The negotiation process without an end

A process-tracing analysis of the accession negotiation process
between the European Union and Turkey

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Abstract

Turkish accession negotiations for European Union membership have officially started in 2005, though the process has not been finalized or prematurely ended yet. Instead, periods of intensive alignment through reforms and dialogue followed by periods of no progress at all can be observed. In this thesis, the Turkish accession negotiations were analyzed, so that the drivers of the process could be identified. These drivers are described in three different theories, in which either national interests of member states (rational choice, RC), the European Commission's initiatives based on shared community values (sociological constructivism, SC) or the strategic use of norm-based arguments (rhetorical action, RA) create development in the process. Through a process-tracing
analysis, the three time slots that showed the most activity between the EU and Turkey have been researched. It was found that SC and RA dominated the start and first phases of the accession process, but that RC explained the process from 2013 onwards. This shift to RC coincided with the refugee crisis in Europe, violent crackdowns of popular protests in Turkish cities and the 2016 coup d'état attempt. National interests of member states to reduce the numbers of illegal entries into EU territory increased the use of RC arguments in the negotiation process. SC arguments disappeared, as Turkey drifted away from the European community's norms and values after the government's response to the protests and the coup d'état and RA theory also lost its relevance throughout the process.

Key words: Turkey, European Union, enlargement, accession process, accession negotiations, process-tracing, rational choice, sociological constructivism, rhetorical action

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I Introduction

The European Union (EU), or the European Economic Community (EEC) as it was called at the beginning in 1957, started as a Western European project between six countries trying to keep peace on the European continent after two devastating wars. The idea was that countries that were interdependent of each other because of economic cooperation would not go to war again. Later, the policy areas expanded, and Southern and Eastern European countries joined the Union (europa.eu, 2020).

Today, almost all countries that are traditionally considered to be European, are member of the European Union or in the process of becoming one, with some exceptions like Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Since the borders of the European continent have almost been reached, some interesting cases that create doubts about membership remain. Countries like Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey are situated on the European continent, yet envisioning them within the European community entails difficulties. For all of these countries, arguments against and in favor or accession can be found, although accession is anything but evident.

The country that sparks the most controversy in this list is Turkey. Turkey is a very big and populous country that is situated on the Asian continent for 97%, the remaining 3% is actually situated in Europe. Next to its geographical position, the Turkish population also differs in cultural and religious practices from most states that are part of the European Union. In 2005, only 30% of the European population was in favor of Turkey joining the European Union (Torreblanca, 2007). According to the Eurobarometer of 2007, 53% of Turkish people saw the EU in a positive light and only 44% of the Turkish population saw a Turkish membership of the European Union as a 'good thing' for their country (Eurobarometer 67, 2007).

However, the possibility of Turkey joining the European has been made concrete when Turkey was declared to be eligible to become an EU member in 1997. Two years before that, a customs union between Turkey and the European Union was made, which was linked to the Association Agreement, or the Ankara Agreement, between those two that entered into force in 1964. In 1999 Turkey was declared a candidate country and in 2001 the Accession Partnership framework was adopted by the European Council. Finally, in 2005, the negotiation process was formally opened.

After this, the accession negotiation process has known a lot of up and downs: negotiation chapters have been opened and closed, there were moments when no progress was made and multiple attempts at keeping the accession talks alive have been launched. The process came to a provisional standstill when the European Parliament non-bindingly voted to suspend accession talks with Turkey in 2016 because of concerns about human rights and the rule of law in Turkey (European Commission, 2019).

In between these bigger events that advance the accession process, it sometimes seems like nothing is really happening. But is this true, is there really nothing happening or are there, beneath the surface of what the European population sees, still things that are happening to make a Turkish accession to the EU a reality? This question forms the puzzle in this research. On the one hand, there is a lengthy accession procedure, but on the other hand, new progress in it is scarce and a final decision on Turkey's membership bid has not been made. Since a decisive answer to determine the end of the process is lacking, there must be factors that can explain why the accession negotiations are still continued by the European Union.

Turkey joining the European Union would have a lot of consequences for both parties. Not only is the country's territory bigger than the now biggest EU member state (France), in 2020 it also has surpassed the population of the before most populous EU member state (Germany). This means that in the case of an accession, Turkey will immediately become one of the most powerful member states that should have the same amount of involvement and for example seats in the European Parliament as the other bigger states like France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Poland. On the other hand, permanently making an end to the negotiations with Turkey and not letting it join the European Union would also have severe consequences, for example losing an ally country with a very geographically strategical position that functions as a border region between Europe and the Middle East. Especially since the refugee crisis that the European Union faced in 2015, Turkey has proven to be a very useful partner.

All of these facts make the Turkish accession a delicate societal matter. However, the scientific side of the matter is also very interesting. Traditionally, there have been to metatheories that were used to explain European enlargement and integration. These theories are rational choice theory and sociological constructivism. When trying to explain the process that preceded the big Central and Eastern European enlargement round in 2004, Schimmelfennig (2001) constructed a third theory, rhetorical action theory, that can be seen as a combination of the former two.

In short, for rational choice theorists, European enlargement and every phase of progress in the accession process is explained by the national preferences of the individual member states. Through a bargaining process, they reach an outcome that is influenced by the European institutions and the bargaining power structures. The most important drivers of enlargement are the member states and their preferences based on national economic interests. Sociological constructivism, in this context, deals with the idea of a European community with members that all share a set of ideas, values, norms and perspectives on European culture, history and politics. Every state that matches the community's standard, can join the European Union. Because the standards that are shared throughout the community are important here, accession progress is driven by supranational institutions like the European Commission.

Lastly, rhetorical action theory is concerned with the use of norm-based arguments to for strategic purposes. Member states still have national interests, but if these happen to align with the community's standard, they can use this standard of legitimacy to back up their own interests. Here, it is essential that the European Community or member states have made promises regarding accession in the past. Because keeping a promise is part of the standard of legitimacy in the European Union, actors that deviate from the earlier promise of accession can become rhetorically entrapped and have to support progress in the accession process to not damage their reputation.

Through this thesis, I want to research what is still driving the Turkish accession to the European Union. Seemingly, a lot of the time nothing happens in the accession process, yet, there has been no official stop either. What has been happening between the moment when the negotiations were formally opened in 2005 and now? How can we explain what is happening and can the rhetorical action theory help explain it? Or are the other two theories more successful at explaining it?

The biggest enlargement round that happened fairly recently could be explained by the rhetorical action theory. That is why it would be interesting to see if the rhetorical action theory has replaced the two older theories and can successfully explain all accessions that

came after the 2004 enlargement or that is was a once-only theory for a single case. Turkey's accession will drastically change the EU, especially compared to the relatively less significant countries that joined the EU between 2004 and 2013. In this perspective, Turkey can function as an extreme case to test the durability of the rhetorical action theory. Is rhetorical action theory indeed a successful new theory, or did it just have a temporary success, and should we rely on rational choice and sociological constructivism again in the future? To answer these questions, I formulated the following research question:

What is still driving the Turkish accession to the European Union?

II Theoretical framework

In this theoretical part, I will describe three theories that can explain the enlargement process that the European Union undergoes when a new country joins the Union. The three theories all focus on a different aspect that cause actors to agree with opening the accession negotiations, to push for further progress in the accession process and to finally accept the official accession of a candidate state. The first two theories, rational choice (RC) and sociological constructivism (SC) are metatheories that are both often used to describe a multitude of phenomena in the social sciences. Their application can be very broad, but both have been applied to European enlargement specifically, too. For rational choice theory, national preferences of the member states are the decisive factor for enlargement, while sociological constructivism focuses on the shared community values of the country that wants to join and the European Union.

The last theory, rhetorical action (RA) by Schimmelfennig (2001), was specifically made to explain the process leading up to the biggest enlargement in the history of the European Union, the Central and Eastern European enlargement in 2004. This theory combines rational and strategic arguments with the importance of dominant community standards of legitimacy and appropriateness to decide whether a state could join the Union or not.

i. Rational choice

General

Political behavior is determined by preferences, according to Aldrich (1993). Rational choice (RC) theory, then, is the theory that explains how exactly these preferences determine the behavior of actors. Preferences are generated by making calculations on the basis of the expected utility of different outcomes (Benoit, 2004). Each alternative has a specific outcome associated with it and for rational theorists, the alternative that is associated with the highest expected utility is preferred. This way, the preferred option is expected to bring the most valued outcome, which leads to a maximization of benefits for the actor. Here, options or actions are the way to obtain a particular ends or outcome, in other words, actions are seen as instruments leading to outcomes. However, with the actions come costs. Actors need to obtain information, process it and decide what they do with it. There are costs linked to inaction as well, for example the decision process before deciding to abstain from a certain action, because to make that decision, you need time and information, both of which are costly (Aldrich, 1993).

For Pollack (2007), rational choice theory consists of three essential points. The first one is methodological individualism, which means that not collectivities or societies, but individual actors are at the basis of social analyses. Secondly, individuals look for utility maximization and to reach that, they make very conscious calculations on the expected utility of several alternative actions and then choose the option that maximizes utility for them. Lastly, actors have to deal with institutional and strategic constraints on their individual choice, which means that they cannot just choose the ideal option, there are constraints coming from their physical and social surroundings that influence that choice. Next to that, actors usually have to make a choice based on incomplete information, which also constrains them, since a decision based on complete information is hardly possible in practice.

But rational choice is a very broad theory that can be applied to a multitude of domains in political science. When applying it to the European Union, and in particular to European enlargement, the details change.

Applied to European enlargement
According to Moravcsik (2013), rational choice applied to European integration and enlargement consists of three steps. Firstly, member states form their own national preferences (1), the states then bargain between each other leading to outcomes for the supranational level (2) and lastly, the European institutions make a decision (3). These steps are influenced by bargaining powers that countries respectively have in the domestic and the international sphere. National preferences are mostly based on economic grounds (i.e. national welfare), but in some cases geopolitical or ideological reasons play a part, too. After the bargaining, so when an agreement is made in the community, governments will take it as the new status quo and all alternative proposals after that will be calculated on the basis of the status quo. If the proposal is more beneficial than the status quo, actors will accept it, if it is not, then the status quo will remain intact. In the third step, the final choice is made by the European institutions, because member states have delegated power to them to be able to do so (Moravcsik, 1995).

According to Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005), international institutions have less of an influence than the members that form the organization. For them, a European institution like the European Commission is always an actor that intervenes between the material interests of a specific country and the collective outcomes of the European Union as a whole. Because of their mostly intervening role, institutions do not actually act, they merely provide the constraints and incentives for the real actors. This also means that they cannot change the interests or identities of the individual actors, but through the constraints they cause, they can alter some of the calculations made by member states. All in all, this means that rational theorists do not see European or other international institutions as autonomous actors, they merely exist to make the life of European member states easier, because they help pursue their national interests more efficiently and with less costs. European institutions are only instruments of the states that make use of them.

Since European institutions do not have an active role, Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier also state that the preferences of the member states eventually determine the enlargement process. European member states only agree with an enlargement that maximizes their benefits the most. So, European member states only want enlargement when the integration of a new member states is more beneficial to them than the alternative where the applicant state does not integrate, and the Union does not enlarge. The same goes the other way around, an applicant state will want to join when there are more benefits than costs to accession than to keeping up the normal situation. For the most part, it is the member states' preferences that count for agreement on progress within the accession process. The desire to join a union as an applicant country does have to deal with that, as well, but is not the leading factor in the accession itself.

So, when deciding if a country can join the organization, member states will calculate the benefits accession could potentially bring them. They also take the costs into consideration. These costs are the transaction costs, policy costs and autonomy costs, as a result of the organization that might expand. After both sides have been calculated, the enlargement can take place when the benefits exceed the costs. As long as the benefits continue to exceed the costs, enlargement is possible, but at the point where benefits are

equal to the costs, or when the costs start to exceed the benefits, there will be no more enlargements. Buchanan (1965) calls this the optimal size of an organization, an equilibrium has been found. Buchanan describes this as part of his economic theory on clubs. For him, 'the individual attains full equilibrium in club size only when the marginal benefits that the secures from having an additional member (which may, and probably will normally be, negative) are just equal to the marginal costs that he incurs from adding a member (which will also normally be negative)' (p. 5). For European enlargement, this would mean that the individual is an individual member state.

It is also important to mention is that enlargement does not have to be beneficial for all members equally, or even beneficial at all. When certain states that are not in favor of enlargement have enough bargaining power, they can either avoid any country joining the EU or they can bargain for compensation so that the enlargement can still take place. The states that agreed with the enlargement have to take into account that they also have to pay compensation to the opponents, in addition to the costs that the enlargement was going to bring anyway. If enlargement is still beneficial from them after that, the candidate country can join (Schimmelfennig, 2001).

ii. Sociological constructivism

General
Sociological constructivism (SC) focuses on the importance of context to understand and describe what happens in the social world. Based on one's own understanding of society, not only knowledge but reality itself is constructed (Kim, 2001). Sociological constructivism rejects the very economically rationalist foundations of rational choice, although material structures do have some importance. The powerful social meanings behind those structures are actually more important to constructivists (O'Brennan, 2001). These social meanings are the focus of study in this theory, who constructs them and how is it done? Crucial is that sociological constructivists believe that structures in society are not simple aggregations of individual actors in that society, but rather that actors and their preferences are a product of these intersubjective structures and the interaction between them. Compared to rational choice, sociological constructivism does not award as much meaning to individual member states and also disagrees with the rational choice perspective of actors acting purely egoistically or instrumentally.

For sociological constructivists, individuals (or member states) that interact with each other on the basis of common interests and shared assumptions share an understanding of the world. This is called intersubjectivity. The communication and interactions between those individuals usually lead to them agreeing upon certain ideas about reality and specific patterns or rules that are appropriate within their group (Rogoff, 1990). The European Union, which can be seen as such a group, also has these standards of legitimacy and appropriateness. The European Community shares a collective identity because of this and any state that adheres to the values and norms dominating the community should be able to join the community.

For Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005), institutions within a community have the ability to shape or alter the interests and the identities of their members. So, a European institution like the European Commission is able to influence the member states. This happens because member states do not see the institution as an actor that provides external constraints (like in rational choice theory), but rather that the institutions give meaning to

the rights and obligations that member states have in the community, i.e. the social role they have to fulfill inside the community. Actors listen to the prescription of this behavior because they feel a normative commitment to the institution or because they are used to doing it.

Contrary to rationalist theories, sociological constructivism does see European institutions as autonomous and powerful actors. They do not only represent a community, they also build it. Where rational choice looks at the efficiency and the instrumental role of institutions, for constructivists the goals of an institution have to do with how members of the community and other international communities perceive the actions in terms of legitimacy and appropriateness.

Applied to European enlargement
The reason that a second theory is needed to explain European enlargement is the fact that pure rational choice cannot explain why the Eastern and Central European enlargement took place. Based on rational choice premises, an association agreement with the countries involved would have been sufficient, as the economic aspects with regard to trade and the internal market would have been taken care of. By approving an accession, the direction of the common budget would shift to the eastern part of the continent, which is not beneficial for the Western and specifically Southern member states.

A theory that goes further than rational and economic interests is needed, which is sociological constructivism. According to Fierke and Wiener (1999), enlargement has always been a core feature of the EEC and the EU. For sociological constructivists, the main condition for enlargement is that the applicant state shares the liberal norms and values of the European community, which also means that they have a shared understanding about things. These things can be cultural traditions, historical or religious experiences or political principles (O'Brennan, 2001). Another important point is that the members of a community should have a shared understanding about who 'the other' is, a common actor, place or phenomenon outside of the community that just does not share the same values. For the European Union, Risse (2004) gives examples like the United States, Russia, Islamic fundamentalism and even European ideologies or conflicts from the past.

Following the sociological constructivists, European enlargement is driven by norms and values. For the European Union, liberal human rights are the most important values. Social pluralism, the rule of law, democratic political participation and representation, private property and a market economy trace back to these human rights. Countries that share this collective identity and have adopted these values will be admitted to the European Union once they seek to become members, because they are seen as legitimate candidates to be part of the community. By these candidate member states joining the community, the standard of legitimacy stays intact (Schimmelfennig, 2002).

Fierke and Wiener (1999) mention the *acquis communautaire* as the normative basis for enlargement, since the document entails what the European Union is and is not and also how the EU perceives itself. Next to the sec requirements and conditions necessary for accession to the EU, it also shows groups from outside the community how the EU sees itself and how it describes its own identity.

In short, the more a country adheres to the liberal-democratic values of the EU and agrees with the norms that lie underneath EU policies, i.e. the more a country is 'European', the bigger the chance that enlargement is perceived desirable by all members and the supranational institutions. This does mean that all member states within the community

need to have come to a consensus on what they want to represent. If this is not the case, or the community's identity has been damaged by certain events, enlargement will be very difficult.

The level of analysis for sociological constructivism is different from rational choice theories. For the latter, the preferences of the individual actors determine what happens, in the case of the European Union, these are the member states. For sociological constructivism, decisions are made at the community or the organizational level. If there is a match between the ideas or the culture of the applicant state and the European Union, the applicant state can join. In the case of the submission of an application by a country, the sociological constructivists would analyze the applicant's identity and the values and norms. Calculations on the basis of costs and benefits, or the material consequences of an accession would not happen. If the identity and the most fundamental ideas turn out to be shared by the EU, enlargement is possible.

At the community level in the European Union, the most important actors are the European Commission and the European Parliament. Both of these serve a more supranational role, whereas the European Council and the Council of the European Union are particularly intergovernmental. The European Commission in specific promotes the general interest of the European Union and when it finds that a country would fit well into the community and that the accession of that country would benefit the European Union, the Commission can initiate actions to obtain rapprochements (europa.eu, 2020).

iii. Rhetorical action

Applied to European enlargement
The third theory can be seen as a combination of both former theories and was specifically made to describe European enlargement, so a more general application of the theory is lacking. Schimmelfennig (2001) noticed that states had national, self-interested preferences (like in RC) with regard to the Eastern and Central European enlargement, yet at the end, there was an outcome based on the community identity and the social norms within the European Union (like in SC). To explain this outcome, he came up with the rhetorical action or rhetorical entrapment theory, which combines the strategy-based interests found in rational choice with norm-based arguments found in sociological constructivism.

For rhetorical action, the most important factor is legitimacy, just like in sociological constructivism, though it is used differently here. The theory assumes that there are actors that are only moderately committed to the community they are part of. They do share the values and norms of the community, but national preferences of member states are generally not completely in line with the community's standard, because the preferences are made in a more instrumental or self-interested way. Through rhetorical action, so a strategic use of arguments and discourse, national preferences shift towards preferences based on the community level, where members have to fulfill obligations to the community. The standard within the community legitimizes certain actions and preferences and rules out others and through rhetorical action, the standard itself can be used to legitimize or disapprove of a preference a member state has.

In other words, the dominant community standards or norms in the European Union can be used as some sort of a backup in the discourse between members states. When a member state prefers an alternative that happens to be in line with the European community standard, the member state can add legitimacy and credibility to its preference

by stressing that it corresponds with the community's norms. Even when the preference in question is essentially based on egoistic interests, member states can still use the norm-based argument to strengthen their point and rhetorical action is used to delegitimize alternatives of member states by referring back to the community's standard. This use of arguments based on the standard within the community to fulfill egoistic preferences is actually what Schimmelfennig means when he talks about rhetorical action. Being able to use rhetorical action gives member states with the aligned preferences more power in the bargaining process between states, so that the bargaining power structure changes in favor of these states.

Another element of rhetorical action as described by Schimmelfennig is shaming. This strategy has often been used by the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries during their accession talks and negotiations. For the shaming to be effective, the member states that now oppose a proposal (for example, the 2004 enlargement) need to have agreed with the community norms and standard of legitimacy before there was a conflict. When certain member states' preferences start to deviate from the norm because at that point their national interests are no longer in line with the norms of the community, other member states still acting in alignment with the standard can shame the former group of countries because of this recent deviation. The countries in the latter group could publicly shame them for having illegitimate preferences or goals and for contradicting themselves by saying one thing (expressing support for the community's legitimacy standard) and doing the other (pursuing interests on the national level that go against community-wide preferences).

When this happens, most member states will change their behavior and go back to following the norms that dominate within the community, because they care about their reputation and do not want to be exposed for pursuing the wrong goals. In other instances, they can defend themselves by stating they interpreted the norms differently or even downplay the standard's importance. This second option can influence their credibility within the community, which member states want to avoid at all costs. At this point, member states can feel like they are entrapped: early on, they have stated that they do respect and follow the community's standards and whenever they deviate from it in the future, they will be publicly exposed and shamed for not following parts of it anymore. The only way for them is to keep following the community's standards, even when their preferences have since changed.

This is exactly what happened during the Central and Eastern European enlargement talks. After the second World War and during and after the Cold War, the idea of a community that united the people of the entire European continent dominated in Europe. It had never been a union for just the Western European countries that were the first members of the EEC and several people with high positions within the EEC and EU publicly commented on that. These statements were interpreted as promises by the CEE countries and got turned into moral obligations towards these countries. Because fulfilling moral obligations is part of the community standard of the European Union, CEE countries that wanted to join the liberal Western countries after they were freed from communist rule kept reminding EU institutions and member states of that promise to push the EU.

Since the CEE countries did not have enough material bargaining power to join the EEC via a solely rational choice way, they also focused on community arguments made in the past with earlier candidate states. European member states saw themselves as a liberal-democratic community and the CEE countries stated that they shared these norms and values of European culture and civilization. Some CEE countries' presidents even mentioned

the 'return to Europe' after a chaotic period under a forced regime coming from the East and revolutions to gain back power. With these arguments, member states could not oppose any commitment to an Eastern enlargement any longer, since that would damage the reputation and credibility of the European community and their own reputation as a member within that community.

As said earlier, next to the claim of being part of the European culture, the CEE countries also exposed inconsistencies between statements made in the past and the EEC member states' behavior at that point in time. Also, inconsistencies between earlier rounds of enlargement and the enlargement at hand were exposed, as to demand the same treatment as for example Greece, Portugal and Spain when they applied for membership. Furthermore, the presidents of the European Commission and the European Parliament, just like the member states that supported the new enlargement round, continued to mention the community standards to persuade the member states that opposed the enlargement. By emphasizing the collective identity that they shared, member states that actually opposed it were put in a position where they could no longer openly oppose the accession negotiations as that would harm their reputation inside the community.

All of these arguments taken together caused the member states that opposed the CEE enlargement to feel entrapped by the rhetoric used against them. Since they felt like there were no legitimate reasons to oppose it, they could not openly oppose any more in fear of losing their credibility or being shamed. In practice, they were silenced by all parties that were in favor of enlargement and had to agree with all the little steps that lead to the actual enlargement process.

Compared to rational choice and sociological constructivism, where respectively member states and European institutions are the drivers of the enlargement process, in rhetorical action theory, there is no material person or institution that drives the process. It is the moral obligations attached to statements made in the past that make member states move towards a goal. If there was a commitment to a certain goal expressed in the past, member states who then agreed with that goal can be persuaded to continue to follow the process to accomplish that goal, in fear of being shamed or exposed for not being consistent and credible to the detriment of their reputation. So, even if the preferences of a member state at this point deviate from the community's preferences, they will still need to follow the community.

Expectations
These three theories that have been written to describe and explain earlier accession rounds that took place in the EU, lead to three different expectations with regard to a new enlargement. All three theories point to a different driver that decides whether progress should be made in the accession process or not. For rational choice theorists, the main drivers that can force progress in the negotiations talks with a country are the member states of the Union. If they consider the accession of a new country as something that is beneficial for their national interests, they will push for it to happen. For sociological constructivists, it is the supranational institutions that decide whether a candidate state can join the other member states in the Union. When they find that the applicant country matches the community values sufficiently, they will constantly support more development between the applicant country and the European Union. Finally, the moral obligation to deliver on a promise made in the past determines the pace of accession of another state for

the rhetorical action theorists. The whole community will be held responsible for what they have said in the past and will be pushed to take action in favor or more integration.

For this thesis, I will examine the Turkish negotiations talks and accession talks and the three expectations for this case are the following:

Rational choice

For rational choice theory, the only ones who decide whether a candidate state can become a member of the European Union are **the member states**. Every state forms its own preferences based on its respective national interests, usually these are economic reasons, but sometimes there are some geographical or ideological strategies that are added, too. The European Union is seen as an intergovernmental organization without much effective power and only its members determine what is happening with regard to the enlargement process. Eventually, the member states that have the biggest bargaining power will win the bargaining process and according to their national preferences, they can decide whether the enlargement process will be kept going or will stagnate.

Concretely this means that Turkey can join the European Union when the countries or groups of countries that have the biggest bargaining power see that adding Turkey to the European Union will benefit them. The countries that actually have the power to decide whom joins need to have a preference for the option of accession of Turkey. This means that they need to have made calculations about all alternatives and see that a Turkish accession is the most beneficial option for them, in economic terms. If these same countries conclude that Turkey joining the European Union will bring more costs, Turkey cannot become a member and more advances in the accession talks will not be made by them. Because the member states have delegated powers to the executive institutions of the EU, these institutions, here mostly the European Commission, will take actions, but the process is undoubtedly driven by the member states.

Since Turkey is a country that can bring a lot of strategic benefits to EU member states, member states that acknowledge that may favor a constant pace of progress in the accession process. Even when they do not envision Turkey as a member state in the long term, keeping Turkey close to them and the European community can be very beneficial. Thus, member states supporting small pieces of growth in the EU-Turkey relations can be expected to follow rational interests concerning Turkey.

Sociological constructivism

Sociological constructivists see the European Union as a supranational organization that has a mission. This mission is about bringing all countries that share the European history, culture, norms, values and principles together in the European Union. Because supranational **European institutions** like the European Commission or the European Parliament represent the European Union as a whole and are the executives of the Union, they are the ones who decide which countries are eligible for accession and when more or less progress in the accession process is desired. For countries that are deemed too different from the members of the community or countries that are not there yet in their development, the institutions will not make a lot of effort.

After having made an analysis that focuses on Turkish norms and values, its understandings about European culture, history and politics, European institutions like the Commission will come with an opinion or advice on the Turkish accession. If they have found that Turkey sufficiently matches the European identity, norms and values, if it feels like

Turkey belongs to the community that has been created over the years, they will take actions to progress Turkey's accession to the EU. This all comes down to the *acquis communautaire*, if there is a match between the way the Commission perceives Turkey and the way it perceives itself, then the negotiation talks will follow, and Turkey will become a member of the EU. So, the process according to sociological constructivism is explicitly driven by the European institutions that work independently from the member states and thus can bring in their own initiatives to change the course of negotiation talks.

When calls for more advances in the Turkish accession process are heard within the European Union, it is expected to come from the European Commission and the European Parliament. These two institutions promote the general interest of the Union and when Turkey's accession is deemed a beneficial addition, they will make an effort to continue the process of Turkey coming closer to the Union.

Rhetorical action

For rhetorical action theorists like Schimmelfennig, accession to the European Union is driven by **promises** that member states or European institutions made in the past. These two parties may have made comments or promises in the past and because of the fact that they are part of a community that values credibility and legitimacy, their promises still hold, even when the situation in the future might change. Member states have a moral obligation to come back to their older promises and support progress in the accession process if that is what they have promised to the countries wishing to join. So, these promises eventually determine if the process of negotiation talks will be started and maintained or not.

For Turkey, this would mean that the country and other member states in favor of a Turkish accession can almost extort progress in the negotiations process if there have been expressed certain statements, commitments or promises with regard to a Turkish accession. On the basis of that, the Turkish government and member states that are in favor of a Turkish accession can remind institutions and opposing member states that they have moral obligations to fulfill to Turkey and that not following their own statements, makes them look inconsistent and unreliable by others within and outside of the European community. Since the European Union would not want to risk damaging its reputation, it will advance the negotiation talks with Turkey so that the idea of an accession will stay an option. To conclude, even though there are no states or institutions that directly influence Turkish accession here, the promises made by these two can do that. To avoid being rhetorically entrapped, opponents of a Turkish accession need to change their behavior and align it with the community's standards again.

If rhetorical entrapment is the case, one will see verbal exchanges between Turkey and the European Union, in which the European Union becomes more and more entrapped. Turkey, European member states and the European institutions that support advances in the negotiation talks will remind the opposing member states of the promises they have made in the past. At some point, there is no other way out than to advance the negotiation talks with Turkey, even though there is no consensus on it in the community.

These three theories are at the basis of this research concerning the accession negotiation process between Turkey and the European Union. These expectations, in combination with observable manifestations that will be discussed in the Methods part of this thesis, I can research why the Turkish accession process goes the way it does, including the phases of progress and stagnation that follow each other. With the expectations

described above, certain events in the passage of the Turkish accession talks can be linked to a driver that is connected to one of these three theories.

III Methods

The research question of this thesis was answered via a qualitative research. Through an outcome-explaining process-tracing analysis, I wanted to find out how the causes influence the outcome in the Turkish accession process. Process-tracing can be executed by systematically examining and analyzing pieces of evidence in light of research questions, mostly in within-case analyses. Doing this, one can describe all sorts of social and political phenomena and research causal sequences and claims in them (Collier, 2011). Beach and Pedersen (2013) describe the main goal of process-tracing as going beyond merely identifying correlations between independent variables and outcomes. This can be done by studying the causal mechanism that is between the X's and the Y. When the researcher does this well, strong within-case causal inferences can be made and the degree of confidence in a certain theorized causal mechanism can be updated.

In the case of this thesis, I am interested in the causal process of Turkey's long accession negotiations with the European Union. On the face of it, Turkey does not seem to be the most pertinent candidate for EU membership, which is why the country was selected for this research. Following Gerring's case selection methods (2006), Turkey can be specified as an extreme case, as it shows unusual values on certain variables, when compared to other (candidate) member states. Because of the differences between Turkey and other member states and its status as an extreme case, process-tracing is a good way to analyze the negotiations, as the peculiarities of the Turkish case can be highlighted in the analysis. More on Turkey can be found in the last part of this Methods section.

The official negotiation process between Turkey and the European Union was opened in 2005, while the two had been closely cooperating for a long time before that. Yet, as of today, the negotiation talks still have not led to a Turkish accession. Because the factors that can play a part in an accession process have already been identified by others in the three theories, the most important goal for this thesis is to find the theory that is most appropriate for the Turkey case and to find a sufficient explanation for the outcome. The goal here is not to theorize another explanation or to test one, but to explain the case and outcome we see, due to this, the research is more case-centric than is it theory-centric. This approach makes the research at hand outcome-explaining (Beach & Pedersen, 2013).

In this research, I study the Turkish negotiation process for accession to the European Union. The outcome, no Turkish accession, can be explained by closely analyzing the trajectory. The potential causes, or the factors that influence the process and the outcome, are the three theories discussed in the theory section. The causes are actions and the consequences of these actions for the accession process. Everything that happened during the negotiation process can be categorized within one of these theories and afterwards, we can see what actions, and thus what theory or theories, can explain the accession process the most accurately. Almost all actions within the causal process that caused some acceleration or progress can be explained by either national interests of member states, the shared community values between the EU and Turkey or the rhetorical entrapment of the European Union. The goal of the analysis is to find out what theory can describe the progress the best, or in other words, what cause has influenced the outcome the most, as to answer what is still driving the Turkish accession process.

Based on the three theories, observable manifestations in reality can be described. In the Theory part, I have already discussed the general expectations, but there are also specific actions taken by the drivers for each theory. If rational choice theory drives the

progress in the Turkish accession negotiations, I expect to see member states that urge on EU institutions for more speed in the negotiation talks. This comes from their own preferences: if the member states deem a Turkish accession or rapprochements beneficial, they will express that and ask for more action to be taken in the process. Important documents here are the conclusions of Council meetings between the heads of state and government or other national ministers.

When supranational institutions that represent the general interest of the EU initiate progress, this will most likely mean that sociological constructivism is behind the development. The European Commission is the executive branch of the EU, so not all of its actions can be seen as evidence for sociological constructivism, but when it comes on its own accord, without them being given the task to do so, it can be seen as such. Examples are positive opinions on Turkey and announcements of initiatives in Commission reports.

Concrete evidence of rhetorical action theory in the Turkish accession process is the presence of a promise of Turkish accession that has turned into moral obligations towards Turkey. EU officials or influential member states need to have expressed something about Turkey's accession in the past and every time they are reminded of that, progress in the process will be visible. Mentions of the European community's standards are also a clear sign of rhetorical action theory.

Because the accession negotiations between Turkey and the European Union have been going for a long time, analyzing the entire process in depth would be too much for this thesis. That is why I selected three periods that show the most activity between both parties. The pairs of two years that I have chosen are 2004/2005, 2012/2013 and 2015/2016. In 2005, the negotiation talks with Turkey were formally opened by the European Union and in the year before that, it was announced that that would happen if Turkey fulfilled all requirements. In 2012, after years of non-action, the Positive Agenda was launched to reinvigorate the accession negotiations and in 2013, important agreements on visa liberalization for Turkish citizens and Turkey's cooperation regarding readmitting illegal migrants were made. In 2015 and 2016, more cooperation and more bilateral summits were needed to combat illegal immigration, leading to a big deal between Turkey and the European Union. In 2016, the relations between Turkey and the EU worsened after the coup attempt and the Turkish government's reaction.

By analyzing the process, focusing on the most important dates, I discovered the causal process of the negotiations leading to today's reality of Turkey not being a member state. The foundation of this research is the analysis of documents published by European institutions, the Turkish government and European member states regarding the Turkish accession process. This includes reports by the European Commission, conclusions of meetings between European and Turkish representatives by the European Council or the Turkish government and conclusions and notes of the presidents of the Commission and the Council. The most important reports were the Regular Reports on Turkey's Progress and the EU Enlargement Strategy papers, both published annually by the European Commission. Next to that, conclusions of the member state that held the biannual presidency of the Council of the European Union, European Council conclusions and conclusions by the presidents of the European Commission and the European Council were also used. All of the reports and other documents were freely available online, mostly via the official websites of the EU institutions and the Turkish government.

To gain insight in the way the negotiations were seen by others outside of the official institutions of the two parties, I also analyzed newspaper reports from the biggest press

agencies. In those news items, events or reactions to events that were not reported by the European institutions were shared with the European population. In addition, reactions by individual European heads of state and government could be found in there, in contrary to the shared reaction published the EU institutions. Analyzing news reports was done via the news database of LexisNexis (NexisUni). Lastly, to get an expert view on the accession process, I analyzed the reports regarding Turkey and the negotiations by the European think tank CEPS.

The European Union
In 1957, six Western European countries, which were Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West-Germany, united forces in the European Economic Community, the predecessor of the European Union. Through six enlargement rounds between 1973 and 2013 the number of European member states grew to 28. In January 2020, the Brexit process was completed and as a result, the United Kingdom formally left the European Union, making the total number of member states 27 as of June 2020. At this point, there are also eight countries in the accession process. Six of them are in the negotiation process (including Turkey) or waiting for the negotiation process to start and the last two countries are potential candidates that were promised the prospect of joining once they are ready for it (European Commission, 2016).

Accession process to the European Union
As described by the European Commission, the EU's enlargement policy is a geostrategic investment in peace, stability, security and prosperity in Europe. There are strict conditions and accession is always based on the candidate country's own merits, by implementing extensive reforms in many areas. In Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) it states that any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 (of the TEU) and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union (Treaty on European Union, 2012). The values that are discussed in Article 2 of the TEU are respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights (including the rights of persons belonging to a minority group).

In short, to join the European Union a country needs to demonstrate that it will be able to fulfill all obligations connected to European Union membership. When a country has complied with all rules and standards of the European Union, has the consent of the EU institutions and the individual EU member states and has the consent of its population (via a voting in the national parliament or a referendum), it can join (European Commission, 2016). The speed of the entire process depends on the pace of reforms implemented by the candidate state and the alignment with EU standards. The Commission distinguishes ten steps in the actual accession process, which have been summarized in table 1.

The accession criteria for a country to become a member states are called the Copenhagen criteria, named after the European Council summit in 1993 in Copenhagen in which they were defined by the EU leaders. There are political criteria, which ensure democracy, the rule of law and human rights and also economic criteria, regarding a market economy that is capable of competing. The last part of the criteria is the candidate country's administrative and institutional capacity to implement the *acquis communautaire*. The *acquis* is divided into 35 chapters in the negotiation framework, where each chapter covers a different policy area. For every chapter, benchmarks have been formulated to guide the candidate country in fulfilling all obligations to become an EU member (European

Commission, 2020). Next to the criteria for the candidate countries, the European Union's capacity to absorb a new member state is also crucial for the accession process (European Commission, 2016).

Step	Action	Actor
1	Submission of membership application to the presidency of Council of the European Union	Potential candidate
2	Review of application and formation of opinion on it	European Commission
3	Attribution of candidate status to potential candidate	European Council
4	Publication of screening report identifying shortcomings and negotiation framework	European Commission
5	Compliance with *acquis* through implementation of EU laws and standards	Candidate country
6	Successful closure of all negotiation chapters and fulfillment of all obligations	Candidate country
7	Creation of accession treaty	European Commission
8	Agreement on accession treaty Signing of accession treaty	Council of the European Union European Commission European Parliament All EU member states Acceding country
9	Ratification of accession treaty	Acceding country All EU member states
10	Accession	New EU member state

Table 1: the European accession process (European Commission, 2016; 2020).

Turkey
This thesis specifically focuses on Turkey and the Turkish accession process. Turkey is a secular republic established by Atatürk after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, who pushed the country towards Europe, democracy and a market economy. Because of its location on both the European and Asian continent, Turkey has a strategic location and controls the entrance of the Black Sea. This led to Turkey playing a very important role in the region.

Turkey has a population of over 84 million and about a quarter of the population is younger than 14 years older. The most important religion in Turkey is Islam, with estimated percentages of between 85 and 99 of the population being Muslim, mostly Sunni. Other religions have been declining. Atatürk cut all ties between the state and Islam, but a revival of Islamic practices in politics has been observed ever since a growing number of Islamic political groups have challenged the full secularization of the country.

Turkey's president is Recep Tayyip Erdogan, after he won the elections in 2013 for the second time. Erdogan is a founding member of his Justice and Development Party (AKP) which is rooted in Islam. In a referendum in 2017, the Turkish population supported a switch to a presidential system, which made Erdogan gain substantial powers.

Turkish opposition parties find him an autocratic leader who tries to silence anyone who does not agree with him. His supporters mostly recognize the economic growth he brought Turkey.

About 20% of the Turkish population is Kurdish. The Kurds live in mostly in the south eastern parts of the country. The Kurdish population accuses the Turkish state of trying to destroy their cultural identity ever since Ataturk proclaimed the republic, wanting to unite and unify all Turks in the country and treating the Kurds as second-class citizens. Erdogan has improved the Kurdish situation, although the biggest Kurdish political organization, the PKK, is forbidden and considered to be a terrorist group by Turkey and the European Union. Since 1990, the PKK has organized terrorist attacks throughout Turkey to achieve autonomy for the Kurds. Other Kurdish political parties have been tolerated by Erdogan, but a very high electoral threshold restrains them from joining the Turkish parliament.

In 1974, the Greek military junta organized a coup d'état to annex the entire Cypriote island. At that time, 75% of the Cypriote population belonged to the Greek-speaking community, while the other 25% were Turkish speaking. The Turkish military responded with two invasions and captured roughly the northern part of the island. To end the fighting, a cease-fire and a buffer zone were declared by the United Nations. This buffer zone is still present to this day and divides the island in a Greek and a Turkish speaking zone. The Greek-speaking community holds about two thirds of the island and is internationally recognized as a legitimate state (Republic of Cyprus), which joined the European Union in 2004. The Turkish-speaking part, called the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is only recognized by Turkey. Since the events in 1974, there have been no diplomatic relations between Greece and Turkey.

This conflict with Cyprus has led to an important delay in the Turkish accession process. In 1963, the Ankara Agreement was signed by Turkey and the European Economic Community as a framework for economic cooperation between the two. In 2005, an additional protocol, called the Ankara Protocol, was signed to prolong the first agreement and to include the ten countries that became EU members the year before. One of these countries was Cyprus. Turkey signed the Ankara Protocol, but also published a separate declaration to set out its views on Cyprus. In there, it was stated that the new protocol would not lead to any form of recognition of the Republic of Cyprus, as it referred to in the Protocol. Turkey did not take the required actions to implement the Protocol and make trade between Turkey and Cyprus possible. This was, and still is, one of the biggest blockades in Turkey's accession process, as it is fairly unusual to have membership negotiations with a candidate that does not recognize one of the members of the organization.

IV Analyses

i. 2004-2005

Reconstruction
In 1999 at the European Council meeting in Helsinki, the European heads of state and government concluded that 'Turkey is a candidate State destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate States.' (European Council, 1999).

A couple of years later, in 2002, the Commission recognized and noted in its 2002 Regular Report on Turkey's Progress (European Commission, 2002) that Turkey had made progress through the reform packages, but that, at that point, the progress was too limited for any action in the direction of Turkish membership. The Turkish government had implemented some reforms, for example, in 2001, there was a major constitutional reform and in 2002, the country abolished the death penalty and gave more rights to the Kurdish minority group in the south east. However, most other reforms packaged still had to be implemented and issues in other domains had not even been addressed yet by the Turkish government. Turkey was encouraged to continue implementing reform packages. In December 2002, during the European Council in Copenhagen, it was decided to re-examine Turkey's progress and its fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria again at the end of 2004 to give Turkey the chance to implement the packages and improve the country's situation to reach the desired standard (European Council, 2003).

In May 2004, during the Irish presidency, the European Union had its biggest enlargement to date, when in total ten countries from Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltics and two Mediterranean islands joined the Union. To celebrate this, all member and candidate member states were invited, Turkey included.

In June of 2004, during the European Council meeting the European Union expressed its commitment to Turkey's possible future accession by stating that the EU would open the accession negotiations with Turkey without delay if the Council decided that Turkey fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria for accession. The Council would make its decision on the basis of the report and of the recommendation of the European Commission that would be published no later than October 2004 (European Council, 2004).

In October of 2004, during the Netherlands' presidency of the Council of the European Union, the European Commission stated in the 2004 Regular Progress Report for Turkey (European Commission, 2004) that Turkey in fact fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria and that accession negotiations could begin. In its Recommendation written to the European Parliament and the European Council, **it recommended the opening of the accession negotiations talk to be started at the end of 2005** (European Commission, 2004). Both the report and the recommendation mentioned how there had been substantial legislative and institutional convergence since 2002 from the Turkish side to European standards, after decades of barely any progress. After the first major constitutional reform in 2001, there was another one in 2004 and between 2002 and 2004, eight legislative packages had been adopted by the Turkish parliament, all in line with the Accession Partnership. These reforms in combination with a Turkish guarantee to keep implementing the other reform packages recommended by the EU made the Commission decide to publish its positive recommendation.

In December of 2004, when the heads of state and government of the European member states came together in the European Council, they also declared that Turkey fulfilled the criteria for accession and decided that the accession negotiations with Turkey should be opened on 3 October 2005 (European Council, 2004). This decision was mostly based on the Council's earlier promise of accepting Turkey as a candidate state as soon as it was ready, which was now the case.

For the Dutch, this was the highlight of their presidency, because there were still a few states that had doubts about the opening of the accession talks at the beginning of the presidency (Clingendael, 2005). Some countries (Austria, France, Germany and the Netherlands itself) were critical about Turkey and especially about the human rights situation and the position and protection of minorities (Kurdish, Christians). These member states initially wanted negotiations about a privileged partnership with Turkey instead of a full membership of the Union. Prime minister Erdogan of Turkey had always refused this special treatment and wanted to be treated like the other states that were candidate members for a complete membership, a partnership association would not be sufficient for his government (AP Worldstream, 2005).

Just before the European Council meeting in December 2004, Dutch prime minister Balkenende flew to Berlin, Paris and Vienna to talk about the objections these states had. When these objections seemed to be solved and the draft conclusions of the Council about the Turkish negotiation talks were sent to Erdogan, the latter refused to sign it because it included a recognition of Cyprus. The Netherlands needed the help of the 'big three' to turn the Council meeting into a success, so the British prime minister Blair and the German chancellor Schröder were asked to talk to Erdogan, while the French president Chirac tried to avoid a Cypriote veto regarding the Turkish negotiation talks by speaking to the prime minister of Cyprus, Papadopoulos (Clingendael, 2005). This approach worked because during the December summit, all 25 members of the European Union agreed to the opening of the Turkish accession talks in 2005. Furthermore, Erdogan accepted an indirect recognition of Cyprus via the customs union agreement.

In May and June of 2005, just before the opening of the accession talks, the French and the Dutch population voted against the European Constitution in national referendums. For the European Union, this was a big hit and for a while, there was quite a bit of turmoil, because the media were discussing the failure of the European Union. After the failed implementation of the European Constitution, the EU was in a bit of an impasse. Multiple plans did not work out and there was not a lot of progress made, the dynamism was gone. If in October 2005, when the accession talks were scheduled to be opened, the opening was postponed or canceled, this would be catastrophic, it would mean another blow for the European Union and it would lose face with yet another sign of failure trying to work on deepening and widening the Union. The existence of the European Union would be unsure after so many failures, so that the confidence of the population of countries that did believe in the EU would decrease, as well (AFP 2005).

In combination with this, since the European Union dealt with an impasse, not a single politician wanted to be held responsible for actually delaying or canceling another big European project (AFP, 2005). After several failed projects and missions, the European Union needed a boost to show its strength again and the Turkish accession negotiations could be exactly that. The politician that possibly blocked that, would be seen as the person that blocked the entire progress of the European Union and wanted the EU to fail as a project. So, all heads of state and government, despite the public dissatisfaction in their respective

countries, agreed to the start of the talks, because they did not want to carry that responsibility and the reproaches later on. The states that did voice objections, were persuaded rather quickly.

In the international media, a Turkish accession was seen as a chance for the EU to lose its label of a closed, old, Christian club and improve its image in the Arab world. Turkey is seen by many as a country that forms a bridge between Europe and the Middle-East. It has connections and is trading with both blocs. When Turkey was to join the European Union, this could mean that the EU as a whole profits from the bonds Turkey has with the Middle East. The Arab countries would be given a chance to see that the EU did not prematurely preclude close cooperation and integration with a Muslim country. By accepting Turkey as one of them, the EU would be able to improve its reputation in all Muslim countries. Furthermore, it would improve the EU's competitiveness and keep the continent open to new ideas and influences, not just from Turkey, but from the entire Arab world. On the other hand, blocking a Turkish accession would only create more skepticism towards the EU coming from the Arab world (The Financial Times, 2005).

Although the public opinion on accession was quite negative, the European Union has seen multiple advantages in having Turkey as one of its member states. One of these advantages is the relatively young population of Turkey. Especially the Western countries of the EU deal with an ageing population, which could cause problems in the future concerning the labor market. There are too many jobs for not enough people, but with the young population of Turkey that is willing to move to countries where they earn more money, this problem could be fixed, and the EU could welcome labor migrants from Turkey more regulated and easily (AFP, 2004).

The general public's opinion on Turkey was not very positive, many European voters thought Turkey was too different from the member states to become a successful member of the EU. However, the European Union had made a promise in the past and to not lose credibility or create tensions, the EU had to come back to those (The Financial Times, 2005). Turkey went through strict reforms to fulfill criteria to become a member, not recognizing that could lead to Turkey closing the door forever. It would strip the EU of its credibility (demanding reforms, but not acting on it when implemented) and it would alienate Turkey from the EU and maybe even from the social democracy it was becoming. The European Union pushing away Turkey means that Turkey has to look for allies to the country's east or south and can become a dangerously embittered neighbor for the European continent (The Financial Times, 2005). According to British foreign secretary Straw this will never be in Europe's favor. On the other hand, if the European Union accepts Turkey, it will continue to reform and improve, as a big country near the European Community this is crucial (AFP, 2005).

In March of 2005 the European Union wanted to open accession negotiations with Croatia, but they were postponed to October of that year, simultaneously with the planned start of the Turkish accession negotiations. The first half of the year, Luxembourg held the European Council presidency, while the United Kingdom did so the second half of the year. The former country did not expect to have to work on the Turkish accession talks a lot and in between the decision to open negotiation talks and the planned date, the Turkish enlargement has not been much of a topic in the European Commission or European Council.

In general, the UK presidency was not seen as a very inspiring one. One of the domains the country was successful in, was enlargement, because the Turkish accession

talks were opened during the presidency. It was called a notable achievement in the face of considerable obstacles by many. It is thought that the public opposition to the European Constitution in France and the Netherlands was linked to the future enlargement process with Turkey, because the population feared lower wages in their own countries or were in general against Turkey in the European Union. The Turkish prime minister Erdogan blamed the governments of France and the Netherlands for not defending the vision of an 'alliance of civilizations' between Muslim Turkey and Christian Western Europe (The Financial Times, 2005).

The build-up to the accession talks already started to show some issues. In July of 2005, Turkey signed the Additional Protocol to extend the Ankara Agreement to all EU members, but reiterated in a separate 'Declaration by Turkey on Cyprus' that this did not mean that it recognized the Republic of Cyprus, as referred to in the Protocol, in any form or that Turkey's policy on Cyprus changed. It did state its commitment to finding a comprehensive settlement for the Cyprus issue (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005).

In September of 2005, the European Community acknowledged this signature by Turkey in a statement, but regretted the extra declaration Turkey issued (European Commission, 2005). The Commission mentioned that it regrets the fact that the Turkish government thought the declaration regarding Cyprus was necessary and that the full implementation of the Protocol is obligatory for continuation of the accession process. If Turkey fails to implement parts of the Protocol, this will affect the progress of the negotiations, since the opening of specific chapters in the negotiation process depends on the Turkish implementation of the Protocol. The EU stated that is it going to evaluate the full implementation in 2006. As long as Turkey does not apply the Additional Protocol of the Ankara Agreement to *all* EU members, so including Cyprus, there are eight negotiation chapters that will not be opened, which means that the negotiations cannot be completed until that is fixed (European Commission, 2006).

More barriers appeared when the planned opening date of the negotiation talks came closer. First off, the German chancellor Merkel stated that she preferred a privileged partnership instead of a full membership for Turkey. Moreover, the Austrian government voiced, once more, its opposition to Turkish negotiations and threatened to veto every attempt with regard to opening the accession negotiations at the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) in Luxembourg. This Austrian opposition in particular was not received well by the other member states and the European institutions. It came at the very last moment, on 3 October, while the Austrian government had had at least a year to voice opposition after the decision was made in October a year before to open negotiations with Turkey. Media suspected that Austria intended to use its veto power regarding Turkey to try to open accession talks with Croatia, something it was particularly in favor of (AFP, 2005).

The fact that the talks were opened on the planned date was partly caused by the absence of chancellor Merkel and her CDU party at the GAERC, because they were occupied forming a coalition in Germany. Next to that, on the day of the opening of the accession talks, the chief prosecutor of the UN war crimes tribunal reported that Croatia had fully cooperated with a legal case of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. This led to the possibility of opening accession talks with Croatia. Because of the Croatian accession negotiations that started, Austria was willing to lessen its opposition to the Turkish membership and accept it.

Eventually, just before midnight on 4 October, the foreign ministers of all member states at the Intergovernmental Conference unanimously agreed to **the official opening of the Turkish accession negotiations**. Although the decision to open the talks was already made earlier, the UK presidency recognized that failing to actually open them would have created important difficulties for the relationship between the European Union and Turkey (Chatham House, 2006). The negotiation framework was accepted by the European Council on the basis of a proposal of the European Commission. In the General EU Position, the European Council published an opening statement, the negotiating framework and the external arrangements, although it was clearly stated that the accession process is open-ended and accession is not a guaranteed final result. If Turkey cannot fulfill its obligations concerning membership, it should at least be anchored in the European structures (European Council, 2005).

As said, the member state that voiced a lot of doubts regarding the Turkish negotiation talks was Austria. To help mediate with that, the Turkish prime minister Erdogan called the secretary of state of the United States Rice. Since the US has always clearly voiced that it is in favor of a Turkish membership, this was a strategic move by Erdogan. According to the Berliner Zeitung (AFP, 2005) it also showed how Erdogan saw the EU: weak and easily influenceable. By threatening with a veto, Austria damaged the EU's principle of decision-making based on unanimity. After Austria's threat, the foreign ministers of the other member states were powerless and only help from outside the EU could improve the situation. Some analysts say that this solved impasse was reached by the UK presidency, many more in fact praised Rice for her efforts to get the talks between the member states going again (AFP, 2005). Although generally in this context, the American efforts were appreciated, it does raise the question whether Turkey has a place in the European Union with these actions. This time, Turkey succeeded with American help, but when the negotiations have started, and the European population rejects Turkey as a member state, just like they rejected the European Constitution, nothing can be done.

A state that could have blocked the opening of the accession talks but did not, was Cyprus. Although the Additional Protocol to the Ankara Agreement included a customs union with all members of the EU, trade between Cyprus and Turkey was not possible yet in October 2005. But, instead of vetoing the opening of the talks, Cyprus tried to find support from the other member states for the position it was in. The Cypriote government finds that the only way to solve the Cyprus matter is by having Turkey be a member of the European Union, just like Germany and France came together in a union to solve their problems after the war.

Multiple heads of member states expressed that negotiation talks with a country that did not recognize one of the other member states would be absurd (AFP, 2005). European Parliament president Borrell stated that Turkey cannot negotiate with the EU without recognizing one of its members. If Turkey does not open up its economy to trade with Cyprus, the negotiations should be suspended according to him. Yet, after the negotiations were opened, he also said that a failure to open the accession talks with Turkey would have been a disaster for the European Union and the credibility of the Union, especially after the recent difficulties to reach an agreement on the EU budget and the national referendums on the European Constitution (AFP, 2005).

Evaluation

In these two years, two concrete instances of progress in the Turkish accession to the European Union have been made. In 2004, the European Commission recommended for the negotiations talk to start after its promise in 2002 to re-examine Turkey in two years. In 2005, the accession negotiations with Turkey were formally opened.

In 2002, Turkey did not yet fulfill the Copenhagen political criteria, but the European Council made a promise to re-examine Turkey two years later. After those two years, the European Commission noted multiple substantial reforms that aligned Turkey more with the *acquis communautaire* of the Union. At that point, some states preferred a privileged partnership with Turkey over a full membership, but prime minister Erdogan had always refused that. The Commission reported on the fulfillment of the criteria and eventually, all member states in the Council agreed with the opening of the negotiations. In between the promise and the decision to open negotiations, the EU reiterated its commitment to Turkey multiple times, as well. Around the time of the decision to open negotiations, the European Union had reached an impasse. After the failed implementation of the European Constitution, not a lot of plans were executed anymore. Opening negotiations with Turkey would bring new chances for the EU to show that it was a successful project that was open to new and different influences.

The decision to open the negotiations, was mostly based on the promise the EU made in 2002, that if Turkey fulfilled all Copenhagen political criteria by 2004, the EU would immediately plan a date to actually open the negotiation process. In 2004, after multiple big reforms in Turkey, the Commission came to the conclusion that Turkey did indeed fulfill the criteria now. Based on the earlier promise, the EU had to go through with its commitment to Turkey and plan a date for the start of the accession process. The fact that the EU had landed in an impasse made the need bigger to announce something that could reinvigorate the entire project again.

Something that may have helped with the decision to open the negotiations, is the fact that it was known by all member states that the process was going to take a very long time. Even though Turkey reached the criteria now, there were plenty of other things that still needed to be addressed, which meant that Turkey would not become a member in just a couple of years. When opening the negotiations, EU officials estimated at least a ten-year long process.

In the decision to open negotiations with Turkey, the supranational EU institutions had a leading role. The European Commission reported the fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria and that opened up the way for Turkey's accession talks. This role for EU institutions leads back to **sociological constructivism**. For this theory, supranational institutions that represent the entire community are the foundation. These institutions represent the *acquis communautaire* of the community and every state that sufficiently aligns with it, should be able to become a member of the organization. When the Commission saw Turkey's fulfillments of the criteria, it recommended the opening of negotiation talks, because on the basis of Turkey's situation at that point, it made sense to agree with an accession.

Adding to that, European institutions made a promise about re-examining Turkey and, in case of sufficient progress, opening negotiations talks. When the progress became real, the institutions could not ignore it, they had to act on it. They might have felt a bit rhetorically entrapped to fulfill their obligations towards Turkey. Especially since the individual member states did not necessarily agree with opening the accession talks. This

pressure as a result of having to act on earlier promises because not doing so would lead to reputation damage is part of **rhetorical action theory.**

In 2005, Turkey signed the Additional Protocol to extend the Ankara Agreement, but specifically stated that Cyprus was not included in it and that the protocol did not change its non-recognition of Cyprus. The European Union accepted this, although the decision was very much regretted. When the actual negotiation framework was to be opened, the expressions of opposition by the member states increased. At the meeting before the opening, one of the biggest opponents of the opening, Germany, was not present to block any actions. Another opponent, Austria, eventually gave up its veto regarding Turkey, because Croatia was allowed to start negotiations, as well. The USA, as a very visible proponent of the Turkish accession talks, played a supporting role, too.

The decision to follow through and open the negotiations talks with Turkey has mainly been made by relevant nation states. You could argue that the EU had already planned the date a year before, and that not following through with that, would cause damage to its credibility and legitimacy. However, the most important factors in the decision in October 2005 were individual states involved in the playing field. First off, Germany was not able to voice opposition anymore, so could not stop the opening from happened. Austria was 'offered' something else that it found much more important, so it decided to lessen its opposition. The USA, not a member state, but still a very important power in the international community, contributed, too. Lastly, the UK, holding the presidency of the Council of the European Union at that time, also wanted the negotiations to be opened, as it was seen as one of the few successes it had during the presidency.

The theory that explains this series of events the most accurately is **rational choice**. For practical reasons, the opposition of disagreeing member states disappeared, making agreeing to the opening easier for the other states. Member states (and relevant non-member states) that supported the negotiation talks did have the opportunity to voice that. In rational choice theory, the power balance during the bargaining process determines the final outcome. Here, voices of opposition were lost, while supporters had enough room in the bargaining process, which eventually made the balance tip to the side of opening the negotiations.

Because of the promise of re-examination of the requirements in 2002 and the specific date that was fixed in 2004, member states that opposed could have felt **rhetorically entrapped**, too. In the past, they agreed to a Turkish negotiation process and not following that decision now, would damage their reputation with the other member states. However, Turkey did not listen to EU appeals to recognize Cyprus. Opposing member states could have used that to downplay the moral obligation towards Turkey, since Turkey did not meet *all* requirements yet.

ii. 2012-2013

Reconstruction
After the formal opening of the accession negotiations in October 2005, the talks and the accession process went relatively well and the Turkish accession was not much of a discussion point anymore, since the European Union had already mentioned that the Turkey accession process was at least going to take ten years. However, in June of 2010, the decision was made to open no more negotiation chapters. The direct cause of this decision was a Cypriote blocking of six negotiation chapters in an attempt to make Turkey normalize

its relations with them. After the adoption of the customs union and the opening of the accession talks, Turkey still did not recognize the Republic of Cyprus and refused to open its airports and seaports for trade with Cyprus.

In the background, there were other, more indirect factors that played a role in the deceleration of the talks. For the first factor, the number of member states that openly were in favor of a Turkish accession declined. The few states that were still fairly enthusiastic, the United Kingdom for example, were accused of wanting to expand the European Union in order to weaken it (The Financial Times, 2011). The German and French governments' preference for a privileged partnership with Turkey was voiced louder as time went by and European Parliament members of the European's People Party supported this request, as well. In the case of full membership, the French and Austrian governments stated that they wanted to hold national referendums on the Turkish accession, which would mean a serious delay in the process (The Financial Times, 2011). In a reaction to the privileged partnership comments by Germany and France, the Turkish minister of EU affairs and the chief negotiator Bagis said that Turkey would not settle for anything less than a full Turkish membership, but that did not stop the European member states (dpa, 2011).

Another factor was that the European Union did not approve of the declining pace of reform implementations by the Turkish government. At the start of the negotiations there were a lot of reforms implemented, but after a while, this dynamism was lost and not a lot happened anymore. In the Europe this was seen as Ankara's way to push the West away since the reforms not being implemented mostly concerned press and religious freedom, human rights and gender equality (AFP, 2010; 2011).

Because of all these issues surroundings the accession talks, the process came near to a complete standstill. If the European Union was still convinced about the idea of a Turkish membership, something needed to be done. That is why, in October of 2011, the Commission, on its own, proposed a **Positive Agenda** for Turkey in the 2011 Regular Report on Turkey's Progress, which included a new timetable to revive negotiations and encourage reforms (European Commission, 2011). In Turkey's accession negotiations, there were 33 chapters which were assessed through a screening report for each chapter.
At the time of the 2011 Progress Report, thirteen negotiation chapters had been opened, nine screening reports were being discussed in the Council and one report had yet to be delivered to the Council by the Commission. For one chapter, the negotiations were provisionally successfully closed (Science and research). In December of 2006, the European Council had decided that negotiations would not be opened on eight chapters until Turkey withdrew its restriction regarding trade with Cyprus and that the other chapters would not be closed until Turkey fully implemented the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement. In the 2011 Progress Report, it was stated that this decision remained in force.

In the face of the growing Turkish economy while the EU dealt with a recession during a severe debt crisis, Turkish minister Bagis commented that Turkey's need for the EU diminished every day, while the EU's need for Turkey increased. He emphasized the prominent role that Turkish diplomats played in the pro-democratic movements in the Middle East during the Arab Spring. According to him, Erdogan was the only leader that could pray with the Arab leaders and later talk about democracy and secularism with them, thus fulfilling a bridge function between the Arab world and the West (dpa, 2011).

On 17 May 2012, the Enlargement Commissioner Füle flew to Ankara to launch the Positive Agenda together with Turkish ministers and negotiators. The Positive Agenda's goal was to give new momentum to Turkey's accession process and make concrete progress

where progress was feasible and needed after a couple of years of not opening new chapters. Domains of common interest were Turkish legislation, foreign policy, energy issues and the easing of travel restrictions for Turkish citizens (European Commission, 2012).

When launching the Agenda, Commissioner Füle held a press conference in which he stated that the stagnation of the accession negotiations caused a lot of frustrations for both parties and that the Agenda's goal was to bring back life into the talks and put in on track. The Agenda meant new ways of looking at the negotiations and each other as equal partners, because new goals and new determination, but also renewed efforts from both parties were needed to deliver results in the Turkish accession process.

The Positive Agenda itself focused on political reforms in eight domains in which Turkey needed to improve the most, these eight domains were political reforms, alignment with the EU acquis, foreign policy, more mobility and migration options for Turkish citizens through visas, the customs union, energy, counter-terrorism and Turkish participation in EU programs. To accelerate the process of reaching goals, the Commission and Turkey set up eight working groups for each domain that needed work. In the working groups, Turkey was guided and supported to come closer to the legislation of the European Union. And although most of the work was done by European and Turkish government officials, the Positive Agenda tried to engage and interact with civil society, as well. After the press conference, Füle met with several representatives of Turkish civil society organizations for human rights and fundamental freedoms to discuss these matters with them (European Commission, 2012).

The launch took place during the Danish presidency of the European Council, but in the second half of the year 2012, when the first reforms were to be implemented, the Cypriote government would be holding the presidency. The European debt crisis was still present and the European Union went through a period of great tensions with a weakened financial sector and low economic growth. Cyprus, during its presidency, was hit very hard in 2012 and 2013 (European Council, 2012).

In the beginning of June 2012, barely a month after the launch and just a month before the Danish government would hand over the presidency to Cyprus, Turkey announced that it would boycott the Cypriote presidency, in line with its non-recognition of the Republic of Cyprus. The first sounds of Turkey not acknowledging the Cypriote presidency were already heard in July of 2011 and despite a European appeal in December 2011 to accept the presidency, Turkey did not listen. It did state that it would limit the boycott to meetings with Cypriote officials, while meetings with the European Commission and European officials could go on as planned (AFP, 2012). Because the Cypriote government did not want this action to affect its presidency and to keep its bilateral issues with Turkey out of its European businesses, it was not mentioned anymore by European officials in public or in official documents (AFP, 2012).

In spite of Turkey refusing to maintain normal relations with Cyprus, the European Commission and the Council continued to work on improving the EU-Turkish relations, mostly on the basis of the national interests of the member states. On 21 June 2012, there was held a special European Council meeting on developing cooperation with Turkey in the areas of Justice and Home Affairs. The focus points of the meeting were illegal immigration from Turkey towards the EU, visa liberalization for Turkish citizens and the need of a growing cooperating with Turkey in the area of Justice and Home Affairs. At the meeting, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs Malmström and the Turkish minister Bagis also made a preliminary agreement on the Readmission Agreement between the EU and Turkey.

In June, the Syrian civil war escalated and illegal migration from Turkey into EU territory (mainly Bulgaria and Greece) increased, which was an immense concern of the EU. During the meeting, the Council acknowledged Turkey's efforts with regard to border management and encouraged them to keep doing that, as it was an interest shared by both Turkey and the EU. The need to establish a cooperation framework between Turkey, FRONTEX and EUROPOL was discussed, as well. The European Union stressed the importance and necessity of concluding and signing the Readmission Agreement. In return, the Council expressed that it knew about the importance that Turkey attached to travel facilitations for its citizens into EU territory, especially in the light of the on-going accession process and the new positive agenda (European Council, 2012). On the basis of that meeting, the Council asked the Commission to establish a cooperation framework that treated all these matters.

A day later, on 22 June, there was an EU-Turkey Association Council, which was used to review the relations between the European Union and Turkey. The European Union noted progress in the negotiation framework, but repeated that the progress depends mostly on Turkey reaching the benchmarks that were set up. To fully fulfill all conditions of the Copenhagen criteria and to align with the *acquis communautaire*, increased Turkish efforts were needed. The creation of a special Turkish ministry for EU affairs already showed some renewed commitment and was welcomed by the Council (European Council, 2012).

To meet Turkey in its efforts with regard to the Readmission Statement, the European Commission prepared a roadmap for visa liberalization for Turkish citizens. In it, there were identified several areas in which Turkey would have to implement legislative and administrative reforms, as well as other requirements needed, so that a secure environment for visa-free traveling would be created. The speed of the process would be dependent on Turkey's reform implementation pace, but also on a full implementation of the Readmission Agreement, which was planned to run parallel to the liberalization process: without the requirements regarding readmitting illegal migrants into Turkey, the roadmap to visa liberalization could not be concluded successfully (European Commission, 2012).

The Readmission Agreement had as its main objectives that both the EU and Turkey would quickly and orderly readmit a person to their territory, if that person no longer fulfilled the conditions to be present on or to enter the other party's territory. This would not only apply to European member states' or Turkish citizens, but also people from other countries or without a nationality (EU Delegation to Turkey, 2012). In practice, this meant that the Turkish government would readmit illegal migrants from third-party countries into Turkey. The agreement was based on a joint responsibility to manage the migratory flows between the EU and Turkey and in order to support Turkey implement the agreement, the EU was going to make financial resources available to Turkey (Official Journal of the European Union, 2012).

In the Council meeting of December 2012, Turkey was discussed. A large number of legal cases against writers, journalists, academics and human rights defenders and the banning of websites worried the Council and needed to be addressed effectively through judicial reform packages to ensure freedom of media. Regarding Cyprus, it was repeated that a full implementation of the Additional Protocol towards all member states would mean a significant boost in the accession process (European Council, 2012).

In January 2013, the Irish presidency of the European Council started with a focus on a financial recovery for the European Union, securing stability and more jobs and growth. Restoring the momentum in the Turkish accession process was also one of the priorities. For

the first time in three years, the EU agreed to open a chapter from the negotiation framework, the 22nd chapter, on regional policy (eu2013.ie, 2013). At the start of the second presidency, held by Lithuania, Croatia joined the European Union as the 28th member. Although Croatia and Turkey began their accession talks with the European Union at the same time, Turkey was still nowhere near accession, while Croatia had just joined.

After an eventful 2012 filled with progress, the Turkish pace declined. The Turkish government made some socially sensitive decisions without much dialogue with the other parties involved. This led to tensions within the population and in May of 2013, protests against a development project started in Gezi Park, next to the Taksim square in Istanbul. The demonstrations spread to other Turkish cities, and despite them being mostly peaceful, the Turkish police used excessive force against the demonstrators, which led to six deaths and thousands of injured people. More than 3500 people were put into police custody. The European Commission described the political climate as polarized in the 2013 Regular Report for Turkey's Progress and promoted dialogue between societal parties (European Commission, 2013).

Next to the political polarization and lack of compromises, the European Commission also reiterated its concern about the freedom of expression and freedom of media in Turkey. The protests in June were barely reported and when they were, downplayed in the media and the authorities made intimidating statements on tv. In addition to that, public figures and journalists had been convicted for critical remarks on religion or the. To improve the situation, a new judicial reform packages was advised by the Commission in the Enlargement strategies and Main challenges 2013-2014 document (European Commission, 2013).

At the end of May, there was another EU-Turkey Association Council. The European Union repeated the same statements about the full implementation of the Additional Protocol, normalization of Turkish-Cypriote relations and Turkey's role in its neighborhood, particularly in supporting Syrians fleeing violence. The Turkish representatives expressed their disappointment about the speed and scope of the accession process. According to the Turkish minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoglu the Cyprus issue could not be resolved due to a lack of political will by the Cypriote government in spite of the efforts of the Turkish government and the Turkish administrative part of Cyprus (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013).

In June of 2013, Germany blocked the opening of the 22nd negotiation chapter with Turkey because of the hard-handed police actions surrounds the protests at the Taksim square in Istanbul. The German proposal to postpone the negotiations with four months (after the German elections) was backed by Austria and the Netherlands, as Turkey should not be rewarded with negotiations after the violent crackdown (The Financial Times, 2013). The proposal caused a lot of tensions between the German and Turkish government, but was successful in the end, since the negotiations were not opened (AFP, 2013).

In September 2013, Turkey's prime minister Erdogan announced an extensive democratization package. Lifting the ban on women wearing headscarves in parliament was one of the most important changes. Lowering the threshold for political parties was another reform, which made it possible for smaller Kurdish parties to join the elections. In the media, Erdogan was accused of being an intolerant and authoritarian leader after the government's response to the protests in May and June and this reform package was meant to prove the opposite, directing Turkey towards democracy instead of autocracy (AFP, 2013).

In October 2013, at the Council meeting for the ministers of Foreign Affairs, the ministers did agree to opening the 22nd chapter of the negotiation framework after the

Dutch government switched positions and announced that it would no longer veto a reopening. On the intergovernmental Accession Conference held 5 November 2013 in Brussels, the negotiations were officially opened. Turkish minister Bagis stated that the opening of a new chapter was a milestone in the Turkish accession process (AFP, 2013; European Council, 2013). Within the European member states, the reactions were mixed. Some countries' officials said that Turkish reforms and alignment to European standards would prevent the events that happened in May and June in the future. They even urged the European Union to open negotiation chapters 23 and 24 as soon as possible, since these treated more controversial issues like justice, fundamental rights, freedom and security (AFP, 2013). Other officials continued to see it as rewarding the Turkish authorities for breaching human rights and disproportional action against anti-government protestors. At the same meeting, talks about the Readmission Agreement and visa liberalization were also continued, but nothing was signed yet.

Eventually, on 16 December 2013, the **EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement** was signed by the Turkish minister Bagis and the European Commissioner Malmström. Simultaneously, the **Visa Liberalization Dialogue** was launched. This dialogue was started to eliminate the visa obligation for shorts visits to the Schengen area for Turkish citizens. The visa liberalization was based on the roadmap which included 72 benchmarks for Turkey, at the time of the launch, the country had met 66 of them (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013). At the time, the liberalization talks were planned to take at least three years. Both signatures were seen as a significant success in the EU-Turkey relations after a three-year period of non-action (dpa, 2013). The European Council looked forward to the swift ratification of the Agreement as Turkey is a key transit country for illegal immigration to the EU and thus crucial in the combat against it (European Council, 2013).

To the Turkish public, the Turkish ministers involved with the deal stressed the visa liberalization part of it. Although this part was substantially smaller and more uncertain than the Readmission Agreement, which was targeted at fixing the concerns of the European Union, it was not surprising that the ministers neglected the readmission side of the deal. Despite the agreement's focus on fixing the problems the European Union encountered, it did bring Turkey some progress in the form of more cooperation with the EU, as well. In addition to that, Turkey to implement new laws and create an administrative body to address the asylum situation for the refugees that were redirected towards Turkey. These laws actually brought Turkey in closer alignment with the *acquis* in this area. These subtle pieces of evidence of progress brought some much-needed goodwill and trust in the EU-Turkey relation. They showed that both parties wanted to work on the problems that had been growing between them in the years before. The biggest problem was the mistrust between both parties, as Turkey feared that it would become EU's dumping zone for unwanted migrants, while the EU had trouble with Turkey's uncooperative stand during the stressful migration crisis (CEPS, 2014).

Evaluation
The most important instances of progress in these two years were the launch of the Positive Agenda in 2012 and the signing of the Readmission Agreement coupled with the launch of the Visa Liberalization Dialogue in 2013.

After the opening framework was opened in 2004 and after a series of reforms in Turkey, the negotiation process came to a near standstill in 2010, mainly because of opposition from EU member states. In Turkey, the speed with which reforms were

implemented before declined, too. The Commission, on the other hand, was still committed to the idea of a Turkish accession and in 2011, it proposed a Positive Agenda for Turkey. In 2012, this Positive Agenda was launched to bring back life into the negotiation process. This initiative to reinvigorate the negotiation talks came exclusively from the European Commission and was mentioned in the Commission's Regular Report on Turkey's Progress. While the member states started to lose faith in a Turkish accession, the Commission was still trying to make it happen with this move to boost the process. Since the European Commission has a Commissioner whose policy area is European enlargement, he was mostly occupied with the launch.

Again, the only party that had a role in the Positive Agenda was the European Commission. The Commission represents the supranational interests of the EU and was apparently still committed to a community that included Turkey, as well. By launching the initiative, the Commission gave evidence of its view that Turkey still satisfied the conditions that were needed for the accession to continue. This step can be best explained by **sociological constructivism**, because this theory sees supranational institutions as relevant and meaningful actors in the European Union. If the Commission had not taken such a role as actor, a Positive Agenda would not have taken place, since the desire for a Turkish accession had disappeared in other actors. Following sociological constructivists, actors, here the European Commission, focus on shared understandings of the world and care about the legitimacy and appropriateness of its actions. We can conclude that the Commission saw reviving the accession talks as appropriate.

After the launch of the Positive Agenda, the situation in Europe's neighborhood started to worsen. The number of illegal entries from Turkey into the European Union increased and the EU saw that a more intensive dialogue between the EU and Turkey was needed to change that trend. One can notice that the number of meetings between the two was slowly growing throughout 2013 which could be seen as some sort of progress, because it brought the two parties closer together. However, the implementation pace of reforms in Turkey decreased again and the freedom of media was heavily violated, causing tensions and polarization in Turkey.

At the end of the year, the biggest advances in years were made through the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement and the launch of the Visa Liberalization Dialogue (VLD). The European Union needed a way to stop illegal migration into EU territory and Turkey had expressed demands for more progress in the accession negotiations, particularly more rights for Turkish citizens in the Schengen area. Both the European Union and Turkey had linked these two matters together to get what they wanted. Both had to make concessions: desired progress in one matter meant unwanted progress in the other matter, as well.

The signing of the Readmission Agreement was incredibly important for the European institutions, as well as for the member states. To show the European population that it was still in control of the big migratory flows coming into Europe, which caused a lot of concerns among the European population, the European Union had to act to strike a deal with Turkey. For European member states, the agreement was just as important, because their countries were overwhelmed by the number of migrants incoming. Turkey, that refused to act unless it brought them something positive, consented to progress in the roadmap towards visa-free travels to European member states for its citizens. Because of these intertwined interests, it is difficult to point to an actor that led the progress. Eventually the Commission, pressured by the member states, was the one who initiated the Readmission Agreement. Because Turkey would not sign such an agreement without

something beneficial in exchange, the Turkish role in this progress boost is also significant.

Linking this back to the theory, **rational choice theory** can explain the progress the best. In terms of actual progress in the accession process, only the visa liberalization dialogue applies. The Readmission Agreement was a big deal for the European Union, but from the Turkish perspective, it did not matter in the accession process. The Visa Liberalization Dialogue, on the other hand, was an important step in the negotiation process. Since the two were linked to each other, security interests of the European Union caused the VLD to be launched, and thus caused progress in the overall process. The fact that the interests of the individual member states are the deciding factor for progress, makes this an instance of rational choice theory.

iii. 2015-2016

Reconstruction

A year after the much-wanted launch of the Visa Liberalization Dialogue, Turkey presented a new European Union Strategy to strengthen and speed up the Turkish accession process. A month later, in October of 2014, the Readmission Agreement between the EU and Turkey entered into force. At the same time, the 2014 Regular Report on Turkey's Progress and the Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2014-2015 were published by the Commission. The documents discussed the steps taken by Turkey to resolve the Kurdish issue, but growing concerns on the independence of the judiciary, separation of powers and fundamental freedoms were discussed as well. Nonetheless, the Commission suggested opening the negotiation chapters on rule of law and fundamental rights as a roadmap for reforms and shared that a working group on the 23rd chapter (Judiciary and Fundamental rights) of the negotiation framework was set up as a result of the launch of the Positive Agenda in 2012 (European Commission, 2014).

In 2015, the EU and the surrounding regions had a difficult year. There were jihadist terrorist attacks throughout the year in France, Denmark, Germany and Turkey, Russia caused a lot of deaths and unrest in the Ukraine, Iceland withdrew its bid for European Union membership and an agreement on the Greek bailout after the European debt crisis had to be found. On their way to the European continent and fleeing the violence in North Africa and the Middle East, hundreds of migrants drowned in the Mediterranean Sea.

At the beginning of the year, the European Parliament said that it was time to advance talks with Turkey, agreeing with the suggestion of the Commission to open new chapters. This contradicted the Cypriote stance on the process, since Cyprus was still blocking two negotiation chapters. The leaders of Germany and Portugal also pushed for a new start in the negotiation talks (dpa, 2016).

In March of 2015, there was an EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee meeting to reflect on the EU-Turkey relations and the accession negotiations. The Turkish representatives stated that they would continue their efforts for a Turkish membership, even though negotiation chapters had not been opened recently. The accession process was meant to be a technical process of reforms, but had been completely politicized in the EU member states, which had caused a lot of delays and a decreasing support for the EU in the Turkish population. Turkey also suggested that it could contribution to more energy security in Europe, as the crisis in Ukraine had led to the EU having more trouble accessing energy (European Parliament, 2015).

In April 2015, a special European Council meeting was organized to discuss the situation in the Mediterranean and to find a way for the EU to bring immediate relief to the region. The EU wanted to prevent more people from dying at sea and decided to expand its presence at sea to rescue migrants and to fight the illegal migration flows organized by traffickers. To do that, the root causes needed to be addressed first and the EU promised to support the UN efforts to find stability in Syria and Libya. It was announced that the EU was going to step up its cooperation with Turkey (as a country of transit) to prevent illegal migration from Syria and Iraq. At the Council meeting in June, the topic was going to be discussed again (European Council, 2015).

In May of 2015, a working dinner between the High Representative for Foreign Affairs Mogherini, the Commissioner for Enlargement Hahn, Turkish Foreign Affairs minister Cavusoglu and the Turkish minister for EU Affairs Bozkir took place. The meeting preceded the EU-Turkish Association Council and was used to discuss points that were high on the agenda for both. The areas in which Turkey needed to take steps to revive the accession process were repeated by the EU officials, these were rule of law, justice and economy. The migration crisis was also an important discussion point and the four leaders agreed to prepare a plan that helped implement the conclusions of the special European Council meeting of the month before. Through increased EU-Turkish cooperation, illegal migration flows and terrorist threats had to be prevented. At this point, Turkey was hosting more than two million Syrian and Iraqi refugees fleeing from violence caused by Islamic State. An extra amount of 18 million euros was given via the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to help Turkey with supplying food and education to the Syrians in the country (European Commission, 2015).

The day after the dinner, an EU-Turkey Association Council was held. The European Union proposed to extend its cooperation with Turkey to fight against IS through a counter-terrorism dialogue. However, the key issue discussed at the meeting was yet again illegal migration. The EU saw an improvement in the dialogue and cooperation between Turkey and Bulgaria and Greece and Turkey was encouraged to extend this cooperation to prevent illegal migration and human trafficking in the Aegean and Mediterranean Sea. The EU reiterated that it expected Turkey to fully implement the Readmission Agreement and the Additional Protocol of the Association Agreement, both of which would provide a significant boost to the negotiation process. The fact that the settlement talks regarding the Cypriote matter and the Kurdish one were resumed was welcomed by the EU. Finally, the EU appreciated the implementation of recent reforms, but added that there were still important concerns about how the executive branch interfered in the judiciary one (European Council, 2015).

At the European Council meeting in June and at an informal meeting of EU heads of state and government in September, the EU leaders came together to discuss the migration and refugee crisis. European Union called for a reinforced dialogue with Turkey as a country that shelters a lot of refugees, but also as a country of transit. A strengthened cooperation between the EU and Turkey would be able to stem and manage the migratory flows coming from Turkey (European Council, 2015).

The intensified contacts with Turkey were shown through another meeting between high-level officials from the EU and Turkey in October. The president of the European Council Tusk and the Turkish president Erdogan met in Brussels. Tusk mentioned the financial assistance, the integration policies and visa liberalization process coming from the EU-side, but stressed that Turkey needed to act as well to prevent people from fleeing to the

EU via Turkey by respecting the rules and agreements between the two parties. During his visit, Erdogan also received a detailed Action Plan on Migration from the president of the European Commission Juncker (European Commission, 2015).

The main objectives of this **Joint Action Plan** were to address the root causes that were leading to a massive influx of Syrians, to support Turkey with the Syrian refugees that needed temporary protection and to increase cooperation on preventing migrants who are not refugees from traveling into EU territories. In the case of irregular migration, the EU and Turkey needed to cooperate to apply the readmission provisions and to quickly return these people to their countries of origin, or at least to Turkey. The Readmission Agreement was to be applied as from June 2016. In return, the EU aimed to complete the visa liberalization process in October 2016 (European Commission, 2015). A French diplomat called this plan EU *realpolitik* at its worst, as the deal did not mention anything regarding the human rights and media situation in Turkey or the Kurdish question (AFP, 2015).

At the European Council in October, the EU shared that it was still working on the Joint Action Plan with Turkey. A successful implementation of the Joint Action Plan would help speed up the processes described in the visa liberalization roadmap and the full implementation of the Readmission Agreement, but also the Turkish accession process in general, so implementing the Joint Action Plan would pay off for Turkey (European Council, 2015).

A highlight and a big step in the relations between the European Union and Turkey was the **first EU-Turkey summit** in November of 2015. For the Turkish delegation, this was an important chance to boost its accession process. In exchange for providing help with stemming the flow of migrants into Europe, the Turkish wanted more money from the EU and more frequent EU-Turkey summits to speed up the negotiations. Erdogan was not present at this meeting, which made the negotiations more difficult. Other obstructive matters were the human rights situation in Turkey and the suspected Turkish role in the conflict in Syria (AFP, 2015).

The German chancellor Merkel expressed her support for more summits between the EU and Turkey, since Germany was the top destination for most refugees entering the EU. It was expected that there were going to be more than a million asylum requests in Germany in 2015, which was a heavy burden for the country. Since a solution needed to be found as quickly as possible, Merkel used every opportunity to show her support for further negotiations and EU money being sent to Turkey (AFP, 2015). Since the high influx of Syrian refugees, Merkel's party, which had welcomed the refugees, had been losing popular support. The anti-Islamic PEGIDA movement gained followers in Germany, while a pro-refugee mayor in Cologne was stabbed with a knife, causing a lot of tensions in Germany. The Turkish prime minster Davutoglu said the day of the summit was historic, as it was the first meeting of this kind in eleven years (AFP, 2015).

In its conclusions for the presidency of the European Council, the Luxembourgish government also marked the first summit as an important move in the development of EU-Turkish relations (eu2015.lu, 2015). During the summit, the 28 European heads of state and government met Davutoglu. Regarding the Turkish accession process, it was decided that negotiations needed to be re-energized with high-level dialogue through regular, more frequent and structured meetings. In practice this meant that there were going to be organized two EU-Turkey summits a year to discuss EU-Turkish relations. At the time of the first EU-Turkey summit, there were 35 negotiation chapters of which fourteen were opened and one had already been closed. To increase the speed of the negotiation process, the EU

officials announced an Intergovernmental Conference that was going to take place in December 2015. At the conference, the negotiations on chapter 17 (Economic and Monetary Policy) were going to be opened and until then, the Commission was going to prepare other chapters as well, even when individual member states disagreed with this.

However, the key agenda point of the meeting for the European leaders was in fact the migration crisis. The heads of state and government activated the Joint Action Plan to deal with the refugee crisis created by the situation in Syria. Through the plan, the EU was going to extend cooperation with Turkey and increase its political and financial engagement towards Turkey. The financial engagement consisted of three billion euros through the Facility for Refugees in Turkey to help with the high numbers of Syrian refugees residing in (European Council, 2015).

As planned, an EU-Turkey Accession Intergovernmental Conference was organized in December 2015. For the first time in two years a chapter from the negotiation framework was opened, chapter 17, this was the fifteenth chapter to be opened. This was possible after France officially removed its veto over this chapter. The Luxembourgish minister Asselborn that chaired the meeting called the chapter opening a fresh impetus in the negotiation process. He welcomed the new regular meetings between the EU and Turkey, because 'Turkey is far too important a partner for European stability and security to not regularly meet with'. It was also announced that the EU was preparing an upgrade of the customs union between the EU and Turkey (eu2015.lu, 2015).

In the first half of 2016, the Dutch government held the presidency of the European Council. In line with the intended increase of dialogue and cooperation between the EU and Turkey, there was another EU-Turkey summit in Brussels on 7 March. Again, the main theme was the migration and refugee crisis and the implementation of the Joint Action Plan. In general, the EU was content with the progress on the plan, however the number of illegal entries had not decreased sufficiently. There were made proposals on the returning of irregular migrants, the implementation of the visa liberalization roadmap, the opening of new chapters in the accession negotiation and the improvement of the conditions for Syrian refugees. The situation of the media and the importance of freedom of speech were also discussed with the Turkish representatives. Lastly, the EU stated that it expected the visa liberalization process to be completed by June of 2016 (European Council, 2016).

Less than two weeks later, on 18 March 2016, another EU-Turkey summit was organized. This summit was planned to follow the European Council that was held the day before. At the EU-Turkey summit, the EU mentioned that the preparations on the visa liberalization and the accession talks were advancing, just as the upgrade of the customs union. It was agreed upon that the negotiations on chapter 33 of the negotiation framework were going to be opened before the end of the Dutch presidency, independent of the positions of the member states. Regarding the migration crisis, both the EU and Turkey saw that further efforts were needed. So, in order to stop people dying at sea, the human trafficking in the Mediterranean Sea and the irregular migratory flows into EU territory, the EU and Turkey struck a deal known as the EU-Turkey refugee deal. Behind the scenes, officials had been working on this deal for a long time. In exchange and next to the three billion euros, the process of lifting of the visa requirement for Turkish citizens traveling into the Schengen area would be accelerated to be completed in June 2016 (European Council, 2016).

This deal was seen as the biggest success of the Dutch presidency, since Dutch prime minister Rutte played a big role in the negotiations and the deal was a big relief for the EU

and the Schengen area, where border controls had since been established by individual member states (europa-nu.nl, 2016). At the kick-off debate of the Dutch presidency in January, Rutte had already told the European Parliament that the refugee crisis was going to be the top priority for the Dutch and underlined the need to make arrangements with Turkey (European Parliament, 2016). Afterwards, Rutte was said to be the main architect of the agreement between both parties (The Financial Times, 2016). He had kept his promise of reducing the influx of migrants into the EU and the deal was very effective, seen from the EU's perspective. However, human rights organizations criticized the deal and others feared that the European Union made itself too dependent on the Turkish government (The Hague Institute for Global Justice, 2016).

In the joint **EU-Turkey Statement**, the deal was announced and explained. As from 20 March 2016, all irregular migrants crossing from Turkey into Greek islands would be returned to Turkey in accordance with international laws. However, for every Syrian being returned to Turkey, another Syrian would be resettled to the EU. Additionally, Turkey would take measures to close all sea or land routes for illegal migration and prevent new ones. To support the Syrian refugees in Turkey, the EU would be giving another three billion euros up to the end of 2018. In return, all on-going processes in the negotiation framework would be sped up. The deal was signed on 19 March 2016 (European Council, 2016).

In a CEPS commentary, legal issues and human rights violations with regard to the refugee deal were discussed. The authors described how the idea of how one Syrian can be substituted for another one goes against established European traditions and norms in human rights. One Syrian would be penalized by trying to access the European Union, while another Syrian would be granted access to that same Union, something that is not compatible with the foundations of the European Union (CEPS, 2016). In another commentary, the authors also notice the EU's remarkable performance, as it rather insists on stopping Syrian refugees from reaching Greece or Bulgaria than upholding the fundamental humanitarian principles within its *acquis communautaire* (CEPS, 2016).

In April, the first implementation report of the Statement was published by the European Commission. It looked like the Statement had started to bring results. With regard to the Turkish accession process, the Commission stated that it would present a progress report on the visa liberalization roadmap in May. If Turkey has fulfilled all benchmarks by then, the progress report would include a legislative proposal to transfer Turkey to the visa-free list. That is why Turkey was encouraged to make efforts to meet the last benchmarks in the roadmap. The Commission also recommended the opening of chapter 33 and was preparing the opening of five more chapters (European Commission, 2016).

Together with the third report on the visa liberalization roadmap in May, the Commission did indeed send a proposal to lift the visa requirements for Turkish citizens to the European Council and the European Parliament. The Commission saw the Turkish efforts and expected the Turkish government to fulfill the last benchmarks with urgency to be able to lift the requirement by the end of June (European Commission, 2016). Another piece of concrete progress for Turkey was the official opening of the negotiations on chapter 33, at the very end of the Dutch presidency, 30 June. This chapter deals with financial and budgetary provisions and was opened during an Accession Conference with Turkey (European Council, 2016). Just a couple of days before the chapter opening, Erdogan had expressed his irritation with the European Union by proposing a Brexit style referendum to let the Turkish population decide whether Turkey should continue to commit to the long and slow process of joining the EU or not (AFP, 2016).

On 15 July, at the beginning of the Slovakian presidency, there was an attempted coup d'état in Ankara, Istanbul and other big cities against the Turkish government and president Erdogan. 241 people were killed and more than 2000 people wounded. In the third report on the implementation of the Statement, published in September, the EU reported on the attempted coup and condemned it. Given the following scale and nature of the measures taken by the Turkish government, the EU called on Turkish authorities to follow the highest standards in the rule of law and fundamental rights, which would be in line with Turkey's status as an EU candidate country (European Commission, 2016).

In the 2016 Report on Turkey's Progress, the European Commission described the aftermath of the coup attempt. Five days after the coup, a three-month state of emergency was declared in Turkey. Dismissals, arrests and detentions of people with alleged links to the Gülen movement took place in high numbers (more than 150 000) and multiple institutions and companies were shut down. The Commission had concerns that not every arrested individual had access to a transparent procedure, in which the separation of powers, the independence of the judiciary and the access to a lawyer are guaranteed. Turkey was advised to address the recommendations that the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe did in October of 2016 (European Commission, 2016).

After the attempted coup, the relations between the European Union and Turkey started to deteriorate. The Turkish government reproached the EU with a cold and critical attitude in the aftermath of the attempted coup. Turkey stated that the EU did not fully understand the scope of the problem and the necessity of the measures taken as a reaction by Turkey. This led to a weakened dialogue and a confidence crisis between the two parties (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). This view was supported in a CEPS commentary, which attributed the limited European empathy to little understanding of the complex realities in Turkey. The commentary functions as a plea to why Europe and Turkey should invest in analyzing and understanding each other's realities, to generate a new momentum of engagement (CEPS, 2016).

In November, two weeks after the 2016 Progress Report, the members of the European Parliament adopted a non-binding resolution to temporarily freeze accession talks with Turkey. The direct reason of the resolution were the disproportionate and repressive measures taken by the Turkish government under the state of emergency. The fact that president Erdogan mentioned the reintroduction of the death penalty was also concerning, since the death penalty is not part of the *acquis communautaire*. Turkey should stay anchored in the EU structures, but no new chapters would be opened during the suspension. Some members of Parliament explained their decision by stating that accession talks are two-sided, but that Turkey was not showing the political will to align anymore by diverting from the European path. Turkey reacted to the resolution by threatening to let thousands of migrants pass into EU territory (European Parliament, 2016). Member states also called for an end to the membership talks with Turkey, although Mogherini and Juncker both expressed that it would be loss for both the EU and Turkey (AFP, 2016).

At the General Affairs Council in December, the Council expressed its concerns specifically on the restrictions and measures that target journalists, academics and human right defenders and on the frequent bans of (social) media sites. In combination with the arrests of multiple members of Turkish Parliament, these actions meant the decline of the rule of law, human rights, fundamental freedom, parliamentary democracy and dialogue in Turkey, which polarizes the society even more. Although the Council noted the progress made by Turkey in some economic domains, it concluded that under the prevailing

circumstances, no new chapters were considered for opening (European Council, 2016). Austria did not underline this statement, as it wanted a full freeze of the negotiations with Turkey, including the chapters that had already been opened, instead of the current solution of not opening any new chapters (AFP, 2016).

Evaluation

These years, the biggest advances in the Turkish negotiation process have been the Joint Action Plan, the first EU-Turkey summit and the EU-Turkey Statement.

Continuing the trend that was started in 2013, the number of meetings and consultations between the European Union and Turkey grew in 2015 and 2016. The European institutions just like some member states really pushed for more dialogue, although they did not necessarily see that as a way to bring progress in the accession process, but rather as a way to solve the problems they faced. In October 2014, the Readmission Agreement entered into force, but the refugee crisis in Europe was only getting worse. So, even though there were more meetings between the EU and Turkey, the key agenda point on all of those was a solution for the high numbers of illegal entries into Europe. After every meeting, the EU reiterated the importance of a good dialogue and cooperation between the EU and Turkey to prevent illegal migration, and if the accession process was mentioned at all, is it at the end as a small matter.

At another meeting between high-level officials from the EU and Turkey, the Joint Action Plan was discussed. This plan, designed by the European Commission, was made to support the Syrian refugees hosted by Turkey and to strengthen the EU-Turkish cooperation to combat irregular migration. In return, the European Union promised to complete the visa liberalization process in before the end of 2016. Soon after this meeting, the first EU-Turkey summit was held in 2015. Formally, the goal was to give the accession process a boost, but the migration crisis dominated the discussions. German chancellor Merkel publicly supported the meeting, as her country was the most popular destination for the refugees that managed to reach European territory.

After the first summit, two other EU-Turkey summits were organized in 2016. On the third one, the refugee deal was arranged and announced via the EU-Turkey Statement. The deal aimed at stemming the flows of migrants that entered the EU via Turkey. To finance it, Turkey would receive three billion euros. Again, one can see the explicit support and even cooperation of European member states, as Dutch prime minister Rutte, holding the presidency, had a decisive role in the closing of the deal.

Both the Joint Action Plan and the EU-Turkey Statement have been designed by the European Commission, pushed by the member states. Because people were dying at sea and migrants illegally crossed the borders to come to the EU, things needed to be done. These agreements between the European Union and Turkey, just like the Readmission Agreement, were received as progress in the EU-Turkish relations, but they brought minimal actual progress in the Turkish accession process. The European member states got a lot out of these deals, as the number of illegal entries decreased significantly after, while the Turkish only received promises to speed up the visa liberalization process and to open some negotiation chapters. Concrete progress had not been realized in the deals. The decisive factor in all of them was the interests of the European member states.

Again, the theory that fits best in this situation is **rational choice theory**. The European Union was overwhelmed by the refugee crisis and was very clear about the fact that it needed to stop, i.e. the preferences of the European institutions and member states

were known. To be able to obtain their preferred outcome, they needed to strike a deal with Turkey. In the bargaining process, the EU dominated, as the Turkish interests were overlooked almost completely: the only thing that mattered was a solution for the refugee crisis in Europe. Since striking a deal with Turkey without promising anything in return would be impossible, the European Union did make some concessions, but these were fully strategic and barely meaningful, perfectly following rational choice theories. Multiple human rights organizations had also demonstrated that the European Union ignored the principles on which its *acquis communautaire* is based to solve the refugee crisis, so the small progress cannot be attributed to sociological constructivism.

V Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to find out what was still driving the process of Turkish accession to the European Union. I have distinguished three theories in the theoretical framework that are used to explain European enlargement. All events that took place in the Turkish accession process can be categorized in one of these theories. Summarizing, rational choice theory focuses on national interests of member states, so these drive the accession process. Sociological constructivists emphasize shared norms and values of the EU and Turkey and progress comes from supranational institutions like the European Commission. In rhetorical action theory, promises made in the past turn into moral obligations, which cannot be neglected following the European community's standards of legitimacy and appropriateness.

 At the beginning of the accession process, I find that a combination of all three theories explained the progress most accurately. Before the opening of the negotiation talks, the EU made a promise to Turkey and reiterated this promise multiple times in official documents (RA). The European Commission exhibited in annual reports that it wanted Turkey to become a member state once it fulfilled all requirements, although it also recognized that there was still a lot of work that needed to be done (SC). The fact that individual member states at times expressed a lot of concerns and opposition did not change this fact for the Commission. Just before the formal opening of the negotiations, the opposition of member states was lost in the bargaining process (RC), which is why the accession talks started as planned.

 In the second phase of my research, I still see an important role for sociological constructivism. The launch of the Positive Agenda, an important event in the EU-Turkey relations, was fully invented and orchestrated by the European Commission as the most supranational institution of the European Union. Here, the Commission was not necessarily entrapped in earlier promises or pushed by member states to take action, rather it took the initiative itself, as it concluded that the reforms in Turkey increased alignment with the *acquis*. In 2013, one can notice a change in the accession process. From this point on, the minimal progress that was made stemmed from European interests to put a stop to irregular migration into EU territory, thus following the premises of rational choice. The Readmission Agreement in itself did not bring Turkey closer to accession, though the Visa Liberalization Dialogue did. Turkey was rewarded with the VLD for its efforts at implementing the Readmission Agreement, but for the European Union it was nothing but a concession to reduce the numbers of illegal migrants.

 The last phase of the process that I studied is characterized by rational choice theory, as well. European member states completely determine the direction of EU-Turkey relations. The Joint Action Plan and the EU-Turkey Statement both symbolize the increase in cooperation between the European Union and Turkey with lower numbers of refugees in Europe as the ultimate goal. Both the Joint Action Plan and the refugee deal resulted from many meetings between the two parties, although progress in the accession negotiations was never seriously discussed. For the European heads of state and government, the plan and the refugee deal were never designed to advance the negotiation process with Turkey, rather they meant effective ways to stop illegal migration. As a way to ensure Turkish cooperation, promises of visa liberalization were made again.

 After 2013, every development in the Turkish accession process took place because of European interests. Turkey drifted away from Europe as new reforms packages were not implemented as fast anymore and Erdogan became more a more authoritarian leader.

However, Turkey was, and still is, a country that is essential for stability and security in Europe, which gave it some room to make compromises with the EU, on for example visa liberalization. But in essence, ever since the first signs of the refugee crisis started to affect European member states, all progress was made as a by-product of the fight against illegal migration into European territory. Turkey is becoming more autocratic and a Turkish membership of the EU seems more unlikely every day, yet progress is achieved because European member states have an interest in keeping Turkey close.

To answer my research question, all three theories have influenced the accession negotiations between the European Union and Turkey. Rhetorical action theory and sociological constructivism dominated the beginning and the first phases of the negotiations, but soon after an important shift towards rational choice theory became visible. After this shift, rhetorical action theory and sociological constructivism have no longer proven to be useful to explain the causal mechanism behind the Turkish accession negotiations. Rhetorical action theory has been able to provide a sufficient explanation of the Central and Eastern European enlargement, but it cannot do the same for the Turkish process. We need rational choice theory to elucidate why the European Union continues to invest in EU-Turkish relations, while Turkey is clearly going in a direction different from the European community.

VI Discussion

The most important conclusion of this research is the shift towards a completely rational choice explanation of the Turkish accession negotiations and multiple things can be said about that. The best explanation for this shift is the migration crisis and the strain it put on the relations between the European Union and Turkey. The Turkish government's responses to the protests in Gezi Park and the attempted coup d'état caused Turkey to move away from the European community and its fundamental principles. However, Turkey was an essential part of the solution to the refugee crisis, so the European Union needed to be on relatively good terms with Turkey to reach that solution. Not making any progress in the negotiations or ending the negotiations altogether would most definitely push Turkey further away, leading to the loss of a crucial partner in the combat against irregular migration. Since Turkey was the most important transit country for refugees and migrants, the European Union needed to deliver some sort of progress in the accession talks to make Turkish implementation of the Readmission Agreement or the refugee deal even an option.

Another factor in the shift towards rational choice theory can be the impossibility of developments in the accession process based on community arguments. As said, the Turkish response to public dissatisfaction or the coup increased the distance between the EU and Turkey. Before these two events, concerns about human rights or freedom of expression and media in Turkey already existed, but there was hope that Turkey could be pulled closer through reforms and the promise of an accession, so that the idea of an accession kept Turkey's motivation to reach alignment with the European community up. After the Gezi Park protests this hope started to disappear and the proposal for the Positive Agenda was the Commission's last initiative to revive the talks with Turkey on the basis of a shared understanding of norms and values in politics. The responses of the Turkish government to these events would prevent any instances of progress based on normative claims in the future, and would even undermine the community's standards of legitimacy and appropriateness if the Commission did suggest it.

Additionally, although Erdogan did not have any influence on the attempted coup, he was able to control the government's reaction on it and it is logical to assume that there is some rationality to it. Just like in the EU, Turkey shifted to a more strategic attitude, although the exact strategy behind it is unclear. After the coup d'état, Turkey did not try to align itself with the *acquis communautaire* anymore and instead consciously distanced itself from the EU's most important values like independence of the judiciary and freedom of expression and media. Erdogan knew that the negotiation talks would become more difficult after the violent crackdown and that his statements about the possibility of the reintroduction of the death penalty would irreparably damage the accession process, yet he saw reasons to still act that way. At the same time, Erdogan was aware of the advantage he had in the bargaining process for the refugee deals, so he took the liberty to make use of that.

The shifts from both the European Union and Turkey made the entire accession process more calculating and more strategic. At the beginning, both parties showed genuine willingness to move closer to each other and to make the Turkish membership happen, indicating a more active role for the supranational institutions like the European Commission. Ultimately, only national interests of the EU member states (and Turkey) determined progress in the accession talks. The European Commission did not and could not initiate developments in EU-Turkish relations any longer and only came in operation to

arrange deals when the member states pushed for it. This could be a sign that the direction the EU is taking in general is decided upon on the basis of the national interests of member states, implying that the European Union is losing its supranational roots and is in the process of becoming more intergovernmental.

One of the reasons to analyze the Turkish accession process was to test if the rhetorical action theory could be used to explain other enlargements processes than the Central and Eastern European one. I found one instance of rhetorical entrapment. This was at the very beginning, when the European Commission and the European Council made two promises:

First, the Commission promised Turkey to re-examine the country's readiness for the opening of the negotiations, after the progress was too limited at the time of the first examination. Secondly, when the Commission assessed the country's state again and found that it was ready, it promised to formally open the talks a year later. The European heads of state and government repeated this promise during the European Council.

Remarkably, these promises were made between 2002 and 2004, and thus coincided with the finalization of the enlargement process with the CEE countries. It is plausible to assume that the Turkish government followed the accession process of these countries and tried to use the same strategies, as it saw that they were effective. However, it seems like this strategic use of norm-based arguments only worked in that specific time frame and with those specific countries, because I have not found any other instances of progress as a result of moral obligations the EU had towards Turkey. The Commission's feeling of being rhetorically entrapped by the CEE countries around 2004 might have caused the same feeling of entrapment towards Turkey, leading to progress in the Turkish accession process, as well. After the accession, the Commission had fulfilled its commitment to the CEE countries, the momentum of rhetorical action arguments got lost.

This is a relatively credible explanation for the presence of rhetorical action theory around that time, especially since there were no other moments in the Turkish accession process when the institutions or the member states were held responsible for creating progress in the Turkish accession process on the basis of earlier promises. Turkey might have been lucky with the timing of the start of its accession process, as it made using rhetorical action arguments relevant, but when the CEE enlargement process came to an end, Turkey's situation turned out to be too different from the CEE group to continue using it. First off, Turkey was alone, while the CEE countries could combine forces to negotiate with the European Union. It is easier to influence an organization when there are ten countries than when it is just one. Also, Turkey had not been going through a visible process of breaking with its former ideology, as the CEE countries did with communism in favor of the EU's capitalism. This evident move towards EU community norms formed a strong argument for the CEE countries, but Turkey could not use the same rhetoric. Lastly, Turkey's geographical location made it is less evident that it belonged in the European Union, while the CEE countries were undoubtedly situated right next to the member states, which increased the credibility of using norm-based arguments in the negotiations with the European Union. So, even though rhetorical action theory was dominant around 2004, after the CEE enlargement its relevance disappeared, at least for the Turkish case.

The most obvious limitation of this research is the fact that is it a single-case study. I have learned a lot about the Turkish accession process and the specific drivers it, but the generalizability of the results is limited because of the case-specificity of the research.

Because of the case-specificity and also because Turkey can be seen as an extreme case, the results I have found cannot be used to make reliable causal inferences on the EU accession process or the European Union itself. For example, my finding that rhetorical action theory was not as relevant in the Turkish case as it was in negotiations in the past, might deal with Turkey's idiosyncrasy more, rather than the relevance or durability of this specific theory in general. On the other hand, the two more traditional theories have proven their use once again, making them more durable.

So, the results only explain the Turkish case and are not meant as general conclusions. However, they could be used as a useful leg for other researches about the accession process. Since the major limitation of this research is that it only deals with one single case, analyzing another case to compare it to the Turkish case would increase the validity of the results. An interesting case for this would be Croatia. For both Turkey and Croatia, the formal negotiations were opened in October 2005. However, Croatia actually joined the European Union in July 2013, while Turkey has still not acceded to the Union in 2020. By doing the same process-tracing analysis of the Croatian accession negotiation process, we will end up with two comparable analyses. Then, both countries and their accession processes to the EU can be compared.

The goal is then to find out what features Croatia has or had that facilitated the negotiations with the European Union. On the surface, we can point to Croatia's location, history and religion. Croatia is situated on the European continent, next to countries like Slovenia and Hungary which have been a part of the European community since 2004. It also shares a past of communist rule with the CEE countries, which could have facilitated the usage of rhetorical action theory arguments in the Croatian accession process. Lastly, Croatia is dominantly Christian, just like the rest of the European community and unlike Turkey. Nonetheless, factors that lie deeper could have also caused a successful negotiation process here. Via a comparison between Turkey and Croatia, we would be able to pinpoint the differences in the countries and the accession process and find out why one negotiation process was successful, while the other was not and thus make a stronger argument about the significance of drivers and theories in EU negotiations.

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