

**The Differential Impacts of Europeanization—
A Comparative Study of Progress on Human Rights
Protection in Romania and Bulgaria
during EU Accession Negotiations**

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Abstract

The EU enjoys significant leverage over “members-in-waiting.” Candidate states tend to accept the EU’s political conditionality as a prerequisite for accession. In other words, states tend to be acculturated to the EU before becoming EU members. However, the process of Europeanization does not produce exactly the same results in all candidate countries. This comparative study of the progress made on human rights protections in Romania and Bulgaria before their accession to the EU suggests that the differing scope and extent of Europeanization in candidate countries is reflective of the interplay of the comparative strength of domestic politics in the candidate states and leverage that can be exerted with the promise of EU membership.

Key Words: Europeanization, political conditionality, leverage, social learning