the condition set and the outcome set. In other words, coverage 'gauges empirical relevance or importance' of conditions to the outcome (Ragin 2006, 292). For a sufficient condition, coverage expresses how much of the outcome is covered by the sufficient condition. For a necessary condition, coverage is better understood in terms of the relevance and trivialness of a necessary condition (Schneider and Wagemann 2012, 325).

3.2. *Data and calibration*

The study is a cross-country longitudinal analysis. The time span includes the years between 2004 and 2013 and the sample consists of eight South-East European countries. The resulting 74 cases provide time- and country-specific insights. For each country and year, set membership values of the outcome variable (enlargement process) and of each of the five explanatory conditions are calibrated. In this context, calibration means that the available 'raw' data is transformed into fuzzy-set membership scores. For a full overview, see Tables 4 and 5 in the Online Appendix.[1]

The outcome to be explained in this study is *enlargement process*. According to Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2002, 502), enlargement can be defined 'as a process of gradual and formal horizontal institutionalization'. This conceptualisation implies the establishment of formal agreements that create institutional relations between the EU and the outsider state. It acknowledges the existence of different formal stages until the accession of the candidate country. According to Steunenberg and Dimitrova (2007, 11), the typical enlargement cycle consists of the issuing of the Commission's opinion on the readiness of the candidate state, the opening of negotiations, the closing of negotiations, the treaty signing and ratification and finally the EU accession. However, the EU enlargement process has become a complex multiple step process, having evolving during each enlargement round. For the Western Balkans Smeets (2013, 149) uncovers no less than 15 political steps in the pre-accession trajectory. However, this conceptualisation only takes the steps until the opening of accession negotiations into account. The precise differentiation of the enlargement process into stages is an important prerequisite for the measurement of the outcome.

The outcome variable is measured in terms of possible steps in the enlargement process. The scores range from 0 (pre-trajectory) to 23 (EU accession). Following Böhmelt and Freyburg (2012, 255), each stage is characterised by a specific probability of EU membership. This probability grows over the process of pre-accession as the credibility of the EU's promises continuously increases and the credibility of threats decreases. Based upon this reasoning, the outcome is calibrated so that 0 means 'fully out of the set of countries experiencing credible membership perspective' and 1 means 'fully in the set of countries experiencing credible membership perspective'. The fuzzy-set scale regards a score of 21 or higher as fully in the set while a value of 0 is fully out of the set. The crossover point is established at a value of 9, which represents the moment of accession application. The application for accession can be interpreted 'as a very public act of commitment to continuing deep institutional reforms that fully align outsiders to EU norms and rules' (Mattli and Plümper 2002, 559). However, at this stage, neither do outsiders possess substantial bargaining power nor do they know whether they can ultimately join the EU (Böhmelt and Freyburg 2012, 255).

Political transformation is a condition originating from the variable 'democracy status' of the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI), which measures the state of democracy and market economy as well as the quality of governance in 129 countries. Scores range from a minimum of 0 to an ideal of 10. The democracy status distinguishes between 'democracies in consolidation', 'defective democracies', 'highly defective democracies', 'moderate autocracies', and 'hard-line autocracies'. This condition is calibrated so that 0 means 'fully out of the set of consolidated democracies' and 1 means 'fully in the set of consolidated democracies'. Following the guidelines established by the BTI project (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2014, 25), the threshold value of 6 is established to separate defective democracies from highly defective democracies. All cases with a score of 4 or lower (hard-line autocracies) are seen as fully out of the set and with a score of 10 as fully in the set.

Economic transformation is derived from the variable 'market economy status' of the BTI. The market economy status differentiates between 'developed market economies', 'functioning market economies', 'market economies with functional flaws', 'poorly functioning market economies' and 'rudimentary market economies'. Scores range from 0 (lowest value) to 10 (highest value). This condition is calibrated so that 0 means 'fully out of the set of developed market economies' and 1 means 'fully in the set of developed market economies'. Following the guidelines established by the BTI project (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2014, 35), all cases with a score below 3 (rudimentary market economies) are seen as fully out of the set and with a score of 10 as fully in the set. The threshold value of 7 is established to separate functioning market economies from market economies with functional flaws.

Reform policy originates from the variable 'transformation management' of the BTI. The state of reform policy is categorised in terms of 'very good', 'good', 'moderate', 'weak', and 'failed or non-existent'. Once again, scores range from 0 to 10, with higher scores indicating higher levels of transformation management. This condition is calibrated so that 0 means 'fully out of the set of countries with sound reform policy' and 1 means 'fully in the set of countries with sound reform policy'. Following the guidelines established by the BTI project (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2014, 47), all cases with a score of 3 or lower (failed or non-existent) are seen as fully out of the set and with a score of 10 as fully in the set. The threshold value of 5.6 is established to separate countries with moderate transformation management from good transformation management.

Conflict situation measures the mean conflict intensity in each country per year. It is derived from the variable 'conflict intensity' in the Conflict Barometer of the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK). The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (2015, 8) defines conflict intensity as 'an attribute of the sum of conflict measures in a specific political conflict in a geographical area and a given space of time'. Based on this definition, the HIIK uses a five-level model of conflict intensity, which consists of the following five levels: 'dispute', 'non-violent crisis', 'violent crisis', 'limited war' and 'war'. This condition is calibrated so that 0 means 'fully out of the set of peaceful states and societies' and 1 means 'fully in the set of peaceful states and societies'. All cases with a mean score of 5 are seen as fully out of the set and with a mean score of 0 as fully in the set. The cut-off membership score is assigned to a mean value of 2, representing a non-violent conflict (Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research 2015, 9).

Attention to enlargement measures the EU's attention to the issue of enlargement. It is derived from the variable 'enlargement' of the European Council Conclusions Data-set. The data-set codes the conclusions of the European Council's official meetings at the quasi-sentence level in order to determine which issues have been addressed at the summits. The proportion of total references to enlargement can be interpreted as an indicator of its status on the agenda of the EU (Alexandrova et al. 2014, 56). In order to measure the degree of attention change, the 'percentage-percentage method' is used and this measurement is replicated for all years to generate the distribution of yearly change scores (Alexandrova, Carammia, and Timmermans 2012, 76). The calculated scores of attention change in the agenda of the European Council to the issue of enlargement range between a minimum of −0.96 (a 96% decrease in attention to enlargement) to a maximum of 2.93 (a 293% increase in attention). The condition is calibrated so that 0 means 'fully out of the set of high attention given to enlargement' and 1 means 'fully in the set of high attention given to enlargement'. A score of −0.96 is seen as fully out of the set and a score of 2.93 as fully in the set. Here, the crossover point is established at the value of 0.

4. Fuzzy-set analysis

In line with the accepted standards in fuzzy-set methodology (Schneider and Wagemann 2012, 278), the analysis of necessary conditions will be separated from and will precede the analysis of sufficient conditions. This study also runs separate analyses both for the occurrence of the outcome and the non-occurrence of the outcome (Schneider and Wagemann 2012, 279).

4.1. Analysis of the necessary conditions

A condition is necessary if – whenever the outcome is present – the condition is also present. Table 1 presents the results of the necessity analysis. While it may be intuitively plausible that a necessary condition for the non-occurrence of the outcome is the negation of the necessary condition for the occurrence of the outcome, such a causal link constitutes two qualitatively different events in QCA analysis. Set relations are asymmetric (Borgna 2013). Hence, the logic of causal asymmetry makes it inevitable to conduct a separate analysis for the status of necessity, both for the presence and the absence of the outcome (Schneider and Wagemann 2012, 113).

Table 1. Analysis of the necessary conditions.

Conditions	Enlargement		Conditions	~Enlargement	
	Consistency	Coverage		Consistency	Coverage
Poltrans	0.98*	0.64	Poltrans	0.88	0.61
~Poltrans	0.4	0.75	~Poltrans	0.48	0.96
Ecotrans	0.8	0.8	Ecotrans	0.63	0.67
~Ecotrans	0.67	0.63	~Ecotrans	0.81	0.81
Reform	0.81	0.76	Reform	0.65	0.65
~Reform	0.63	0.63	~Reform	0.76	0.81
Conflict	0.86	0.66	Conflict	0.77	0.63
~Conflict	0.52	0.68	~Conflict	0.58	0.82
Attention	0.58	0.63	Attention	0.54	0.63
~Attention	0.66	0.57	~Attention	0.68	0.63

*Consistency score ≥0.9.

With a standard consistency threshold of 0.9, the results show one necessary condition for the presence of the outcome and no condition for its absence. However, the low coverage score of the necessary condition indicates that it is probably falling short for understanding the full variation in outcome – a point that will be further elaborated when the results of the sufficiency analysis are described.[2] The evidence suggests that successful political transformation is a necessary condition for the occurrence of EU enlargement. In other words, without having a high degree of democratic consolidation, candidate states are unable to make progress in the enlargement process. This result is in line with the study of Jano (2014, 76–77) and supports the liberal-democratic community hypothesis.

4.2. Analysis of the sufficient conditions

A condition is sufficient if – whenever the condition is present – the outcome is also present. In fsQCA, the analysis of sufficiency is performed on the basis of truth tables, which reduce causal complexity by outlining all logically possible combinations between the conditions and links of them to the outcome. The formula 2^k yields the number of logically possible combinations. The truth table for the present study is based on five conditions and includes 32 truth table rows (see Table 6 in the Online Appendix). Of these 32 logically possible combinations, 9 are represented by the 74 cases. Now, the fsQCA analysis proceeds in two steps. First, the consistency value is calculated for each of these 9 combinations. Consistency provides a numerical expression for the degree to which the empirical information deviates from a perfect subset relation. Second, the truth table is minimised on the basis of the Quine–McCluskey algorithm, excluding rows with a consistency score of less than 0.8.

Table 2 shows the intermediate solution which consists of two causal configurations of conditions that can be seen as sufficient for the occurrence of the outcome.[3] It includes 28 cases covered by this solution. For each case, the degree of membership in the outcome and the case's membership in the causal configuration are indicated if its membership is higher than 0.5. Three cases have membership in both configurations, i.e. Croatia in 2006 and 2011 and Macedonia in 2011, because these sets overlap. The overall solution consistency is good (0.8), the solution coverage sufficient (0.78). The first aspect to be considered is the importance of the necessary condition. Political transformation is present as a condition in both configurations. However, the necessary condition is not individually sufficient for the outcome. Political transformation explains enlargement only in conjunction with other

Table 2. Sufficient conditions for the occurrence of the outcome (intermediate solution).

Cases	Membership in outcome	Poltrans *Ecotrans *Reform	Poltrans *Reform *Conflict *Attention
Albania 2010	0.62		0.54
Albania 2011	0.62		0.51
Croatia 2004	0.82	0.7	
Croatia 2005	0.88	0.7	
Croatia 2006	0.88	0.71	0.62
Croatia 2007	0.88	0.7	
Croatia 2008	0.88	0.7	
Croatia 2009	0.88	0.69	
Croatia 2010	0.88	0.67	
Croatia 2011	0.95	0.65	0.65
Croatia 2012	0.95	0.63	
Croatia 2013	0.97	0.64	
Macedonia 2008	0.78	0.57	
Macedonia 2009	0.82	0.55	
Macedonia 2011	0.82	0.53	0.64
Macedonia 2012	0.82	0.53	
Montenegro 2010	0.78		0.59
Montenegro 2011	0.82		0.59
Serbia 2004	0.06		0.56
Serbia 2010	0.5		0.56
Serbia 2011	0.62		0.56
Turkey 2004	0.34		0.55
Turkey 2008	0.42	0.57	
Turkey 2009	0.42	0.59	
Turkey 2010	0.42	0.61	
Turkey 2011	0.42	0.61	
Turkey 2012	0.42	0.61	
Turkey 2013	0.42	0.61	
Consistency		0.82	0.85
Raw coverage		0.76	0.5
Unique coverage		0.28	0.02
Consistency cut-off	0.81		
Solution coverage	0.78		
Solution consistency	0.8		

causal conditions. Conditions in such conjunction are so-called INUS conditions. These are conditions which are themselves insufficient but nonetheless necessary parts of a condition which is itself unnecessary but sufficient for the result (Schneider and Wagemann 2012, 79–80).

Thus, the analysis of sufficiency confirms the importance of a sound reform policy. This condition exists in both configurations. The analysis shows that political elites in South-Eastern Europe push for EU membership. In the case of Croatia, this reform agenda resulted in the accession to the EU in July 2013. The next INUS condition worth highlighting is economic transformation. Overall, the economic transformation has progressed in most South-Eastern European states.

The absence of conflicts is relevant for one of the two causal configurations. While there are still conflicts to be resolved in the Western Balkans, the region has gained stability on the whole. However, Albania is the only among all South-Eastern European states which does not have to cope with internal conflicts and is not involved in bilateral disputes. This is the main reason why the country was provided NATO membership in 2008. So it is not

Table 3. Sufficient conditions for the non-occurrence of the outcome (intermediate solution).

Cases	Membership in outcome	~Conflict	~Ecotrans *~Reform	~Ecotrans *~Attention
Albania 2005	0.88		0.56	0.7
Albania 2006	0.73		0.58	
Albania 2007	0.73			0.63
Albania 2008	0.73			0.57
Albania 2009	0.44			0.55
Albania 2013	0.32		0.58	
Bosnia and Herzegovina 2004	0.91		0.69	
Bosnia and Herzegovina 2005	0.88		0.65	0.65
Bosnia and Herzegovina 2006	0.94			0.57
Bosnia and Herzegovina 2007	0.84		0.62	0.62
Bosnia and Herzegovina 2008	0.73		0.62	0.62
Bosnia and Herzegovina 2009	0.73		0.62	0.62
Bosnia and Herzegovina 2010	0.73		0.62	
Bosnia and Herzegovina 2011	0.73		0.61	
Bosnia and Herzegovina 2012	0.73		0.61	0.61
Bosnia and Herzegovina 2013	0.73	0.62	0.61	
Kosovo 2008	0.88		0.61	
Kosovo 2009	0.94	0.73	0.56	0.62
Kosovo 2010	0.94	0.73	0.56	
Kosovo 2011	0.94	0.73	0.56	
Kosovo 2012	0.91		0.57	0.7
Kosovo 2013	0.88	0.62	0.59	
Macedonia 2004	0.38	0.62		
Macedonia 2005	0.22	0.62		0.61
Macedonia 2006	0.22	0.62		
Macedonia 2007	0.22	0.54		
Montenegro 2007	0.79			0.56
Montenegro 2008	0.66			0.55
Serbia 2005	0.88			0.64
Serbia 2006	0.88		0.58	
Serbia 2007	0.84	0.53	0.57	0.58
Serbia 2008	0.79			0.57
Serbia 2009	0.73			0.55
Turkey 2005	0.58			0.55
Turkey 2007	0.58	0.54		
Turkey 2008	0.58	0.58		
Turkey 2010	0.58	0.55		
Turkey 2011	0.58	0.55		
Turkey 2012	0.58	0.6		
Turkey 2013	0.58	0.58		
Consistency		0.82	0.84	0.83
Raw coverage		0.58	0.73	0.58
Unique coverage		0.04	0.07	0.02
Consistency cut-off	0.81			
Solution coverage	0.82			
Solution consistency	0.8			

surprising that the European Commission (2014, 14) highlights Albania as a 'constructive partner in the region' in its latest progress report. Finally, the attention to enlargement is also an INUS condition for enlargement in one configuration.

The analysis of sufficient conditions for the non-occurrence of the outcome uses the same five causal conditions employed for the analysis of the occurrence of the outcome (see Table 7 in the Online Appendix). The intermediate solution is presented in Table 3, which includes 40 cases. Two cases have membership in all three configurations, which are Kosovo in 2009 and Serbia in 2007. The overall solution consistency is good (0.84), as is the solution coverage (0.83). Table 3 indicates that there is only one single sufficient condition for the

non-occurrence of the outcome. The absence of conflict resolution is sufficient for a low dynamic of the enlargement process.

Additionally, two conjuncturally sufficient combinations are linked to a slow enlargement process. The first aspect to be observed is the importance of economic transformation. This condition is present in both configurations, meaning that all candidate states with slow accession processes are also characterised by a bad economic situation. Indeed, the 2008 financial crisis followed by the Eurozone crisis has deeply affected the whole region and has slowed down the countries' individual paces of economic transformation (Pula 2014). The financial crisis caused a perceptible drop in overall economic activities in the region and resulted in a fall of gross domestic products and an increase of budget deficits. A decrease in foreign direct investments and a postponement of larger investment projects also led to prominent socio-economic challenges. Consequently, standards of living have decreased and unemployment rates have increased. Today, the unemployment rates in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo remain the highest in Europe. However, a lack of economic trans-formation is not individually sufficient for a slow enlargement process. In the first combina-tion, this INUS condition appears together with the absence of reform policy. Due to a negative economic environment, important reforms related to the EU accession process have been delayed. In the second combination, the absence of economic transformation comes in conjunction with a negative shift in attention to the issue of enlargement. The still ongoing economic and financial crisis has substantially affected policies, institutions and politics in Europe (Tosun, Wetzel, and Zapryanova 2014). It is obvious that European deci-sion-makers are more concerned about creating jobs, growth and investment inside the EU rather than concentrating on further enlargement.

5. Implications and conclusion of the study

This study attempted to answer the general question: Which factors shape the process of EU enlargement in South-Eastern Europe? For this purpose, the study drew on a set-theoretic perspective of necessary and sufficient conditions to assess the process of EU enlargement. The configurational analysis was based on the Copenhagen criteria and included five con-ditions with a good empirical record for understanding what drives EU enlargement: the political and economic transformation in candidate states, their reform policy, the existence of conflicts in the region and the EU's attention to enlargement. In traditional quantitative models, these conditions are analysed in a static manner. In contrast, this study uses the QCA tech-nique – more specifically fuzzy-set analysis – which helps to identify multiple configurations of causal conditions.

Two main advantages arise from the use of such a method. First, a configurational logic provides a more complex and complete explanation of the phenomenon of EU enlargement, in which each causal condition has an individual, set-theoretic status and often needs to be understood in a conjunctural way. The results show that the factor of political transformation in candidate states is a necessary condition for EU enlargement in South-Eastern Europe. However, the results also show that political transformation alone is not sufficient for the outcome. Only in conjunction with economic transformation and a sound reform policy or in conjunction with a sound reform policy, a low level of conflicts and high attention to enlargement does political transformation explain the outcome of EU enlargement. These causally complex results differ from those produced by standard statistical approaches and

challenge the literature which predominantly considers causal conditions as independently sufficient explanations of EU enlargement.

Second, fuzzy-set analysis is able to uncover the asymmetric nature of EU enlargement which would have been invisible to correlation analysis. The results have demonstrated that what explains the lack of enlargement process is not automatically the negation of the conditions which explain the progress in enlargement. For example, neither is the absence of democratic consolidation a necessary condition for the absence of EU enlargement, nor it is an individually or conjuncturally sufficient condition. By contrast, a weak economic transformation is a relevant condition for the non-occurrence of EU enlargement, but only in conjunction with a failed reform policy or a negative shift in attention to enlargement. Furthermore, the results show that a high conflict intensity is an individually sufficient condition for a stalling enlargement process. The implications of these findings are noteworthy: while understanding the configuration of the progress in EU enlargement is important, looking into the dynamics of enlargement stagnation does not reveal a mirror image, but a different picture (Cebotari and Vink 2013, 313).

Third, a valuable advantage of the set-theoretic method is that it allows the understanding of different causal paths which are driving EU enlargement in South-Eastern Europe. Through its case-oriented nature, QCA explicitly matches causal configurations with empirical cases and thus provides useful cues for a subsequent case selection (Schneider and Rohlfing, 2013a, 2013b; Schneider and Wagemann 2012, 305–312). The advantage of this case-oriented approach holds not only for researchers but also for policy-makers who, at least until now, have too often acted from a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. The guiding principles of EU enlargement are, by and large, those that have been applied to Central and Eastern Europe. However, it has become apparent that a pure strategy of 'accession conditionality' does not work for countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina or Kosovo. Bearing in mind that a realistic time horizon for further accessions to the EU after Croatia is many years from now, it is highly important to keep all applicant states on track regarding their EU membership with a pro-active and individually tailored enlargement strategy.

In conclusion, this study should be considered as a first starting point for further research. The results can be replicated and extended by other researchers. Including countries from the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) area might lead to interesting insights. Using a different calibration could also provide further useful information on the obtained results. Additionally, other relevant conditions might be identified and used as a basis for a more detailed understanding of EU enlargement. For example, it has been argued that public opinion in the EU member states and applicant countries has an influence on the process of EU enlargement. However, until now, surprisingly little research has been devoted to the impact of public support. But is public enlargement fatigue within the EU a necessary or sufficient condition for a standstill in enlargement policy? Does country-specific support or the lack thereof make a difference? Or is strong public support for EU accession in applicant countries a relevant condition for accession progress? These questions require further detailed qualitative analyses tracing EU enlargement in South-Eastern Europe and will be the focus of future research.

Notes

1. The Online Appendix is available at: https://www.uni-due.de/politik/schwarz_research.php.
2. Schneider's and Wagemann's formula for the relevance of necessity (Schneider and Wagemann 2012, 236) reveals a value of 0.49, thereby also supporting the assumption that the necessary condition is probably falling short for understanding the full variation in the outcome.
3. The analysis yields three different results: a complex, a parsimonious and an intermediate solution. For reasons of limited space, only the intermediate solution is presented in this study. In general, the intermediate solution is superior to both the complex and the parsimonious solutions and should be a routine part of any application of any version of QCA (Ragin 2009, 111). The results of the complex and the parsimonious solution are available from the author upon request.

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