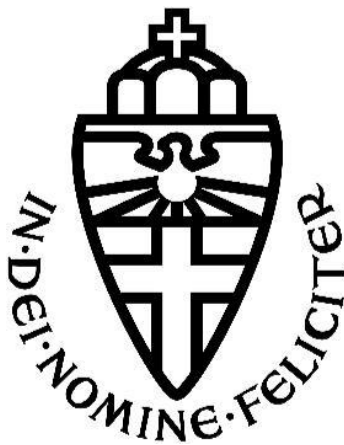


The Accession of the Western Balkans in the European Union:

A Narrative Perspective on Enlargement Discourse of the
European Commission



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Abstract

In February 2018 a new enlargement strategy was presented by the European Commission. This renewed interest in the Western Balkan by the European Commission formed the motivation of this study, which is dedicated to establishing the narrative of the Juncker Commission on EU enlargement to the Western Balkan. This study argues that narratives can provide new insights into the study of EU studies and constructivism, because narratives focus on how discourses are structured around a central plot. This argumentation in favour of narratives is tested through a single case study aimed at determining the dominant narratives employed by the European Commission. After introducing narratives into constructivism, two meta-narratives are derived from empirical research, a normative and a pragmatic meta-narrative. Based on these two meta-narratives, the method of content analysis was employed to find the three narrative elements in a selection of official documents, speeches and statements made by Johannes Hahn, Jean-Claud Juncker and Federica Mogherini. After reconstructing the narrative of the Commission, this thesis shows that a normative narrative is dominant in the enlargement discourse of the Commission, although reforms are narrated based on a pragmatic narrative. Secondly, it can be concluded that the narrative of the new enlargement strategy follows the normative narrative but includes geopolitical narrative features. The EU, the Western Balkan countries and the reforms are all narrated based on a normative narrative, but the motivation for enlargement is narrated from a geopolitical narrative.

Keywords: Constructivism; Narratives; Narrative analysis; Western Balkan; Enlargement; European Union; European Commission

“The EU reiterates its unequivocal support to the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries. The future of the Balkans is within the European Union.”

(Council, 2003)

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

AAAs	Association Agreement(s)
AFET	European Parliament Committee of Foreign Affairs
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
Commission	European Commission
Council	Council of the European Union
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
HR/VP	High Representative/Vice-President
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia
IR	International Relations
FYROM	the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreement(s)
SAP	Stabilisation and Association Process
SEE	South Eastern Europe(an)
SEA	Single European Act
Strategy	Strategy for the Western Balkan
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In 2003, the member states of the European Union (EU), the President of the European Commission, and governmental representatives of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia, the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Montenegro and Serbia came together in Thessaloniki for an EU-Balkan Summit, in an effort to consolidate their intention of enlargement of the EU towards the Western Balkans. The following years the EU took several steps to engage with the Western Balkans. Most importantly, the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) was started, and consequently Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAAs) were signed with several Western Balkan countries. However, since then only Croatia has become a member of the EU in 2013. It was the last country to join to date.

Formal decisions on enlargement are made by the European Council (and since the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty with the European Parliament (EP), who vote on the SAAs, the start of accession negotiations and the ultimate Treaty of Accession (Nugent, 2017, p.371). This allocation of responsibility is also set out in Article 49 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which states that countries can become a member of the EU by addressing “its application to the Council, which shall act unanimously after consulting the Commission and after receiving the assent of the European Parliament [...]. The conditions of admission [...] shall be the subject of *an agreement between the Member States and the applicant State*” (Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union, 2007, p.43, emphasis added). Given this distribution of formal responsibilities, it would be expected that the member states dominate the enlargement process (O’Brennan, 2006, p.74).

Yet, despite its lack of formal power, the Commission has a considerable influence over the enlargement process, which has only increased as the enlargement process became more complex (idem). The Commission leads the screening and provides the yearly reports on (potential) candidate states, leads the enlargement policies, writes the EU enlargement strategy, is responsible for the aid programmes that support the countries in their reforms and advises the member states on the enlargement decisions.

“Facing the challenge of managing relations with the new democracies, the Commission was confronted with an environment it had never previously encountered. From the outset of the process member states were dependent on the Commission for leadership and policy advice. [...] Even in the latter stage of negotiations, where the member states were in the ascendancy and the Presidency played a crucial role, the Commission continued to cajole, deliberate, and persuade both insiders and outsiders of the merits of its enlargement strategy.” (O’Brennan, 2008, p.514)

The Commission has been considered to be in favour of further enlargement of the EU, unlike the member states who have often needed convincing (Vachudova, 2014, p.125-126). Therefore, the statement of President Juncker at the start of his presidency of the Commission that “under [his] Presidency of the Commission, ongoing negotiations will continue, and notably the Western Balkans will need to keep a European perspective, but no further enlargement will take place over the next five years” (Juncker, 2014, p.11), together with the decision to change the DG Enlargement to DG Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, had considerable weight (Nugent, 2017, p.371). Equally important – and surprising to policy makers and scholars – was the renewed interest in the Western Balkan by the Commission, which was consolidated with the presentation of a new Western Balkan Strategy (Strategy) in February 2018 (O’Brennan, 2018, p.3). In this Strategy the Commission not only reiterated its commitment to the Western Balkans, it also explicates the steps the EU and the (potential) candidate countries had to take together towards membership. It even provided a clear target of 2025 for both Macedonia and Serbia.

1.2 Outline of research

As the Commission is renewing its commitment to enlargement of the EU towards the Western Balkans, it is important to consider how the Commission is participating in the discourse on enlargement. Because the Commission has no official decision-making powers regarding enlargement, it depends on discursive power to communicate its position on enlargement. Due to the importance of the member states in the accession process, most of the research and theory on enlargement has been dedicated to the role of member states. Yet, the previous subchapter shows how the Commission can be considered an influential actor in the EU enlargement process, which makes further inquire into their discursive construction and actions a logical next step. Looking at the narrative is interesting because it will improve the understanding of the Commissions discourse on EU enlargement. Narratives will help understand how the

Commission tries to narrate its own position on the Western Balkans in the larger enlargement discourse of the EU that includes the narratives of the other EU institutions. Secondly, narratives can shed a light on how the reasons behind the renewed interest in the Western Balkans are justified by the Commission. Narratives are a suitable theoretical and analytical framework because the Commission depends for a large extent on its discursive power to convince the member states of its position (Giandomenico, 2015, p.196). Narratives provide a perspective that is different from other discourse theories. It looks at the complete story of enlargement and not at one part of discourse, such as frames or metaphors. The purpose of this research is thus to identify the dominant narrative of enlargement of the Juncker Commission and secondly, how the Juncker Commission has narrated its renewed focus on the Western Balkans. The main question therefore is:

What has been the EU Commissions narrative of enlargement during the Juncker presidency and how has the Juncker Commission narrated its renewed focus on the Western Balkans?

To find the narrative of the Commission on EU enlargement towards the Western Balkans, a narrative analysis is conducted. This narrative analysis is based on the research of Spencer (2016; see also Oppermann & Spencer, 2016, 2018). Narratives are one of the many and varied forms of discourse within the interpretative perspective of social constructivism. Social constructivism started as a critique on the 'rational' and material focus of the dominant IR theories (neo)realism and (neo)liberalism. Instead, social constructivism emphasized the importance of values, norms and identity in shaping and understanding the motivations and interests of actors in the international system. Secondly, social constructivism assumes that both structure and agency play a role in the construction of a social reality and of each other (Risse, 2009). The increased interest in intersubjectivity and ideas, was followed with a new focus on discourse, both as a research subject and method (Adler, 2013, p.112). With the linguistic turn in IR (and later in European Studies) emerged a body of research dedicated to understanding how language played a role in the constitution of social facts, the use of discourse by actors, how identities and behaviour are influenced by language, and interpretative research designs.

However, although interpretative constructivism and discourse analysis have been introduced in many fields in IR and European Studies and have since been recognized as a credible theoretical and methodological foundation, narratives are still met with some suspicion (Spencer, 2016, p.13). Secondly, even when narratives have been included in research, they have often been used as synonyms for concepts such as frames, discourse and rhetoric, without

attention being paid to the explanation of narratives in its original research field, literary studies and narratology (idem). Alexander Spencer has tried to address this theoretical and conceptual blind spot in the literature by conceptualizing a research design for research in International Relations (IR) and Political Science based on narratology. According to Spencer, narratives contain a description of a particular *setting*, which helps the audience to understand the actors and their decisions in the narrative. Secondly, actors are attributed features through *characterization*. This gives the actors identities and helps the audience to understand the ideas and reasons of an actor. Lastly, narratives have to contain a form of *emplotment* by which the events, characters and setting are linked and the story is given causality.

As part of the theoretical framework and with the help of the existing literature of EU enlargement, two meta-narratives related to EU enlargement have been identified. They will serve as the analytical framework for this thesis. This framework guides the categorization of the narratives and allows for a comparison and assessment of the Commission's narrative on the accession of the Western Balkans. The first meta-narrative is based on normative elements such as European identity and shared norms and values. The second meta-narrative is based on pragmatic (political/economic) arguments, such as economic potential and global influence.

The thesis focusses on the narrative of enlargement since the start of the mandate of the Juncker Commission in 2014 until presentation of the new Western Balkan Strategy in 2018. This timeframe has been chosen for two reasons. Because of limitations in time for this thesis, it was not possible to conduct a narrative analysis of the Commission since the EU-Balkan Summit in 2003, when the European perspective of the Western Balkans was originally proclaimed. Secondly, the Juncker Commission started its mandate with a diverging discourse on the future of enlargement when it stated explicitly that there would be no further enlargement until 2020. This was a significant divergence from previous Commissions which traditionally were in favour of enlargement (Troncotă, 2014, p.154).

The data of this research consists of several official EU documents on EU enlargement, such as the yearly enlargement strategies and the Political Guidelines of President Juncker; as well as speeches and remarks of Jean Claud Juncker, Federica Mogherini and Johannes Hahn (President of the Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Commissioner Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement respectively). Lastly, the new Western Balkan Strategy will be included in the analysis to see how this new strategy fits within the dominant narrative on enlargement of the EU. It is important to note that the purpose of this thesis is to identify the main narratives of the Commission. The contribution

of this research thus lies not in explaining why a narrative dominates or changes. This fits within the interpretative conception of research that asks ‘how’ questions (Checkel, 2013, p.2).

1.3 Scientific and societal relevance

This thesis aims to include the concept of narrative in the analysis of EU policy, which fits within the current developments of EU foreign policy research. Narratives are at the “core of the interpretivist research agenda as both an analytical category and as a means of interpretivist methodology”, the result of a growing awareness of the contextual and contentious aspects of how knowledge is constructed (Heinelt & Münch, 2018, p.11; Kurowska, 2018, p.281). Thus, this thesis fits well within the current debate on narratives and interpretative research within the field of EU foreign policy studies. Secondly, this thesis will bring new insights from literary studies into the method and methodology employed in IR. By illustrating how narrative analysis can contribute to an understanding of enlargement discourse, it shows how narrative analysis from literary studies can be used in EU foreign policy analysis. Lastly, this research will test the empirical conclusions used for the two potential narratives and will thus contribute to a better understanding of the theoretical origin of these previous studies.

The societal relevance of this research is threefold. Firstly, by researching the position of the Commission on enlargement, this research furthers the knowledge of the EU, the enlargement process and the role of the Commission. Although the Commission does not make the final decisions on accession, their reports and strategies are important and influential documents because the Commission leads the enlargement process as the EU representation and thus establishes the general enlargement strategy of the EU, including the priorities and policies (Nugent, 2017, p.371). Secondly, a narrative analysis of the Western Balkan Strategy helps improve the understanding of this strategy and the potential role it can or will play in the enlargement of the EU in the next decade. Thirdly, understanding the narrative of enlargement of the Commission will help countries in the Western Balkans adapt their policies and reforms to the standards and preferences of the Commission (which is in charge of both monitoring progress and giving advice on membership applications). A narrative analysis can give those who want further enlargement of the EU insight in what policy areas they need to work on, in order to gain progress on enlargement.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured as follows. In the next chapter the theoretical framework of this thesis will be presented. This framework is based on social constructivism and narratology, which is a contribution from literary studies to the linguistic/interpretative theory of constructivism. The second part of this chapter will present two potential narratives of enlargement of the EU found in empirical studies on European enlargement, with a focus towards the CEECs and Western Balkan. Chapter three contains the method and methodology of this research paper, and includes an examination of the methodological focus, narrative analysis as a research design in IR, and the method for data collection. The chapter also contains an operationalization of the potential narratives that have been compiled for this research paper. In the fourth chapter the narrative analysis is applied to the data, which consists of several official documents and discourse texts of the Commission on further enlargement. The narrative will be depicted, based on the three elements of narratives identified by Spencer (setting, characterization and plotment). Finally, in the concluding chapter the research and findings are summarized and reviewed, the central research question is answered. This is followed by a discussion on the contribution of this research to the existing literature on enlargement discourse and the Commission as well as the inclusion of narratives in IR. Lastly, recommendations for further research are made.

2. Theoretical framework and potential narratives

2.1 Introduction to this chapter

To draw any conclusions on the role and use of narratives on enlargement, a theoretical framework is needed, which is based on interpretative/linguistic constructivism. Both constructivism and discourse have gained ground in scientific research, and constructivism has become a principle theory within the field of IR (Fierke, 2013, p.188). Nevertheless, narratives have received limited attention in IR studies; although they have been at the foreground of new interpretative research on EU foreign policy (Kurowska, 2018, p.281).¹ This chapter will consider the developments within constructivism and present an argument on why narratives should be included in interpretive research in IR. The theoretical framework of this thesis is twofold, the first part is dedicated to constructivism and the place of discourse and consequently narratives in IR; the second part is devoted to the two narratives which have been derived from existing empirical research on enlargement of the EU.

Starting with the origin of constructivism, this subchapter provides an overview of the rise of constructivism in IR. The second subchapter on the ontological basis of constructivism explains how the concepts norms, ideas and identity gained prominence in IR studies. This development also influenced EU scholars, who tried to explain the expansion of the EU beyond an economic cooperation, the construction of a European identity, as well as EU enlargement (Risse, 2009, p.148-156). The focus on norms and identity was followed by an interest in the role of discourse, which is explained in the chapter on language in constructivism. This turn towards language provides the basis for the inclusion of narratives in EU studies and this thesis. These narratives are both the research object and the method of analysis (Robert & Shenhav, 2014, p.7). The second part of this thesis provides an argumentation on the inclusion of narratives in EU enlargement studies; and explains two narratives which can be found in literature on EU enlargement. This second provides the research with a stronger scientific and theoretical foundation as it offers the possibility to compare the results of this thesis with previous work on enlargement by testing the results against empirically established normative and pragmatic meta-narratives (Milliken, 1999, p.235).

¹ See the recent special issue on the EU and narratives of the *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* (2017) and *Narrative Culture* (2017), see also among others Kurowska (2018), Cianciara (2017), Cristian & Nikola (2013), Manners & Murray (2016), Biegón (2012) and Schumacher (2015).

2.2 Origin of constructivism

The purpose of my thesis is not to provide a comprehensive account of the history and development of constructivism. Nevertheless, in order to understand the ontological and epistemological basis of constructivism and narratology within IR and later European studies, it is important to begin this theoretical framework with an overview of how constructivism originated in the discipline. Constructivism as a philosophical approach to social sciences was developed before its entrance into IR and EU studies. Adler (2013, p.114) traces the philosophical foundation of constructivism in social sciences to four main influences: Immanuel Kant (and his ideas on the realm of reason and influence of our consciousness), subjective hermeneutics, critical theory and pragmatism.

Many scholars consider the end of the Cold War as the start for the inclusion of constructivism in IR (Guzzini, 2000, p.151; see also Fierke, 2013; Adler, 2013 and Hopf, 1998). Neither of the dominant positivist materialist theories, (neo)realism and (neo)liberalism, had been able to predict or explain this change in the international system. A second explanation sees constructivism as the reaction to IR's 'third debate' on the meta-theoretical positions of IR theories which started in the 1980's (Lapid, 1989, p.241) (considered the fourth debate by scholars who distinguish a separate interparadigm debate, such as Wæver (1996/2002, p.167). This third debate can be seen as an umbrella for several sub-debates between explaining and understanding; positivism and post-positivism; and rationalism and reflectivism (Kurki & Wight, 2013, p.20).

Constructivism was considered the 'middle ground' between the positivist, rationalist theories (favouring individualist ontology, utility maximization and positivist analytical models) and the new theories which rejected positivism (in favour of reflexivity and interpretative methods in order to understand the social world) (Adler, 1997, p.384; Kurki & Wight, 2013, p.5). It provides a theoretical alternative to the rationalist readings of the international system that had dominated the field of IR, by introduced changing identities and interests as explananda; focussing on ideas, norms and values; and theorizing the co-constitution of the structure and the agent (Checkel, 2007, p.58; see also Ruggie, 1998; Fierke 2013). This ontological basis of constructivism will be further explained in the following subchapter.

2.3 The common ground in constructivism

Like realism, the field of constructivism consists of many different varieties, based on the different interpretations of post-positivism, poststructuralism and the origin of the theory. Almost all constructivists, however, share what is considered the common ground of constructivism (Adler, 2013, p.113). Their critique on the static material assumptions of mainstream IR theories led them to emphasize “the social dimension of IR and the possibility of change” (Fierke, 2013, p.188). This has several important implications for the way constructivists see the world and the focus of constructivism-based research, which will be further explained in this subchapter.

Intersubjectivity and social facts

One of the guiding principles of constructivism is intersubjectivity and the construction of social facts. In this view, the material world is socially constructed, as “material resources only acquire meaning for human action through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded” (Wendt, 1995, p.73). Constructivists do not deny that there is a material world but maintain that the social meaning of material facts plays a significant role in the international system. These *social facts* are “those facts that are produced by virtue of all the relevant actors agreeing that they exist” (Ruggie, 1998, p.12). Constructivists combine objectivity (the brute fact) and subjectivity (the social fact) to understand how objects and practices become meaningful and how their meaning can change.

The intersubjective meaning of reality has an independent status based on collective knowledge and is not based on just the aggregation of the ideas of individuals (Fierke, 2013, p.191). Likewise, Searle (1995) argues that social facts are collective agreements between observers (humans) who engage with each other based on shared intentions or ideas. Actors make choices and create a ‘reality’ through social interaction with others (in a given context) (Onuf, 1989/2012, p.22). These actors must believe that this social meaning exists and behave according to the rules or ideas of the social fact (Hurd, 2008, p.304). When social facts are based solely on human cooperation and acceptance they often “require human institutions for their existence” (Fierke, 2013, p.192). For example, international organisation such as the EU would not exist if government officials had not created it by signing the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) on behalf of their country.

Ideas, identity and interests

Unlike rationalist explanations of interests – which are determined before interaction with other states based on individual material characteristics and self-interest – constructivists see a role

for identity, shared understandings and social interaction in determining the interests of states. According to Wendt identities are “relatively stable, role specific understandings and expectations about self” (1992, p.397), which can be based both on intrinsic and relational factors. Both are dependent on the context, while the latter is defined through the process of interaction and socialization (Jepperson, et al., 1996, p.34).

Identities play an important role in IR because states base their interests and behaviour on their identity (Wendt, 1999, p.2). They are the link between the international structure and the interests of the states. Collective identity – strongly identifying with other actors – and the demarcation between self and other are based in relation to another actor or the community. This perception of reality brings about certain expectations and commitments in behaviour (Risse, 2009, p.148). Neither identity nor interests are static, a change in identity results in a change of interests, which in turn can change the behaviour of states (Fierke, 2013, p.190).

Agency and structure: construction of norms

Another principle of constructivism is the *mutually constitutive* nature of the structure and agents, meaning that agents can influence the structure of the international system, while this structure in turn shapes the identity of states by forming the context in which they are embedded. As Wendt argues, “it is through reciprocal interaction that we create and instantiate the relatively enduring social structures in terms of which we define our identities and interests” (1992, p.402). Interaction between agents influences and alters the international system, which is dependent on the social actions and shared understandings of actors for its existence (Koslowski & Kratochwil, 1994, p.223).

The concept of co-constitution also means that the structure has a constitutive effect on the identity and interests of agents. Norms – expectations of appropriate behaviour – and rules of the international system are internalized by individuals and as a result “become the source of people’s reasons, interests, intentional acts” (Adler, 2013, p.123). When institutionalized, norms become international practices such as international institutions which are accepted by those states affected by them (Ruggie, 1998, p.866). According to constructivism, states base their identity and behaviour not only on their material capabilities, but also on the normative understandings of what is legitimate behaviour which, in turn, is defined by these norms and values. Norms determine what actions are acceptable or when rules are violated. Thus, states act not in accordance to the *logic of consequences* – it is logical to maximize your own interests – but are guided by the *logic of appropriateness* (Fierke, 2013, p.190).

Capability for change

Constructivists maintain that the world is “a project under construction” (Adler, 2013, p.113) and seek to explain change in the international system, where other theories assume sameness (Fierke, 2013, p.189). The rules of the game, the meaning of material facts, such as nuclear arms, and the existence of international organisations can change. According to Koslowski & Kratochwil (1994, p.223) the international system transforms when actors change their behaviour – which depends on their identity – in their interaction with other states. Through the interaction with other states and their actions based on the altered identity, states change the norms and rules of the international system. Similarly, identities might be relatively stable, but are not static or unchangeable (Wendt, 1999, p.417).

Where conventional constructivists would focus on *why* identities change (which factors caused the change), interpretative and critical/radical constructivists would research the background conditions and discourses that explain *how* identity changes (Checkel, 2007, p.2). The language used to construct the world is not static and a change in identity, norms and interests is often expressed in language (Fierke, 2013, p.196). The divide between conventional and linguistic constructivists also influences the studies on enlargement. Conventional constructivists claim to have an answer to the question of why member states support the accession of countries who have little economic benefit for incumbent member states; a question neither neofunctionalism nor intergovernmentalism could answer. Their argument is that EU norms and values internalized by member states explain the decision to go against their own material interests (Risse, 2009, p.156-157). However, conventional constructivists do not consider *how* these norms are formulated; or in other words, how enlargement is talked about in or by the EU, the candidate states and the member states themselves. Linguistic constructivism focusses on this discourse of enlargement. Narratives play a role by structuring the basic elements of discourse on a certain subject or chain of events. In the following subchapter this linguistic strand of constructivism will be further explained.

2.4 Taking language seriously

In this subchapter the role of discourse in constructing reality is explained, because it is within the linguistic turn of constructivism that narratives can be situated. Linguistic constructivism²

² While Adler (2013) categorizes constructivists as either ‘conventional’ or ‘(modern) linguistic’, several other authors use different categories. Fierke (2013) calls language-oriented scholars ‘consistent’, others use terms such as ‘strong’ or ‘rules-based’; while Checkel (2007) differentiates linguistic constructivists into two further

argues that a description of a social fact is tied to how it is perceived, and that language should be viewed as an independent object (Larsen, 2004, p.64). As a result, linguistic constructivists look at discourse and employ a linguistic methodology such as discourse analysis (Adler, 2013, p.122). This new consciousness about the role of language challenged the dominance of positivism, which was still present in conventional constructivist studies. It is at the level of discourse – which is a “system that regulates the formation of statements” – that meaning is produced, and that social reality is constructed, although this does not mean that interpretative constructivists consider there is no world outside of discourse) (Wæver, 2009, p.164; see also Foucault, 1972). Accordingly, language is not seen as a mirror of reality (like conventional constructivists see it), but as speech acts, discourse power structures and structures of argumentation (Checkel, 2007, p.3). How discourse is approached varies extensively depending on which philosophical influence – Wittgenstein, Foucault, speech act theory, Habermas, as well as poststructuralism, such as Derrida (Adler, 2013, p.114) – scholars choose.

Speech acts

Those constructivists interested in the discursive actions of agents and the process of constitution through discourse, often look at speech acts (Fierke, 2013, p.197). This means focusing on the discursive action of actors in relation with instead of in response to a norm (Wiener 2007, p.48). For actors to have the ability to change the current social reality, they must be “discursively competent” (Ruggie, 1998, p.879). Speech acts are a way for actors to intentionally express their ideas and intentions, but they are always produced in a context and are intended for someone. Norms give actors a way to contextualize their actions (including speech acts), tell them how to communicate with the other and how to appraise their own actions as well as those of others (Kratochwil, 1993, p.76). Thus, speech acts theory brings together both structure and agency to show how intentional discursive actions are socially constructed. Although speech acts are actions of agents, they are expressed in relation to the structure the agent is in. Based on Wittgenstein’s concept of ‘rules’ in a game, where moves are only made based on rules, it is possible through speech acts to find rules that structure how actors reason with each other in different contexts (Fierke, 2013, p.196-197). Actors ‘make moves’ by using discourse, but these moves are restricted by the rules of the ‘game’ of the particular context.

When approaching enlargement of the EU, speech acts have been applied to the rationalisation/justification for enlargement (Wæver, 2009). Schimmelfennig (2001; see also

categories, namely ‘interpretative’ and ‘radical/critical’ (Adler, 2013; Checkel, 2007; Ruggie, 1998). For the purpose of this thesis, the term ‘linguistic’ will be used when language-oriented constructivism is mentioned.

Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2002, 2005) explains support for enlargement even if it is not in the interests of the member states through rhetorical entrapment. Member states use speech acts or rhetoric actions – strategic norm-based arguments in favour of enlargements – to justify their own political goals. The opponents of accession of a new country are shamed into rhetorical entrapment by the supporters who use norm-based arguments. As a result, the opponents are forced to conform to the EU norm. Here the EU norms are the rules of the game, and rhetorical actions are speech acts. However, Schimmelfennig still argues that member states are weakly socialized and are often motivated by material and egoistic political interests. Although he studies discourse, he sees it as a causal mechanism which changes the agents (Schimmelfennig, 2001, p.62).

Discourse constituting reality

While many scholars in linguistic constructivism focus on the discourse of actors, others look at how discourse has the power to construct social reality (Reus-Smit, 1999, p.26; see also Hopf, 2002; Spencer 2016). Although the construction of reality through discourse was once considered part of poststructuralist theories of IR, it has since been included in a constructivist theory where the idea of ‘macro’ discourses means that it can generate and constrain the identity and choices of agents (Larsen, 2004, p.65).

Based on a Foucauldian theory, discourse is not ‘deliberately shapeable’ but shapes the way actors understand the world (Heinelt & Münch, 2018, p.4). Discourse does not mediate the world, it is how social reality is created, as such “discourses organize symbolic forms within our lives, in such a way that they become internalized (or naturalized) within people’s minds and hearts. This is the power of discourse – it controls the agency of its subjects” (Foucault, 1982, pp.43-46). A word has no meaning in a vacuum. By using a word, it becomes meaningful in a given time and setting and can construct the subject it refers to. For example, constructivist concepts such as norms, beliefs and identities are formed through language. These discourses, such as treaties, directives and regulations, are not just international laws, but discursive instruments in which the norms and values of the EU are made present through language (Ibryamova & Dominguez, 2006, p.48).

Linguistics and poststructuralism

What differentiates linguistic constructivists and more poststructuralist scholars is the latter’s emphasis on the relativity of statements, by which no view can be more valid than others (Adler, 2013, p.117). Linguistic constructivists argue that discourse can construct reality. As a result, discourse is changeable, although it can remain relatively stable (Fierke, 2013, p.197).

Poststructuralists are more sceptical about the ability to capture meaning and assert that there are multiple interpretations for how individuals and groups can “see” the world. These interpretations are always unstable and multiple meanings can be given to one ‘sign’ through deconstruction (idem; see also Campbell, 1993; Derrida, 1978/2005). Spencer (2016) belongs to the former by maintaining that narratives have constitutive power on their own, are relatively stable, do not change per actor or have infinite multiple interpretations.

To summarize, the linguistic turn in constructivism brought language and discourse to the centre of research on IR. Through language actors constitute the world and language limits what the actors can say. Secondly, language has the ability to create, change and reproduce social reality. Narratives, Spencer (2016) argues, are one way that reality can be formulated and changed. An example of this is the research of Manners and Murray on six European integration narratives. They argue that a new narrative of the EU, based on a new ‘belonging to Europe’, emerged post-Cold War time (Manners & Murray, 2016, p.190). Their research shows that narratives are not only strategic speech acts but can construct the way political events are talked about (idem). This understanding of narratives is further explained in the next subchapter.

2.5 The turn to narratives

Turning to narratives is also a turn to a field of discourse analysis that is still being viewed with suspicion and scepticism about its relevance (Spencer, 2016, p.2). Although narratives have attracted some attention in previous research, they have gained prominence in EU foreign policy research only recently (Kurowska, 2018, p.281). Narratives matter in IR because they “do political work” (Riessman, 2008, p.8). “It is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities” (Somers, 1994, p.606). Our interests and identities are thus (in part) constructed by narratives. Secondly, narratives are essential to how the political system is constructed (Shenhav, 2005, p.249). Although narratives cannot give us an explanation of reality, analysing narratives can show us how alternative ideas of reality are constructed and transformed (Spencer, 2016, p.4). This fits within the post-positivist, discursive and cultural position of interpretative constructivism which argues that social facts are constituted through discourse (Brockmeier and Carbaugh 2001, p.9).

What is a narrative?

In interpretative constructivism, narratives are defined in a myriad of ways, such as an explanatory scheme representing reality, a strategic resource or something that structures discourse and constitutes reality (Roe, 1994; Shenhav, 2005; Biegón, 2013). However, many still consider narratives to have similar structural elements (Van Peer and Chatham, 2001, p.2). Most definitions of narratives include the (re)production of an event or events, which occur within a particular setting (Spencer, 2016). Bruner (1991, p.7) maintains that narratives are “about people acting in a setting,” while others see event(s) as the central subject of narratives (Spencer, 2016, p.15). Often the concept of time and the concept of causality or sequence of events are included in narratives. Plots make a succession of events into a story, although the plot does not need to portray the events chronological (Ricoeur, 1981, p.167). Figure 1 below shows the construction of narratives summarized by Abbott (2002, p.16, emphasis in original): “**Narrative** is the representation of events, consisting of *story* and *narrative discourse*, **story** is an *event* or sequence of events (the *action*), and **narrative discourse** is those events as represented.”

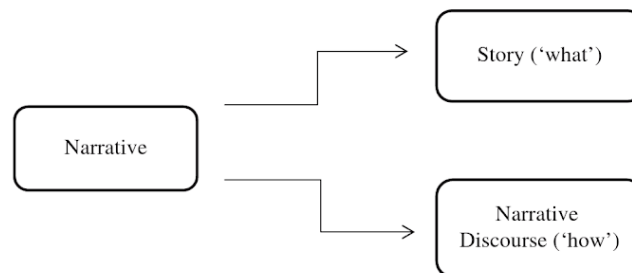


Figure 1: Narrative components (Source: Spencer, 2016, p. 17)

As narratives are becoming increasingly important, Spencer (2016, p.2) argues that scholars have paid very little attention to what narrative are according to research on narratology. At the same time, many IR studies which do include narratives, use the concept as a synonym for frames, discourse in general or (strategic) argumentation. Although these concepts deal with the same subject, namely language, in a similar way, there are differences. Narratives are “phenomena embedded in discourses” which organise elements of discourse into a “comprehensible plot” (Urhammer & Røpke, 2013, p.64). Discourses describe how reality is given meaning through language, which can take many forms, such as frames, metaphors, and explanatory paradigms. Narratives is the part of discourse that structures these elements around a plot or events (Spencer, 2016, p.33).

Cultural and cognitive narratology

Both the cultural (also called historical) and cognitive narrative perspective can offer insights into how narratives can play a role in politics and IR (Spencer, 2016, p.14). These theories show how narratives fit within the main components of constructivism, such as identity, culture and ideas. According to cognitive narratology humans have a natural impulse to think in narratives. Bruner (1991, p.6) even argues that one of the first capabilities of the mind is being able to comprehend narratives. Narratives are important to humans because they simplify what humans observe around them and make sense of the world (Spencer, 2016, p.19). This same process can be applied to the broader concept of actors in the international system as defined by constructivism. Humans formulate narratives about events, processes and international organisations in the international system – such as the EU and enlargement – which gives meaning to and understanding of actions and choices of international actors (Patterson and Monroe, 1998, p.316). Thus, by creating a certain (strategic) narrative, humans are constructing their position and identity in the world as well as the ideas and interests that they might have.

On the other hand, cultural narratology focusses on narratives that are constructed on a larger scale and form the foundation on which culture and group identity is constructed (Spencer, 2016, p.20). “So natural is the impulse to narrate, so inevitable is the form of narrative for any report of the ways things really happen, that narrativity could appear problematic only in a culture in which it was absent” (White, 1987, p.1). Because narratives “invite reflections on the very nature of culture and, possibly, even on the nature of humanity itself” it is impossible to present an objective narrative of history, as people will including their own interpretation (idem; Spencer, 2016, p.20). This process can be found in the constructivist principles of the co-constitution of agency and structure and the constitution of culture. Narratives are part of every society and influence the constitution of a common identity (Browning, 2008, p.47), because groups – whether local communities or international organisations – establish shared norms, values and an identity through narration (Erll, 2009, p.212). Together, cognitive and cultural narratology show how the world is both perceived and understood through narratives (Spencer, 2016, p.19).

Setting, characterization and emplotment

This thesis follows the conceptualization of narratives based on the research of Alexander Spencer (Spencer, 2016; Oppermann & Spencer, 2016; Kruck & Spencer, 2013). According to Spencer (2016, p.25), narratives are composed of a *setting* or context of the story, a *characterization* of the actors involved and an *emplotment* of the causal and temporal plot of

the events, which he has taken from literary studies and narratology. These concepts will be further operationalised in the following chapter on method and methodology, but for now a brief outline of the three concepts will be given, as well as how they contribute to a constructivist understanding of international relations.

As has been expanded on before, one of the fundamental assumptions of constructivism is the social construction of reality and social facts. Although reality exists without discourse, the meaning given to words come from and through discourse (Wæver, 2009, p.165). This corresponds with the notion of ‘world-making activity’ – with setting as the key concept – of narratology (Bruner, 1991, p.11; Spencer, 2016, p.26). Narratives are one form of how the world is both represented and constructed in a given culture (Spencer, 2016, p.23). For narratology, it is the setting in a particular narrative that provides the background. This gives the audience a context to the story and helps them to determine what appropriate behaviour is for the actors included in the narrative (ibid.).

The characterization and construction of identity are also linked in narrative (Spencer, 2016, p.28). Identities are (partly) constituted by the norms and ideas of the social structure. In narratology, this process is often based on the idea of *alterity*, it is both in contrast to and in combination with the ‘other’ that identity is formed (ibid.). Connected to identity is the constitution of interests and action. Narratives contribute to the construction of interests and the way behaviour is perceived, because they are the “guides for action in the present by framing what we value, what constitutes acceptable and moral behaviour, and by setting the parameters of the ‘legitimate’ stories that can be told about the self” (Browning, 2008, p.55).

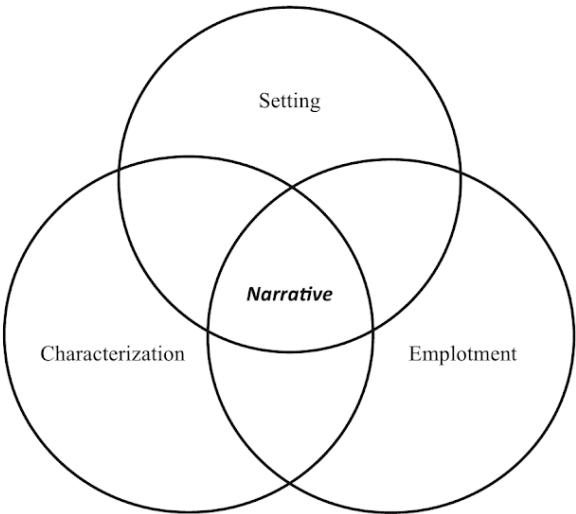


Figure 2: Elements of a narrative (Source: Spencer, 2016, p.25)

Characterization describes how identity (construction) is integrated in narratives.

The third element of narratives is emplotment, which corresponds with the co-constitutive nature of the structure and agent in constructivism. Emplotment provides the “overarching context and makes events, characters and their behaviour coherent and intelligible, as it offers an explanation or reason for why settings or characters are the way they are and why they behave in the way they do” (Spencer, 2016, p.32). A narrative becomes meaningful if the actor is emplotted in a setting. An overview of events and characters is only the story, but not the narrative discourse (see figure 1) (Spencer, 2016, p.17). The characters in the narrative need to have a reason for their behaviour, which is linked to a chain of events or actions that lead to other actions (Baker, 2006). Emplotment “allows us to weight and explain events rather than just list them, to turn a set of propositions into an intelligible sequence about which we can form an opinion” (Baker, 2006, p.67). Paul Ricoeur (1981: 167, emphasis in original) summarizes this, writing “[a] story is made out of events to the extent that plot *makes* events *into* a story.”

One example within EU studies is the research on legitimization narratives of the Commission of Biegón (2012, p.205-207). The background of a ‘democratic Europe’ narrative is defined by the democratic revolutions of Eastern Europe in the 1990’s, which influences the characterization of Western Europe as a ‘beacon’ of stability and freedom. Other actors are the European citizens, which Biegón sees as ‘citizens’ of Europe, unlike in a ‘cultural’ narrative which would characterize Europeans as a cultural community. Both are centred around a plot, where the EU institutions are actively trying to express the EU in a certain way through their regulations and decisions.

Structure and agency

Apart from how narratives work and what structural elements they possess, two questions arise about the function of structure and agency in narratology. Firstly, how are certain narratives marginalized or made dominant and secondly, how do narratives change? Spencer (2016, p.4) considers discourse – and thus narratives – as ‘above’ individual actors. This means that a narrative has significant power on its own to construct reality and constitute actors within the international system. This has a considerable effect on how the role of structure and agency is theorized.

A focus on structure means that change and marginalization of narratives are (wholly or at least mostly) the result of changes in a larger discourse, which takes place at different levels of discourse formation. Actors, in this macro-centric view of narratives, have less agency over the narrative they produce (Holzscheiter, 2014, p.151). A marginalization of narrative is thus not dependent on one narrating actor but can only succeed if the alternative narrative fits, to some

extent, within the conventional narrative being told to the audience. Changing a narrative will happen gradually and when included in a variety of texts by different narrators. A key concept for this version of narrative change is *intertextuality*, meaning that texts are interdependent with other texts and always relate to one another (Spencer, 2016, p.185; see also Bakhtin, 1986).

On the other side are scholars who start from the micro-centric position, who look at the power of narrators to change or manipulate the (strategic) narrative (Spencer, 2016, p.37). Actors choose not only which events to narrate, but also control the narrative and narrative strategies they want to present (Holzscheiter, 2014, p.153). These scholars acknowledged that narratives can succeed or fail depending on certain intertextual and contextual elements, but maintain that agents are the authors of their narrative and can thus deliberately structure social reality (and identity) (ibid.). Changes in narratives can thus happen fairly quickly, as one actor can change a narrative if the narrating actor has the power to influence it. Marginalization comes about differently in a micro-centric view, because the narrating actor can decide on what he or she includes in his or her narrative and what is left out.

For example, according to the first position, the Juncker Commission would have had very little power over the narrative on enlargement. Because the process of enlargement started several years before the Juncker Commission mandate, a narrative of enlargement had already been shaped. The latter position instead, would see extensive power in the Juncker Commission in shaping the enlargement narrative of the EU, such as calling for a temporary pause on enlargement at the beginning of their mandate. Meaning the Commission was not limited by the narrative commitments of previous Commissions, who had continued their support for enlargement, despite increasing ‘enlargement fatigue’ among the member states (Ferro-Turrión, 2015, p.18).

In summary, narratives contribute to a better understanding of discourse in IR and EU studies as way to structure discourse elements through setting, characterization and plotment. These three narrative elements are integrated into the co-constitutional and identity principles of constructivism. Narratives help us understand how the world, as well as actors and actions are structured and communicated in texts. In the next subchapter the applicability of narratives to European enlargement and the role of the Commission will be considered.

2.6 Interpreting narratives of enlargement

In this subchapter the concept of narratives will be linked to the case of EU enlargement. This thesis argues that narratives can be found in official communication of the Commission on enlargement and investigates how narratives on enlargement are constructed in the Commission's official discourse, so that particular narratives are precluded, while others become dominant. Narratives provide for a better understanding of how enlargement and the involved actors are being talked about. The Western Balkan enlargement is a long and complicated process, with many different actors involved in the various stages and decision-making, such as the Berlin process, the SAP, the 35 chapters of the *acquis communautaire* and the role of the Council in the accession decisions. This thesis therefore assumes that the Commission will narrate their policies in a particular way in an effort to advance their position on enlargement to the Western Balkans and bring certain elements of the enlargement process to the foreground. Narrative analysis provides a useful methodological tool for the reconstruction of narratives in discourse and the elements that shape the formation of statements, speeches and official communication documents (Biegón, 2012, p.195). The elements of setting, characterization and emplotment are therefore assumed to also be present in the different sources.

Narratives help scholars understand what characterization of the Western Balkans and events in the enlargement process the Commission wants to emphasize and show how these events are given meaning by the Commission. Likewise, the narrative offers a way for scholars to understand how the Commission is justifying its policies on enlargement towards the member states of the EU, the constituents and the (potential) candidate countries. Narratives provide a complementary perspective next to other forms of discourse analysis such as framing, because it shows how the different frames or other explanations of major steps in enlargement are linked together in one story. Two 'meta-narratives' have been identified, which will serve as the basis for a comparison of the narratives of the Commission on enlargement and allow for the analysis of how similar the narrative of the Commission is to the 'meta-narratives' which exist on enlargement.

While several potentially narratives for this analysis can be found in existing literature, this thesis focusses on two meta-narratives that have been used to describe the process of enlargement of the EU the most. The narrative of enlargement is partly constructed by the narratives of European external relations and narratives of European integration (Manners & Murray, 2016, p.188). These two 'meta-narratives' serve as the framework for the empirical

analysis in chapter 4, because these ‘meta-narratives’ function as the intertextual discursive background within which the Commission has to shape its own (strategic) narrative. The narratives collected in this chapter and further operationalized in the next, provide a guide for the collection and analysis of the data. Meta-narratives allow for an evaluation to what extent the Commission’s narrative fits within the ‘meta-narratives’ on enlargement and how the Commission has narrated its renewed interest in the Western Balkans. Based on the meta-narratives it is possible to compare the results of this thesis to categories which resemble a theoretical puzzle (Milliken, 1999, p.235). To do this, the following two chapters describe the selected narratives, before addressing the expected manner in which these narratives will be present in the narrative of the Juncker Commission. The ‘meta-narratives’ will be operationalised according to the elements of setting, characterization and emplotment in Chapter 3.

The two narratives of immediate relevance are: a *normative* narrative and a *pragmatic* narrative. The first narrative is based on normative arguments, this normative narrative contains three main arguments: the Europeanness of the candidate countries, the responsibility of the EU to promote and protect peace and democracy in Europe and finally, the solidarity of the EU with candidate countries. The second narrative is based on pragmatic arguments, which include the economic benefits from enlargement for current members, the increase of EU’s political and economic influence and lastly, the costs of non-enlargement (Herranz-Surrallés, 2012). In the following two subchapters these narratives will be further explained.

2.7 Normative narrative

The first narrative of enlargement is based on normative arguments for enlargement. These are founded on the shared identity, the responsibility of the EU to promote peace in Europe and solidarity, which are norm, values and rights-based arguments. Many scholars have argued that normative arguments were the solution to the theoretical puzzle of why member states were supportive of accession of Eastern European countries, despite the expected political and economic costs (Herranz- Surrallés, 2012, p.390). Normative arguments were the only way enlargement could be explained from the perspective of the incumbent EU member states, who were motivated by normative principles (Sedelmeier, 2003, p.8). In this subchapter the normative narrative will be further expanded and finally applied to the case of the Juncker Commission and enlargement of the Western Balkans.

European identity, norms and values

The first part of a normative narrative is the element of identity, or the Europeanness of the Western Balkans. ‘The European identity’ narrative has two understandings of the European community; first, a community with one (overarching) culture, and second, a community of norms and values. The idea of a European community with one culture, or a ‘European people’ with a common heritage has been part of EU discourse for decades (Biegón, 2012, p.205). In enlargement discourse this idea is portrayed as a shared identity between the current EU member states and the (potential) candidate states, or the idea that the candidate states in the process of becoming a European state. Many studies have been dedicated to the ‘otherness’ of Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans (for the latter see the work of Maria Todorova (1997) on ‘orientalization’ of the Balkans). However, proponents of enlargement leave out references to ‘other’ in the accession discourse, because this would confirm the narrative that the candidate countries (the Western Balkans in this thesis) are not part of Europe (and thus do not belong in the EU) (Verney, 2006, p.33). Instead, the narrative will include references to how the countries belong in Europe, such as referencing Greece as the birthplace of European ideals instead of its dictatorial recent history (ibid.).

The EU as a normative power, thus as a community based on normative values and norms, is often considered to have played a significant role in EU enlargement. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998, p.898) argue that international organizations such as the EU have been able to influence state actors based on normative ideas, thus playing the role of ‘norm entrepreneurs’ or ‘policy advocate’ for enlargement. This is not only based on a normative identity but has a significant link to the concept of Europe, shared values and a commitment from all (potential) member states to promote these values internally and internationally (O’Brennan, 2006, p.157). Manners (2002) describes this as ‘normative power Europe’, saying that:

“[t]he concept of normative power is an attempt to suggest that not only is the EU constructed on a normative basis, but importantly this predisposes it to act in a normative way in world politics. It is built on the crucial, but usually overlooked observation, that the most important factor shaping the international role of the EU is not what it does or what it says, but *what it is*.” (Manners, 2002, p.252)

As stated in the TEU art. 49; “[a]ny European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union” (TEU, 2012, p.43). The norms and values of the EU are laid out in the *acquis communautaire*, which have been placed at the centre of the EU enlargement policies since the early 1990’s

(O'Brennan, 2006 p.158). Enlargement is then part of the collective identity of the EU based on values of Europeaness. EU give the EU a duty to those with the same identity, while enlargement requires the candidate states to accept the European *acquis* before enlargement.

Universal rights

Sjursen (2002, p.499) goes beyond the concept of a European identity with European norms and values and instead maintains that the identity of the EU is based on fundamental rights. The distinction between values and rights matters because, whereas the EU can differentiate between candidates based on values, it cannot do this based on universal rights principles (Sjursen, 2006, p.209). Sjursen (2006, p.495) argues that enlargement is motivated by universal rights, which are not linked to an *acquis* whose content can change and is based on the ethical-political objectives of the EU. Instead, Sjursen argues that the EU is fundamentally based on ideas of human rights, rule of law and democracy, which are accepted as valid by all, and all of which can be found in the two Treaties of the EU. The EU is not only an advocate for its own values, but is constituted by those very rights, which in turn become values and norms. As she states:

“*Rights* refer to a set of principles that are mutually recognized. In other words, policy would be legitimized with reference to principles that, all things considered, can be recognized as ‘just’ by all parties, irrespective of their particular interests, perceptions of the ‘good life’ or cultural identity.” (ibid., emphasis in original)

This key principle has also played a role in previous enlargement rounds, especially in the Southern enlargement of Greece, Portugal and Spain. This argument is strengthened by the position of the EU regarding the membership application of the latter two countries. Although the countries had applied earlier, their application was not taken seriously until they became functioning democracies (Sjursen & Smith, 2004, p.131). These countries who had just become democracies had “entrusted the Community with a political responsibility which it cannot refuse, except at the price of denying the principles in which it is itself grounded” (Commission, 1978, p.6). This development of universal rights is also integrated into the accession process, for example through the inclusion of chapter 23 “judiciary and fundamental rights” to the *acquis* (Hillion, 2013, p.2).

Application to the case

What can we expect for the narrative of enlargement by the Juncker Commission based on this normative narrative? The Western Balkan enlargement resembles the puzzle of the Eastern enlargement. As the accession of the Western Balkan is not a large economic contribution to

the EU economy, it is argued that, like the accession of the Eastern countries, normative arguments motivate the EU to support accession. Therefore, it is normative discourse that will dominate the narrative of the Commission, in an effort to increase the feeling of duty of the EU member states to support enlargement and for the (potential) member states to understand the norms and values of the EU.

First, the narrative is expected to contain references to the shared identity of the Western Balkans and the EU. This can take many forms but is likely to contain elements which link Western Balkans to Europe and the history of the Western Balkans to the history of Europe. For example, the way the Western Balkan 'has always been a part of Europe' or is 'an integral part of a united Europe' might be included in a normative narrative. However, references to the Yugoslavian wars can be both part of the normative narrative and (in this research not included) security narrative, depending on how the wars are framed. For example, the Eastern countries joining the EU in the 'big bang' enlargement of 2004 were talked about in normative terms as transitioning from 'Eastern' and 'communist' states to 'European' states, which gave the EU the moral duty to 'bring the countries back' to Europe (O'Brennan, 2006, p.161). Likewise, the Balkan can be referenced as a region of war, which through accession is transformed into a peaceful and democratic region with respect for good neighbourness, meaning respect for the other Western Balkan countries (Nițoiu, 2013, p.246; Bechev, 2009, p.215). However, the Yugoslavian war can also be linked to instability and a problematic past, in which case it would not be part of a normative narrative. During the data selection these different references to the Yugoslavian War will be differentiated. Secondly, a normative narrative will include references to the norms and values of the EU, such as the *acquis*, the values and rights as described in the Treaties of the EU and more broadly the fundamental values of, among others, democracy, equality, rule of law and human rights. Lastly, it is expected that enlargement and reforms will focus on human rights improvements, institutionalization of European values and norms or as bringing the Western Balkan closer to the EC, because it is these changes that are most important to the Commission if the EU is a community based on values and norms.

Normative discourses have been met with scepticism or discussion. Juncos (2011, p.98) maintains that the EU has undermined the normative discourse of the EU by not employing a successful normative discourse in the Western Balkans, despite its attention to norms in the entire Balkan neighbourhood there were inconsistencies and double standards regarding the compliance to the ICTY. O'Brennan (2006,159) identifies some form of path-dependency in consecutive enlargement rounds, where each round created certain expectations as well as

structure for the discourse of the succeeding enlargement round. Schimmelfennig (2001, p.76) would argue that the enlargement is not actually based on collective identity or a sense of responsibility, as it would be portrayed in the discourse on enlargement. Instead, states are motivated by material and egoistic reasons but are rhetorically entrapped by proponents of enlargement through their normative based arguments. Although Schimmelfennig concludes that actors are not actually motivated by norms and values, this does not mean that this thesis cannot include a potential normative in the analysis. The purpose of this thesis is not to find the true motivations of the Commission to favour enlargement, but to understand how they narrated enlargement in their official communications.

2.8 Pragmatic narrative

An alternative narrative can be developed based on research arguing that political and economic interests are the main motivation for enlargement. The integration process of the EU has been based for a considerable degree on the willingness of member states to form a common economic sphere and each successive enlargement of the EU has had an economic component which changed the economic dimension of the EU (O'Brennan, 2006, p.132). Secondly, enhancing the political function of the EU was considered a main objective of EU integration and the common European foreign policy. It is therefore not surprising that economic and political arguments have been used to support enlargement in practice and research. In this subchapter the pragmatic narrative will be explained and applied to the case of the Juncker Commission and enlargement of the Western Balkans.

The costs and benefits of (non-)enlargement

A recurrent argument to justify enlargement is related to the costs of non-enlargement or the material benefits that enlargement would bring to the incumbent EU countries (Herranz-Surrallés, 2012, p.394). Including costs and benefits into the narrative can be aimed both at the current member states and the (potential) candidate states.

Positive effect on economic growth for both the incumbent and new members, is included in the justification for enlargement in a number of ways, such as eliminating costs, such as tariffs and transaction costs, by enlarging the common market and equalizing the legal and regulatory systems and by promoting investments and trade (Schneider, 2009, p.42). The Eastern enlargement of 2004 (and 2007) was often justified with the increase of 500 million people in the common market of the EU, which would be beneficial for both the internal market and the

position of the EU in global trade, while new states would benefit from having access to ‘club goods’, the internal market and faster organisation of trade (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005, p.12; O’ Brennan, 2006, p.133). The EU official documents used statements such as ‘win-win process’ to describe enlargement being both beneficial for new and incumbent member states (idem). As the Commission concludes, the Eastern enlargement has:

“boosted the economies and improved living standards in the new Member States, thereby also benefiting the old Member States notably through new export and investment opportunities. It has strengthened the economy of the Union as a whole, through the advantages of integration in a larger internal market.” (European Commission, 2009, p.3)

Next to maximizing the benefits of enlargement, the EU has sought to minimize the costs of accession of new member states (Herranz-Surrallés, 2012, p.390). De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2006, p.420) argue that support for enlargement decreases when it is related to risks and costs. The current member states encounter several costs, such as loss of political influence in the EU and loss of control over decision-making as more members are joining the Council (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005, p.12). Secondly, transaction costs of the enlargement process are present for both the current and new member states, which are framed as a needed ‘sacrifice’. For example, during the Eastern enlargement, the Commission insisted for the duration of the process that the costs would stay within the budget, even though this goal was unlikely as previous enlargement rounds had often cost more than budgeted (Jileva, 2004, p.18). Sjursen (2002, p.497) however, concludes that high costs were expected and explicitly mentioned in the ‘Agenda 2000’, which would indicate that all actors were aware of the costs.

On the other side, costs of non-enlargement were used to justify enlargement to the current member states. For example, costs as de-stabilization of the European neighbourhood and loss of economic potential were used in previous enlargement rounds (Herranz-Surrallés, 2012, p.395). Likewise, Biscop (2010, p.76) maintains that the EU was willing to sacrifice normative provisions in favour of providing political stability and ensuring the economic interests of the EU in the region. Finally, Manners and Murray (2013, p.192) argue that a pragmatic narrative of the EU can include references to the enlarged EU as the solution for economic issues related to globalization for both member states and applicant states.

Political and economic influence

According to several authors, the reason for and discourse of enlargement has revolved around the economic and political influence of the EU on a global level (Herranz-Surrallés, 2012, p.399). This argument centres around the idea that the position of the EU relative to its main

competitors would increase through enlargement. Including more countries and people in the EU would increase its economic market position and power. Enlargement had to “strengthen the role which the Community is *destined to play* in the world” (Commission, 1978, p.12, emphasis added) and should not damage the single European market or the CFSP (Sjursen & Smith, 2004, p.132). In 2002 the Commission states that the two strategic aims of enlargement are “projecting political stability and strengthening Europe as an economic power”, which are expected to be achieved (Commission, 2002, p.3). Likewise, in the 2006 enlargement strategy the Commission argues that:

“[e]conomically, enlargement has helped to increase prosperity and competitiveness, enabling the enlarged Union to respond better to the challenges of globalisation. This has brought direct benefits for Europe as a whole. Enlargement has increased the EU's weight in the world and made it a stronger international player.” (Commission, 2006, p.2)

The Commission not only tried to increase the position of the EU in the international community, but also tried to protect its internal organisation. Part of this narrative is also considering the EU as an institution which can ‘tame’ globalization and the ‘fortress Europe’ metaphor and promotes the protection of the internal single market (Manners & Murray, 2016, p.196). Accession of new states is often considered to bring internal changes and disturbances. In previous enlargement discussions the Commission has tried to counter this narrative of enlargement by stating that “an applicant country whose constitutional status, or stance in international affairs, renders it unable to pursue the project on which the other members are embarked could not be satisfactorily integrated into the Union” (European Commission 1992, p.11). This provision was implemented to ensure that new member states would not damage the projects of the EU, including its increasing position in the global political community (Sjursen & Smith, 2009, p.132).

The importance of these pragmatic enlargement conditions was solidified in the Copenhagen Summit Declaration in 1993 and thus in the Copenhagen criteria. All candidates have to be able to meet key criteria’s of the *acquis communautaire* such as a functioning market, otherwise it would disrupt the market of the EU; and accepting the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) (which is an important policy area for EU global political influence) (Sjursen & Smith, 2009, p.132).

Application to the case

If the EU enlargement to the Western Balkan is narrated based on a pragmatic justification, it is expected that the Commission will include several economic discourse elements. Vachudova

(2014, p.125-126) argues that EU enlargement to the Western Balkans is still considered in economic terms. Economic experiences from the 'big ten' enlargement and the economic crisis resulted in an enlargement fatigue in the current member states, which would create the expectation that enlargement would be halted. However, the enlargement continued despite this 'fatigue' rhetoric, because of the economic and security benefits for the member states.

The enlargement to the Western Balkans is similar to the enlargement of the Eastern countries in economic terms, meaning that these countries are economically behind the current member states and would thus induce costs for the current members (unlike the accession of the Scandinavian countries). Therefore, the pragmatic narrative of the Western Balkan enlargement is expected to have the same elements, which include referencing the Western Balkan as a potential market and including foreign investments potential of the region. Secondly, the financial costs of enlargement will either be avoided or mentioned with the benefits which would make the short-term losses worth it. For example, although the costs of arranging the enlargement increase the EU budget, it could be linked to the potential increased 18 million consumers market. Additionally, a pragmatic narrative is expected to include justifications based on the increased political/economic position of the EU, which will lead to an improved and secured Europe. This includes narrating the EU as a stabilizing institution and the stronger position of the EU to solve political and economic problems in the Western Balkans (thus in Europe) and around the new borders of Europe. It is expected that enlargement will be explained in terms of economic reforms and as a process that increases the political and economic influence of EU. However, just as the SEA included references to democracy and human rights because they are beneficial for economic development (Manners & Murray, 2016, p.192), these values can be used in an economic narrative on enlargement. Therefore, if democracy and human rights are included in the narratives, not based on the normative value of both but on their importance for the economy, this narrative element is considered to be part of the pragmatic narrative.

2.9 Conclusions and limitations

In conclusion, this thesis is based on the concept of narratives as a discursive practice that constitutes social reality. Constructivism brought discourse into IR and EU studies, opening up the possibility for narratives as a theory, study object and method of analysis. The linguistic turn in constructivism included a new interest in how subjects such as identity and interests, but also policies and motivations, are talked about by actors. Narratives are one form of discourse,

which have come to the foreground of narrative analysis in recent years. By basing the theory on narratives and the narrative analysis on the conceptualization of Alexander Spencer, this thesis introduced the concepts of setting, characterization and emplotment as key elements of a narrative.

The second part of this theoretical framework consisted of two ‘meta-narratives’ which can be found in previous studies on enlargement. It includes several pragmatic or normative elements which have been identified by scholars in EU discourse on enlargement. These ‘meta-narratives’ will serve as the framework for the empirical analysis in chapter 4, because these ‘meta-narratives’ function as the discursive background within which the Commission has to justify its position in its own narrative. If the ‘meta-narrative’ of enlargement is based on pragmatic arguments, it is expected that the Commission (to some extent at least) follows this narrative, by referencing economic and political justification, such as a common market and increased global influence for the EU. On the other hand, if the ‘meta-narrative’ is based on normative argument, the Commission is likely to include justifications based on a shared identity, European norms and/or universal rights, such as democracy, human rights or rule of law. The two ‘meta-narratives’ conceptualized in this chapter will be operationalized in the following chapter on method and methodology. First, this chapter will end with an overview of the limitations of this theoretical framework and the ‘meta-narratives’.

Limitations of meta-narratives

Narratology and discursive constructivism do have some limitations. Firstly, although narratives are everywhere, not all discourse is structured as a narrative (Riessman, 2008, p.4). Czarniawska (2004) argues that not all people have the same capacity or interest in communicating through narratives. In the same way, international organizations have various documents that consist of language, but would not be considered discourse, for example, statistics and legislative proposals. These could still influence the way the enlargement towards the Western Balkans could be talked about by determining the information on which a narrative is based. They are however, not part of a narrative defined by Spencer (2016) because these types of text miss the element of emplotment. Secondly, Spencer bases his argument on intertextuality and the constitutive power of narrative partly on the ideas of Foucault (Spencer, 2016, p.2). However, he does not engage with the power/knowledge argument of Foucault which is often taken together with his theory on discourse. As a result, the study of discourse should include not only the texts, but also the context and structure of power (Larsen, 1997, p.).

Similarly, Spencer (2016) leaves little room for agency in his theory of narratives. Bevir (2006, p.601) criticizes this decision, arguing instead that ‘situated agency’ leaves room for agents to change the discourse through small adjustment. Narratives are produced by individuals in a context of existing narratives. However, although Spencer’s (2016) theoretical explanation for narratives leaves less room for agency, he does acknowledge a role of agency in certain contexts. In his research on he concludes that on a group level there is more room for agency (Kruck & Spencer, p.340). For this research, we will consider the Commission to be an agent in the EU discourse which tries to influence the narrative of enlargement through their official EU documents and texts but is restricted by the meta-narratives.

The decision to base the analysis on the two meta-narratives of enlargement derived from existing empirical analyses has one important weakness. There were several scholars found different arguments and motivations for enlargement of the EU, which are not included in this analysis. Kuus (2004, 2011) determined there is an extensive functional narrative of enlargement (Kurowska, 2018, p.281). Kuus argues this focus on functionality, policy and bureaucracy in the enlargement process, result in the neglect of the connection between enlargement and the EU as a union of ideas and ideals (ibid.). Another alternative narrative comes from Ferrero-Turrión (2015), who argues that the EU’s motivation is based on the security and geopolitical interests. Likewise, Higashino (2004) argues that the Commission together with Great Britain and Germany has consistently used arguments of security to persuade the other member states. Because only two theoretical perspectives have been chosen – there is a chance of bias in the research. This bias is minimalized by ensuring that the chosen narratives have sufficient foundation in empirical research. Secondly, this thesis is not limited by the decision to concentrate on two potential narratives. It is still possible to make conclusions on the role of these two meta-narratives and determine to what extent they are present.

3. Method and methodology

3.1 Introduction to this chapter

In this chapter the method and methodology of this thesis will be explained. This thesis uses narrative analysis as a method to answer the question of how the Juncker Commission narrates their position and policy on the Western Balkans. This is a mainly deductive content analysis. First, the process of a narrative analysis following Spencer will be explained. The third subchapter is dedicated to the case selection, in which the choice for the narrative of the Juncker Commission is described. In the fourth and fifth subchapter the three narrative components (setting, characterization and emplotment) will be operationalized and applied to the two ‘meta-narratives’. The operationalization of the narrative elements and the ‘meta-narratives’ is done in two separate chapters, following the example of the Spencer (2016, p.40-43). In the sixth subchapter the source and data collection are justified. Finally, the weaknesses of the research design are briefly touched upon in the final subchapter.

3.2 The method of narrative analysis

In this subchapter the method of narrative analysis according to Spencer (2016) is elaborated upon. First, the interpretative epistemology of linguistic constructivism explained in the previous chapter is shortly revisited because Spencer’s narrative analysis is a form of interpretative research. Secondly, the four steps of Spencer’s narrative analysis will be explained.

Post-positivist epistemology

To reiterate, linguistic constructivists look at *how* a social fact happens, not *why* it happens. Discourse is how understandings are created and meaning is given. This means that research should be conducted through interpretation. It is not possible to find what reality is or ‘what is really meant’, as scholars can only gain knowledge through language and interpretation (Larsen, 2004, p.66). Narrative analysis is part of this post-positivist epistemological research tradition. Nevertheless, although it is not possible to research the world without interpretation, some explanations of social facts are more plausible than others in the given context (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001, p.395). This allows interpretative scholars to make claims about the world based on their research. Secondly, by researching the world, social scientists such as IR scholars, are contributing to the social knowledge of the world (ibid.). This means that this research also

contributes to the social facts on enlargement. However, the postpositivist turn in constructivism does not mean method and methodology need to be excluded from research (Milliken, 1999, p.226). Interpretative scholars studying discourse in the international system should address how they operationalize and justify certain methodological decisions. This does not require a positivist approach; instead, scholars should describe and justify the sources and techniques which are used (idem).

Spencer's narrative analysis

Spencer (2016, p.35) gives a short explanation of how a narrative analysis based on setting, characterization and emplotment should be employed. The four steps of a narrative analysis are followed in this thesis, which consists of 1) a case selection, 2) source and data selection, 3) categorizing the data according to the three narrative elements based on the 'meta-narratives' and finally, 4) identifying and analysing the main narrative. Spencer starts with identifying the subject of interest. This will be done in the following subchapter and has been shortly explained in the introduction, which is why it is not further explained here. Following the case selection, one needs to decide on data which Spencer separates in 'the realm of analysis' as well as the timeframe. This is done in the subchapter on data selection, where both the source and data collection in this analysis are explained.

The third step is categorizing the data found in the text according to the three categories. This requires a conceptualization of the 'meta-narratives' a scholar expects to find. The two 'meta-narratives' introduced in the previous chapter, serve as the framework of analysis for this thesis and provide the resources to conceptualize the three narrative elements, select the data from the sources and reconstruct the narrative of the Commission. As explained in the previous chapter, these 'meta-narratives' allow for the comparison of the Commission's narrative to the expected narratives and thus resemble a theoretical puzzle. Therefore, the pragmatic and normative 'meta-narratives' are operationalized in this chapter. The operationalization of the three narrative elements and the features of the two 'meta-narratives' is done before the data selection, because the categorization of the 'meta-narratives' serves as the basis for the data selection. The final step of the narrative analysis is to identify the main narrative elements found in the texts. The analyst "engages to retell the story by using the quotations as a collage" (Spencer, 2016, p.35). The narratives will be constructed guided by the conceptualization of the two 'meta-narratives'. However, it is possible that other 'meta-narratives' influence the narrative of the Commission. These elements will still be included in the reconstruction and analysis of the narrative. This step forms the next chapter consisting of the empirical analysis.

3.3 Subject of interest

In this subchapter the case selection (called the subject of interest by Spencer) is explained, which is the first step of a narrative analysis. This thesis is comparable to single case study as the thesis focusses on the narrative on EU enlargement of one Commission.

The EU and its predecessors have a long history of enlargement. As can be seen in Table 1 on the next page, there have been several enlargement rounds of the EU. Since its foundation in 1957, the EU (and its predecessors) has grown from six to 28 members. Currently there are three candidate states in negotiations (Turkey, Montenegro and Serbia), two countries are official candidates (FYROM and Albania), two are considered potential candidates (BiH and Kosovo) and one (Iceland) has frozen the accession. As a result, there are different enlargement rounds one could choose from to research the narrative on enlargement.

Table 1: Enlargement of the EU

Year	Enlargement round	Countries
1973	1 st	Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom
1981	2 nd	Greece
1986	3 rd	Spain, Portugal
1995	4 th	Austria, Finland, Sweden
2004/2007	5 th	Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania ³
2013	6 th	Croatia

Source: Gateva, 2015, p.8

The subject of this thesis is the narrative of the enlargement round that is currently in process, namely the Western Balkans, by the current Commission. This enlargement round started before the mandate of the Juncker Commission. The mandate of the Juncker Commission is specifically chosen though, because of the recent renewed interest in enlargement of the Juncker Commission, signified by the presentation of the new Strategy. This renewed interest contrasts with the initial position of the Commission. Although accession of a country was unlikely during the Juncker mandate, considering the normal time frame for membership negotiations,

³ The accession of Bulgaria and Romania is sometimes considered the 6th round of enlargement. The Commission combines them, which is why this definition is adopted here.

Juncker's explicit rejection of enlargement in his Political Guidelines deviated from the former positive position of the Commission on this subject (O'Brennan, 2018, p.2).

In terms of narratology, the accession of a country would be the main event in the story. It is both the end goal of the process and the event which all previous enlargement events are causally related to. Spencer (2016) has only applied his theory and method to events which have taken place. According to the definition of narratives, at least one event must happen for a story to become a narrative (ibid.). In the case of Western Balkan enlargement, only Croatia has succeeded in reaching this final event. Nevertheless, the case of Western Balkan enlargement is a suitable case for a narrative analysis. Although accession has not happened yet for the six remaining countries, it is talked about as an event which can/will take place in the future. In relation to this, a multitude of events have taken place in the process of enlargement since 1999; both formal events, such as the application of membership or the presentation of a new enlargement strategy, and smaller events, such as reforms, new legislation, elections or speeches. Therefore, this enlargement round still fits within the definition of a narrative story.

In this analysis, Europe/EU is the setting, which is both the geographical region and the institutional environment in which enlargement takes place. The process of enlargement takes place within Europe. This makes it the geographical setting of this story. Secondly, the EU is the international diplomatic environment where the enlargement policies are made, the actors, including representatives of the Western Balkans, meet and in where negotiations on accession take place. The Western Balkan as one region and each individual country (as well as their representatives, such as head of states and the general population) are the actors who are characterized by the Commission. The Western Balkan countries have to make the reforms and changes which are part of the process of enlargement. Lastly, enlargement defined as the "gradual and formal horizontal institutionalization of organizational rules and norms" is the collection of events which are emplotted (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005, p.6). It is the enlargement process that links the events, the countries and the EU/Europe together. How reforms or changes are mentioned – for example, is it the introduction of a human rights ombudsman or is it the liberalisation of the market – shows how the events in the enlargement process are talked about or what events are considered most important by the Commission for the plot in this narrative.

3.4 Operationalization of narrative elements

In the previous chapter the link between constructivism and setting, emplotment and characterization was explained. In this chapter, these three narrative elements will be further explained. These three elements will be linked to the two ‘meta-narratives’ in the next subchapter.

Setting

First, setting provides the background to a story, which is linked to the concept of structure and the construction of social reality in constructivism. It is the setting in a story, which gives the audience information on how to interpret the behaviour of actors and assess political events. The concept of setting in narratology is similar to the concept of setting in a play or film. The background or location of the story is important for the story to unfold and gives the audience clues about the story and provides context (Spencer, 2016, p.27). Michael Toolan (2001, p.41) asserts that the “locations [or settings] where events occur are...given distinct characteristics and are thus transformed into specific places.” The setting can take many forms, from a broader context to a geographical location or subjective assessment. As explained, the setting in this narrative is both the geographical region of Europe and the institutional diplomatic realm of the EU.

Characterization

Secondly, the process of characterization of actors plays a large role in narratives. Characterization of actors is related to the constitution of identity and the values, ideas, interests of actors. Characterization describes how identity (construction) is integrated in narratives. For characterization to take place, there has to be a “human or human-like (anthropomorphic) protagonist at the centre” (Fludernik, 2009, p.6). This does not exclude non-human actors, as long as the agent is capable of actions. Actors at the centre of the story are given certain traits, transforming them into characters (Spencer, 2016, p.30). Giving a characterization – for example, a label or name – to an actor influences the identity given to this agent. Secondly, giving an actor characterization changes the relationship between the reader and the subject, which creates a form of personalization (ibid.). There are several ways in which characterization can take place. Often adverbs and adjectives are used to characterize an actor in a narrative. (Oppermann & Spencer, 2016, p.690). A subject can be characterized by giving a ‘relational’ label or based on their physical attributes and appearance. Lastly, agents can be described through their own acts and discourse. By highlighting certain things said by an agent, the narrative can influence how the agent – and their identity and ideas - is perceived (ibid.).

Emplotment

The third and final narrative element is emplotment. Emplotment in narratives is part of the co-constitution of structure and agents, through emplotment the behaviour of agents becomes meaningful in a setting (Spencer, 2016, p.32). Emplotment is the way events (which are an important part of narratives, as something has to happen for it to be narrated about) are written about. The causal dimension of events is of particular interest to IR scholars. Knowing the frequency or duration of events, is part of the story (see figure 1), but not of the narrative. Events are part of a larger causal sequence of events (Fludernik, 2009, p.5). This does not mean that these events have to be narrated according to the causal order. It is even unlikely that events are rarely narrated in the order in which they took place, because linking certain events is part of narrating the story (Baker, 2010, p.353). Emplotment is done through the labelling of events, which includes terms that provide an assessment or opinion of the event.

3.5 Operationalization of ‘meta-narratives’

In this subchapter the two ‘meta-narratives’ are operationalized in the three elements of a narrative which were explained in the previous subchapter. First, the normative narrative will be operationalized based on setting, characterization and emplotment by focussing on identity and norms and values. Then, the pragmatic narrative is operationalized in the same categories based on economic and political interests. Both are summarized in table 4 and 5 respectively.

Earlier in this chapter the setting was defined as the EU/Europe; the characterization is made of the actors, which are the Western Balkan countries; the events which are emplotted are the developments in the process of enlargement/accesion of the Western Balkan countries. Although, these three elements are operationalized based on the meta-narratives, the interpretation of the narratives is not limited to these specific words. For example, operationalizing the setting as the EU being a ‘global entity’, can be worded as ‘global player’ ‘international player on the world stage’ ‘world economic or political power’. Therefore, reading the sources requires a continues interpretation why a certain phrase belongs in one of the narratives as well as consistent documentation of the data.

Normative narrative

The first operationalized narrative is the normative meta-narrative. A normative narrative is based on a European identity and on shared norms, values and rights, as summarized in table 2 on the next page. Manners (2002, p.242-244) finds five core norms in the *acquis*

communautaire, the TFEU and TEU on which ‘normative power Europe’ is built: peace, rule of law, liberty, democracy, and respect for human rights. In addition, he suggests there are four minor norms, which are social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development and good governance.

Based on the ‘meta-narratives’ we expect the setting to be defined according to four different features. First, as Biegón (2012, p.205) points out, EU/Europe is a cultural region with one European identity or an assembly of multiple European identities sharing a certain culture or history differentiating the EU from others. Secondly, the EU/Europe is based on norms, values and rights. Where Manners & Murray (2016, p.190) focus on the norms that underpin the EU, Sjursen (2006, p.249) argues that the EU is based on universal rights. Both are included as features of the EU as a setting. Lastly, as O’ Brennan (2006, p.70) argues the EU is defined by its moral duty to promote the norms, values and rights it is based on. If the EU embodies the norms and values of the community, it has an obligation to other states who fit the qualification to be part of the community (be a European state and respects the values of the EU) to support them in their development towards an EU state (ibid.).

Table 2: Elements of normative narratives

Setting (Europe/EU)	Characterization (Western Balkans)	Emplotment (Enlargement)
S1: European identity	C1: History of Yugoslavia	E1: Promoting democracy
S2: European values	C2: Democratic potential	E2: Internalizing norms and values
S3: Based on universal rights	C3: People want human rights and rule of law	E3: Improvement of human rights and rule of law
S4: Moral duty to promote norms, values & rights	C4: Part of Europe & European history	E4: Cultural Europeanization

It is expected that the Commission will include characterizations that link the Western Balkans to Europe and to EU norms and values. First, based on the characterization of the Eastern states as former communist states and southern states as states ‘in democratic transition’, we expect the Balkan states to be referenced in relation to their history of the Yugoslavian wars. This would narrate the Western Balkan as a region in transition from a state that needs EU support

to a state which fits within the EU (Bechev, 2009, p.215). This first narrative feature is linked to the second and third feature, 'democratic potential' and 'people want human rights and rule of law'. The democratic potential is expected to be present in a normative narrative by the Commission because democracy is a key principle of the EU (Manners, 2002, p.242). Secondly, the people and governments of the Western Balkan countries are likely to be narrated based on their commitment to EU norms and human rights, which the accession states' governments and citizens are expected to respect. Lastly, the Western Balkan is characterized as a cultural part of Europe and European history (Biegón, 2012, p.206). In an identity-based narrative, the EU has a collective (cultural) identity and a shared European history. This means that, only if the Commission successfully narrates the potential members as being part of this cultural EU identity is the narrative consistent and convincing.

Third, events in the enlargement process are then narrated as 'promoting democracy' and 'improvement of human rights and rule of law'. As democracy and human rights are some of the core principles of the EU (Manners & Murray, 2016, p.190), this would make them the most important accession reforms to emphasize. This could include different forms of changes, such as strengthening rule of law and the position of judges, securing the position of the media and respecting freedom of speech, and good governance. Secondly, it is expected based on the meta-narrative that the people and governments in the countries are internalizing the EU norms and values because they value these changes based on their normative meaning and not as a useful tool (Drulák, 2006, p.168). Lastly, following the 'meta-narrative' it is likely that enlargement is described as bringing the Western Balkan countries closer to a united EU. The Western Balkan countries are characterized as being part of Europe, which would imply that they are already 'done' with becoming European. However, it is possible for the countries to be characterized as being part of Europe, while still developing a European identity based on EU norms and values. Therefore, it is likely that enlargement is explained as both contributing to a more unified EU identity and as a process in which the Western Balkan countries are becoming 'more European'.

Pragmatic narrative

In the previous chapter pragmatic and utilitarian arguments for enlargement have been collected from previous enlargement rounds. This meta-narrative argues that there are costs of non-enlargement and benefits of enlargement which convince both the current member states and the candidate states to support enlargement. Secondly, an important part of the pragmatic narrative is the political and economic influence of the EU which is increased by enlargement.

Based on this ‘meta-narrative’ we can operationalize a narrative comprising of a setting, characterization and plot. These three narrative elements are summarized in table 3.

First, based on the meta-narrative the EU is narrated according to its political and economic characteristics. The EU has ‘its own important economic logic’ based among other things on the Single European Act (O’Brennan, 2006, p 32). As summarized in table 3, the EU is an economic region with a common market. In relation to this, the EU is represented as both a political cooperation of states for the benefit of its member countries and as the economic liberal ideas on which the EU was built. This includes, for example, emphasising the role of the member states as the central agents in a cooperation and describing the political and economic goals of the common interests of the member states. Europe/EU thus represents the ideas of a political and economic union based on liberal ideas which all member states support (Moravcsik & Vachudova, 2002). Lastly, the setting is characterized by its place in the larger world. Arguments brought by the Commission during previous enlargement rounds included the positive effects for the EU as a global player (Herranz-Surrallés, 2012, p.3912). According to a pragmatic meta-narrative the Commission will emphasise the role of the EU on the continent of Europe and the world, including political influence, the strengthening of the position of EU member states in trade negotiations and promoting the political opinions of the EU states.

Table 3: Elements of pragmatic narratives

Setting (Europe/EU)	Characterization (Western Balkans)	Emplotment (Enlargement)
S1: An economic region and common market	C1: Economic area/market	E1: economic reforms & development
S2: Represent liberal ideas	C2: Has potential for foreign investment	E2: environmental, agricultural and infrastructural progress
S3: Forms a political cooperation of states	C3: willingness to be influenced	E3: Strengthens economic and political influence
S4: Global entity on world stage	C4: strategic location	E4: Low/no costs to enlargement

If the EU is primarily a union based on economic and political interests, it logically follows that the Commission describes the (potential) candidate countries and the process of enlargement through economic and political characteristics. The pragmatic narrative would therefore give

the main actors in a narrative, specific economic characteristics. Similar to the enlargement to the Eastern Europe, it can be expected that the Commission characterizes the Western Balkan according to their economic market and the potential for trade for current member states (O'Brennan, 2006, p.133). For example, using the terms 'market potential' or emphasising the possible natural goods as well as labour the Western Balkans has which could benefit companies in the current member states. Secondly, enlargement is often talked about as a way for the EU to increase its influence in Europe and the wider world. According to Vachudova (2014) the economic potential for the current EU member states is relatively low, meaning that the narrative on enlargement would include more references to the benefits for the political and economic positions of the EU and its member states in the long term. This however, is predominantly part of the narrative description of the plot. Nonetheless, there could be some ways in which the region can be described that would fit this political influence feature. For example, their 'useful' location or the willingness of the Western Balkans to have the EU influence their own political and economic characteristics.

Based on the pragmatic meta-narrative, there are several ways to characterize the plot of the narrative. First, it is likely that reforms of enlargement are linked to the economic development of the region. In the narrative this can take the form of either actual economic reforms or of other ways to support economic conditions. Secondly, O'Brennan (2006, p.149) argues that environment, agriculture and migration are important subjects in an economic narrative, due to their impact on the current single market and member states. These subjects are important to member states of the EU and therefore it is important that these policy fields have preference, next to general economic reforms, in the enlargement process. As a result, it is expected that enlargement is plotted with attention to these specific policy fields. Lastly, the enlargement process as a whole, is narrated as a method to improve the EU economic and political influence, which includes improving economic trade positions and strengthening the position of the EU.

Conclusion

The two meta-narratives operationalized in this subchapter and summarized in table 2 and 3 will serve as the framework for the analysis in the next chapter. If the Commission narrates the enlargement according to a normative meta-narrative, the emphasis will be on the EU with a common identity based on shared norms, values and rights; the Western Balkan countries are described as part of Europe and committed to the norms and values of the EU; and the enlargement is narrated as a process of cultural and normative development. If the Commission emphasizes the pragmatic elements of enlargement, the EU will be described as a political and

economic region/institution; the Western Balkans as an economic region and according to their potential for EU states; and the enlargement process is described as one of economic reforms and increasing economic and political influence.

Some conceptualizations cause ambiguity, rendering an interpretation of the narrative more difficult. For example, both the normative and pragmatic narrative would insist on ‘good-neighbourness’, which means that all bilateral disputes have to be solved before a country can become a country. A normative interpretation would argue that the Commission would favour this, because disputes often go hand in hand with violations of human rights. A pragmatic narrative would instead argue that ‘good-neighbourness’ is mentioned because current member states do not want to incorporate a conflict into the EU destabilizing the political cooperation and common market. Conflicting interpretations of the same concepts have to be solved through multiple layered interpretation, which includes linking the concepts to surrounding argumentations.

3.6 Data selection

In this subchapter the source collection and data collection will be explained and justified. First the justification for the collection of sources is explained. Following Spencer (2016) the realm of analysis is explained based on the time period and type of sources. The sources of this thesis are a collection of speeches, remarks/statements and policy documents. The second part of this chapter consists of the data collection justification.

Collecting sources

The second step in narrative analysis is to choose the ‘realm of analysis’, consisting of the sources and the time period one wants to analyse. The time period of this analysis is July 2014 until February 2018. This timeframe is chosen, because this research is specifically interested in determining the narrative of the Juncker Commission on enlargement. Due to limitations in time for this thesis, it was not possible to conduct a narrative analysis spanning the entire accession period of the Western Balkan. The mandate of the Juncker Commission commenced in November 2014. However, before the start of this mandate the Commissioners had to provide policy documents that explained their vision for the next five years as well as defend their policy in the EP. To show the narrative on enlargement of this Commission from 2014 to 2018, these first policy documents are the start of this analysis. The final documents of the narrative analysis are from February 2018, which is when the Commission presented its new Strategy. The Commission has announced six flagship initiatives which form the focus of the strategy.

Because they have been presented at the time of writing this thesis, they will not be part of the narrative analysis.

The sources for this analysis consist are all primary sources. The narrator of the narrative is the Commission, represented in this research by Johannes Hahn, the Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement, Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Jean Claud Juncker, President of the Commission. First, official documents regarding enlargement have been collected, such as the strategies on enlargement and the Western Balkans. These strategies represent the official framework for enlargement and have considerable importance, because they are – although not legally binding – the way the Commission presents their policy proposals. These documents give an overview of the principles, objectives and arguments of the EU enlargement policy.

Secondly, speeches and remarks or statements of Mogherini and Hahn were collected. These are important sources of information because the Commission uses them to express its position on enlargement policy. The attention is less on the specific and “mundane” aspects of politics and policy and instead on the vision of the Commission on (the enlargement of) the EU (Forchtner & Kølvråa, 2012, p.379). Sources that contained the words ‘enlargement’ and ‘Balkan(s)’ were collected from the press release database of the Commission. Only sources which had at least one paragraph dedicated to this subject and were linked to important events, such as EU-Balkan Summits and presentations of enlargement strategies, were selected.

Table 2 on the next page shows the total speeches and remarks on Enlargement and the Western Balkan in general made by Hahn and Mogherini. The left column of each Commissioner gives the total sources found. The right column in the table gives an overview of how many of these sources were included in the analysis. From a total of 150 sources, a selection of 29 sources have been included in the narrative analysis.

Table 4: Overview sources of Hahn and Mogherini

	Hahn		Mogherini	
Speeches	31	6	8	4
Remarks	49	3	41	4
Joint statements	21	3	21	3

A third source of data is a collection of communications of the Commission and the HR/VP. These include the State of the Union addresses of President Juncker, the hearing of Hahn and

exchanges of Hahn with the AFET in the EP. These sources are important because they also tell us the general position of the Commission regarding enlargement and the justification of this position and the enlargement policies made in front of the EP. All sources were collected from the website and press release database of the EU. The hearings of Hahn in the EP were collected from the website of the EP. A list of all sources can be found under Appendix C.

Collecting data

As stated in the introduction of this chapter this thesis is a mainly deductive content analysis. Content analysis is a suitable method for this thesis, because it allows for the organized analysis of a body of texts, such as speeches and policy documents of the Juncker Commission (Krippendorff, 2012, p.18). The content analysis is done through the categorization of the data (Weber, 1990, p.23). This is done in a two-step process. First, sentences and phrases about one of the narrative elements were selected and categorized according to the narrative elements (setting, characterization, emplotment). Then, the sentences are categorized according to the type of meta-narrative the phrase belongs to, either pragmatic or normative. The criteria for this categorization are based on the operationalization of the ‘meta-narratives’ explained in the previous subchapters. For example, the sentence ‘the EU is a cultural community’ is categorized as 1) setting and 2) normative. This means that there is a total of six categories (pragmatic setting, pragmatic characterization, etc.). It is possible that the three narrative elements are described from a different narrative perspective. Because of this, the research is partly inductive, as these phrases will also be included in the dataset and codified because they are part of the narrative of the Commission.

Table 5: Example of narrative analysis table

Date	Location	Source	Source Type	Quote	Narrative element	Narrative type
Date or month/year	Where text is spoken (optional)	Document name	Document type	Copy-paste text fragments	S/C/E	N/U/X
(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)

The narrative phrases will be documented following the example of table 3 above. Shenhav (2015, p.28), in his book on narrative analysis methods in social sciences, proposes a table for documenting narrative phrases, which is followed in this thesis with the adjustment of adding the columns on narrative element and narrative type. In this table the collected data can be

presented in a comprehensive and coincide manner. This has two reasons. Firstly, this will make the compilation and analysis of the narrative easier. Secondly, careful documentation of the data used for the reconstruction of the narrative, contributes to the validity and justification of the results (Milliken, 1999, p.235). Presenting the entire data set also allows for replicability, which increases the reliability of the data (Krippendorff, 2012, p.110).

The first four columns of table 3 provide background information to the data, which is needed for the reconstruction of the narrative. The fifth column consists of the quotes which are taken from the text. These quotes are codified in the sixth and seventh column with a label (for narrative element these labels are: S=setting, C=characterization, E=emplotment; for narrative type these labels are: N=normative, U=pragmatic and X=different narrative).

3.7 Weaknesses of research design

An interpretative discourse analysis, such as employed in this thesis has several limitations. The most important weakness is the problem of bias, which is something that influences the results. Bias is a risk in four different ways regarding interpretative discourse analysis; through the choice of potential narrative, through the choice of sources, through the selection of data, and finally the inherent bias of the scholar. The first of these biases has been addressed in the previous chapter.

In the process of selecting sources, a researcher can suffer from confirmation bias. Selecting sources and data require the scholar to make decisions about the texts and data they collect. It is therefore important that scholars collect a variety of sources (Klotz & Lynch, 2007, p.20). In the selection of the phrases there is a potential that not all relevant quotes are collected. For example, this bias plays a role when the narrators use frames, metaphors or myths in their narrative. The fourth and final bias has been briefly addressed in the introduction. IR scholars researching narratives have to be aware of their own bias because they themselves are dependent on language. Scholars are limited by their own interpretation of the collected data. As Larsen (2004, p.66) argues, since knowledge is socially constructed, it is not possible to attain objective and generalizable truths. However, the purpose of this thesis is not to contribute to a generalizable theory of discourse in enlargement, but to understand how narratives play a role in this specific case.

4. Empirical analysis

4.1 Introduction to this chapter

In chapter two a theoretical and analytical framework have been developed based on social constructivism, narratology. Two meta-narratives have been developed based on previous research on enlargement. The first of these meta-narratives is a normative narrative based on European identity/identities and shared norms and values. The second meta-narrative is a pragmatic narrative which emphasises economic and political characteristics and influence. In the previous chapter these two meta-narratives were operationalized and categorized according to the three elements of enlargement, which can be used to analyse the discourse of the Commission from a narrative perspective.

In this chapter the narrative analysis of the Commission discourse on enlargement will be compiled and written down as a “collage”, a retelling of the narrative using the collected phrases (Spencer, 2016, p.35). This chapter consists of three main parts. First, a historical overview of the accession, in narratology called the ‘story’, is given. The second section of this thesis is the compilation of the narrative according to the three narrative elements, which is done in subchapter three to five. The third section explores these narratives according to the expectations of the two meta-narratives and analysis the established narratives.

4.2 Historical overview: The story of accession

This first subchapter will provide a brief overview of the enlargement process of the Western Balkan. This chapter starts with an overview of relation between the Western Balkan countries and the EU and also comments on the role of the Commission in the enlargement process (in appendix A and B a map of the Western Balkan and a timeline of EU accession can be found).

Although the EU had established diplomatic relations individually with several of the Western Balkan countries throughout the 1990’s, the Council decided on a new regional approach to the Western Balkans, which was aimed at improving stability throughout the region (Gateva, 2015, p.126). This regional approach was formalized by the introduction of the SAAs. Serbia was the first country to sign a SAA with the EU, starting the Stability and Association Process (SAP). This process comes with its own SAP conditionality. Although there was already an established framework for accession, based on the Copenhagen Criteria and the treaties of the EU, the SAP

conditionality added specific conditions for the Western Balkan states. These included cooperation with the ICTY, regional cooperation, supporting the return of refugees and instituting specific democratic reforms (ibid., p.127).

The SAP continued to play a large role in the relation between the EU and the Western Balkan countries, because it had to prepare the Western Balkan countries for the actual accession process and gave them the opportunity to show willingness for reforms by taking the conditions under the SAP seriously. Only after the ratification of a SAA can the state apply for membership. In 2001 FYROM and Croatia were the first to sign SAAs, followed by Albania in 2006, Montenegro in 2007 and Serbia and BiH in 2008. The SAAs had to be ratified by all the member states before they could go into effect. Kosovo did not sign a SAA until 2015 because the country was and is still not recognized by several EU member states. The Commission circumvented the member states in 2015 when the EU signed the SAA as an independent legal personality (ibid. p.128-129).

The next step in the enlargement process is the application for membership (the last one was by BiH in February 2016), which is handed in to the Council but forwarded to the Commission which is responsible for writing an ‘Opinion’ on the applicant state. The BiH is the last country to date to apply for membership in 2016 and has recently handed in the questionnaire based on which the Commission writes its Opinion. After the Commission gives a positive advice in its Opinion and the EP votes in favour of enlargement, can the Council can decide and vote on whether they accept the application. A unanimous vote is required for a membership application, which is one of the reasons why the application of FYROM had not been accepted for years, as it is blocked by Greece. While FYROM was a candidate since 2004, it has only opened accession negotiations in June 2018 together with Albania.

If a membership application is accepted, the negotiation process is started which is formed around the (currently) 35 chapters of the *acquis communautaire*. From the six Western Balkan countries only Serbia and Montenegro are currently in the negotiation stage. While the Commission has provided positive recommendations for FYROM, opening accession negotiations has been vetoed by current member states. Each chapter is evaluated before it is ‘opened’ and ‘opening benchmarks’ can be established if the Commission considers more change is necessary before a chapter can be opened. Serbia has 14 opened chapters at this moment, while Montenegro has already opened 31 chapters. Many of the chapters have been opened during the Juncker mandate (see appendix B), which shows that the enlargement process did not come to a complete halt after Juncker’s controversial statements in his Political

Guidelines. When all the closing benchmarks of a chapter are met, the chapter can be closed (Vachudova, 2014, p.132). The accession conditions are constantly evolving, often the conditions and negotiation chapters are increased and developed to incorporate new preferences and benchmarks. The Copenhagen Criteria and chapters vary from educational reform to human rights and democracy to agriculture and financial services, targeting all areas of EU law.

Nevertheless, the Commission has prioritised certain chapters in the enlargement strategy. In 2012 the Commission introduced two important changes, the chapter on Judiciary and fundamental rights and the chapter on Justice, freedom and security would be the first chapters to be opened and the last to be closed from now on. This influenced mostly the accession of the Western Balkan countries. Secondly, a new set of interim benchmarks were established in each chapter to improve the compliance of the countries to the enlargement process. Since 2013/2014 a new approach to enlargement was developed, called 'fundamentals first'. This approach was set up by the Commission and encompassed: rule of law, bilateral issues, economic governance and public administration reform (Mišćević & Mrak, 2017, p.195). This 'fundamentals first' approach is still followed by the Juncker Commission.

If a country has successfully closed all the chapters and completed the accession negotiations, the accession stage begins. The Accession Treaty has to be signed by all the member states. After the signing, the Commission prepares several monitoring reports on the preparedness of an accession country for EU membership (Gateva, 2015, p.147). The accession is complete when the Accession Treaty comes into force, however, only Croatia has succeeded in completing this process.

4.3 Setting

The first narrative element analysed in this thesis is the setting. The setting of this narrative is the European Union and Europe as the geographical region in which the EU, the member states and the Western Balkan are located together. To reiterate, if a normative narrative prevails in the EU discourse on enlargement the narrative will be highlighting a shared European link and the norms, values and fundamental rights on which the EU is based. If the EU is narrated from a pragmatic basis, the EU will be considered a form of economic cooperation with its core elements being increasing political influence for the member states and a common market.

Juncker's vision for Europe?

Before the start of his mandate President Juncker presented his vision for Europe in the EP in the Political Guidelines titled “A New Start for Europe: My Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change” which concentrated on “the areas where the European Union is able to make a real difference” (Juncker, 2014a, p.3). Based on ten policy areas – varying from a deeper and fairer internal market, making the EU a stronger global actor, the EU as an area of justice based on mutual trust and a union of democratic change – these Political Guidelines still leave the setting of this narrative relatively undefined. However, two conclusions can be drawn from the narrative of the Juncker Commission with respect to the EU/Europe as the setting of this narrative of the Juncker Commission can still be made. First, only two out of the ten policy areas are related to what would be considered a normative narrative. These policy areas, number nine and seven respectively, mentioned already above, are the EU is a “Union of Democratic Change” and “an Area of Justice and Fundamental Rights Based on Mutual Trust” (Juncker, 2014, p.8-10). This would indicate that the Juncker Commission follows mostly a pragmatic narrative. Significant in the narrative of the setting is also that enlargement policy is part of the chapter on the EU as a “stronger global actor” in the Political Guidelines, which is dedicated to Europe becoming “stronger” when it comes to foreign policy and improving the EU’s “international and global competitiveness” (Juncker, 2014, p.10). However, Juncker also writes:

“Our European Union is more than a big common market. It is also a Union of shared values, which are spelled out in the Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Citizens expect their governments to provide justice, protection and fairness with full respect for fundamental rights and the rule of law. This also requires joint European action, based on our shared values.” (ibid.)

This would indicate that despite the focus on pragmatic policies for the duration of their mandate, the Juncker Commission still considers the EU as more than just an economic cooperation and argues in favour of a policy based on shared values and universal rights.

The EU's “raison d'être”

One narrative feature of the setting was based on the foundation/origin of the EU, which looks at how the establishment of the EU is narrated. This can be narrated as an economic cooperation or the establishment of a community (although European Community was also the official name of the EU until 1993). A few months after the presentation of the Political Guidelines by Juncker, the new Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations,

Johannes Hahn, was questioned by the EP about his vision for his policy areas, including the enlargement towards the Western Balkans (and Turkey). Answering a question on European Neighbourhood Policy, he sheds light on the setting of the enlargement narrative, by stating that the EU “started as a ground-breaking peace project” of which “the enlargement and neighbourhood policy are continuations, based on [the] fundamental values” of the EU (EP, 2014, p.4).⁴

This narrative of the EU is repeated throughout the Juncker mandate. The EU started “on the ashes of destruction” (Hahn, 2017). What began as “an economic cooperation project” “grew as a peace project” and it is “still the most successful peace and economic project in human history” (Mogherini, 2017c). Meaning, although the EU started out as an economic union based on pragmatic ideas, this has since changed to a union based on normative values and rights. In September 2017, during his State of the Union address, Juncker reiterates the pragmatic to normative narrative of the EU by stating that “Europe is more than just a single market,” Europe is “more than money, more than a currency and more than the Euro”. Instead, “[Europe] was always about values” (Juncker, 2017). He emphasizes “freedom, equality and the rule of law” as the foundation to build “a more united, stronger and more democratic Union” which includes enlargement to the rest of Europe (ibid.). This characterisation of the EU/Europe indicates that the setting of this story is based on the normative ‘meta-narrative.

Mogherini narrates the Treaty of Maastricht, which came into force in February 1993, as a turning point in the meaning of the EU at the 25th anniversary of signing of the Treaty in 2017. Where before the cooperation was only to establish a “free trade area”, the EU became a “political Union” for “citizens with rights, citizens with responsibilities, with liberties and with opportunities”. “It was a revolution”, “the first time in history” that “building peace became the aspiration of a continent” (Mogherini, 2017f). This meant “ending the division of the European continent” and setting a “common goal of our Union to contribute to peace, security and progress” (ibid.). “The level of social rights, individual rights, civil human rights, women’s rights and the level of peace and economic development we have reached in Europe has no comparison in the world” (ibid.). Mogherini therefore emphasises the turn to a normative constitution of the EU. At the occasion of the membership application of BiH in 2016, a key moment in the accession process, Mogherini and Hahn, sum up their idea of Europe saying the “raison d’être” of the EU, is to “impact our citizens’ life for the better” (Hahn & Mogherini,

⁴ Original citation: “Die Europäische Union selbst hat als bahnbrechendes Friedensprojekt durch regionale Integration begonnen”, “die Erweiterungspolitik als auch die Nachbarschaftspolitik sind Fortführungen dieses großartigen Projektes, aufbauend auf unseren Grundwerten.” (EP, 2014, p.4)

2016). This means, in the words of Mogherini being a Union for “peace, for democracy, for rule of law and economic growth” while Hahn emphasises that the EU brought its citizens “lasting peace, political stability and increasing prosperity” (Mogherini, 2017; Hahn, 2015).

European family, European citizens, European consumers

Another reoccurring feature is the description of EU people, which can be explained as family, citizens or consumers depending on the narrative. The EU was born as Europeans “realised it was much more convenient for all of us to establish a regional economic cooperation to do business together” (Mogherini, 2017c). “Our Member States teamed up” and “created the largest ever single market, allowing investors to reach a large number of clients and consumers” (Hahn, 2017) because they realised it made “more sense to work together with our neighbours, instead of waging war against them” (Mogherini, 2017b). As a result, the EU is “the world’s largest and wealthiest market” made up of “half a billion of free people” (Hahn, 2017). These phrases emphasize a pragmatic construction of the EU, with the inhabitants being defined by their economic potential and need, namely their ability to buy things. Secondly, the member states are considered strategic actors who cooperated by to create a single market because ‘it made more sense’. Both of these features fit within the pragmatic narrative construction of the setting.

On the other hand, the frame of a European family and identity is used repeatedly to describe both the EU and Europe, which is in line with the normative narrative. On her tour of the Western Balkans, Mogherini describes the EU as being a “common European family” (Mogherini, 2017a). Although the people in the EU all have “multiple identities” they belong to “the greater European family”. Likewise, in her speech on the anniversary of the Maastricht Treaty, Mogherini emphasis that “Europe will not be united” and “our Union will not be complete as long as [...] all the Western Balkans, will not join our family” (Mogherini, 2017f). The membership application of BiH to the EU is a “step towards a united and peaceful continent” and shows “the need of a united European continent is still strong among our people” (Hahn & Mogherini, 2016a). The frame of an ‘EU family’ supports the normative identity-based narrative, which is also featured more explicitly. For example, next to belonging to a “local or ethnic community” or someone’s “own country”, there is a “European identity” that “needs to be honoured through a joint celebration” (ibid.; Mogherini, 2017b). In the setting of this narrative, the EU is thus both narrated linked to the geographical location (summarized as Europe is one, but not whole) and as incomplete until the European continent is united, which is achieved through membership of the EU (Hahn & Mogherini, 2016a). Hahn also uses the

frame of an “EU family”, but links this to more “than just complying with the EU Acquis” (Hahn, 2014b). He says that becoming part of the family is also about “making the country economically fit for membership” (ibid.). Only then can the candidate country “reap all the benefits of EU accession” which are “open borders” and a “single market” (Hahn, 2015a). This means that, although he does emphasize identity, Hahn sees the pragmatic liberal ideas on free market and open borders – and not just norms – as part of the values that shape EU identity.

Lastly, the EU is narrated as being in service of the European citizens. The inhabitants of the union were “not customers, [they] are citizens” (Mogherini, 2017f). As was quoted before, “citizens with rights, citizens with responsibilities, with liberties and with opportunities”. For example, the “real benefits of the European Union” is “making a difference for businesses, for citizens, every single day of our life.” The EU is the result of a commitment to “deliver on our citizens’ needs.” EU citizenship, introduced in the Maastricht Treaty, has since been an important element in EU integration and has been linked to the “normative core of democratic citizenship: political rights” (Seubert, 2018, p.25). Including ‘citizens’ rather than more general conceptions such as ‘people’ in discourse emphasizes the normative rights of the EU people, such as democracy, human rights and good governance (ibid.). References to citizens is therefore a method by the Commission to accentuate the normative basis of the EU in their narrative on enlargement.

Global role of the EU

The final setting feature continuously present in the narrative is the role of the EU in the international community, as Mogherini said: “with the Treaty of Maastricht we set as the common goal of our Union to contribute to peace, security and progress, not only in Europe, but in the wider world” (Mogherini, 2017f). The EU has an “increasing punch on the global stage” (Hahn, 2017). “Only as the EU can we “determine global trends”, “set the global agenda” and “play a key role” in the world and thus make a difference for Europeans and people in the rest of the world (Mogherini, 2017f). This explanation of Europe fits the pragmatic meta-narrative, of which the political and economic influence is an important feature. Mogherini even goes as far as to state that the world would be unimaginable without the existence (and influence) of the EU:

“so just imagine, for one moment, what if the European Union didn’t exist. For the rest of the world, it would be a disaster. Our world that is already quite chaotic – to put it bluntly – would definitely in a much worse situation.” (ibid.)

The role of the EU in the Western Balkan is mentioned explicitly several times in the narrative of enlargement. In his opening speech during his hearing in the EP at the beginning of his mandate, Hahn states that the EU has to be “aware of its role as a key player in its own neighbourhood” (Hahn, 2014a, p.2), the previous enlargement round should “make us proud and confident”⁵. In his State of the Union 2015 Juncker called the EU “a strong stabilising force in the region”, using the example of being “central in brokering an agreement which aims to end the [...] crisis in the [FYROM]” (Juncker, 2015). This fits again within the pragmatic narrative of enlargement, as the importance of the EU in the Western Balkan is emphasized. However, the role of the EU in the Western Balkan is not just narrated as a global power. The EU also has to “support its partner countries in their political and economic transformation” (Hahn, 2015a), because the EU “cares about the Western Balkans” (Mogherini, 2017a). It imagines and wants “a common future for all the people of this continent, joined inside our Union” (ibid.). “We have a responsibility” towards the Balkan, it is “the part of the world where *only us* can really make difference” and the EU cannot “turn towards the Balkans only when we see a problem with refugees or with terrorists” (Mogherini, 2017f, emphasis added).

In this narrative there are two different conceptions of the EU in relation to the Western Balkans. Hahn mentions several times that the EU is a partner of the Western Balkans, where Mogherini argues that the EU has a responsibility towards the Western Balkans and that the EU cares about the Western Balkans and its people. Both conceptions of the relationship between the EU and the Western Balkans are different from the narrative of the EU as a global power based on its own interests, which would be a pragmatic narrative feature. Hahn’s statement forms a middle way between normative and pragmatic – emphasizing a partnership, neither power- nor value-based. Mogherini continues in a normative narrative by emphasizing responsibility, even when the EU does not need to work with the Western Balkan countries for its own interests.

Analysis and comparison

This initial analysis of the setting of this narrative is comprised of two parts. Firstly, the features of a setting in the enlargement narrative are discussed. Secondly, the link between the narrative and the new Strategy is touched upon. Due to lack of data concerning a setting in the new enlargement strategy, it is not possible to make strong claims on the narrative element of setting in this analysis.

⁵ Original citations: “Diese Erweiterungsleistung, die wir bisher zusammengebracht haben, sollte uns stolz und selbstbewusst machen,” “selbstbewusst in ihrer Rolle als Schlüsselspieler in der eigenen Nachbarschaft (AFET, 2014, p. 2)”

The setting of this narrative contains both normative and pragmatic elements. However, the analysed sources contain more references of a normative narrative than a pragmatic narrative. All three narrators refer to the beginning of the EU as an economic cooperation, which is a pragmatic narrative. Nevertheless, they all narrate the EU as developed beyond economics and political influence, to an organisation based on European values. Although these values are not specified further very often, the benefits of the EU are more often normative (such as peace, rule of law, and democracy) than pragmatic (economic prosperity) narrative features. Secondly, the EU is narrated more often as a community with a ‘grand’ European identity or as one European family (where everyone can have his own identity). Lastly, the global task of the EU is narrated from a pragmatic perspective (the EU can decide the global agenda). But more importantly for this thesis, when the EU global power is related to the ‘neighbourhood’ of Europe, both Hahn and Mogherini use a more ‘kinship’ narrative by emphasizing a partnership (which can still be based on pragmatic needs) or a value-based responsibility. Therefore, the complete characterization of the EU/Europe as the setting fits within a normative meta-narrative.

Although this analysis was supposed to include a comparison between the setting during the mandate and the setting in the new Strategy, this has not been possible due to lack of data. Although the Strategy, the press conference and the presentation of the Strategy in the EP have been included in the dataset, there were only a few references to the EU which relate to the setting of this narrative. These phrases are: a “Union that is ready to grow”, “the European peace project would not be complete without them”, “our Union must be stronger and more solid, before it can be bigger” and “the Union [...] must now show and assume responsibility for making this historical opportunity a reality” (Commission, 2018, p.1; Hahn, 2018a; Mogherini, 2018). Although some conclusions about the setting can be made, they are not sufficient to make a valid comparison. First, Europe is narrated within the normative meta-narrative. Presenting the new Strategy with the statement that the EU would not be complete without the Western Balkan fits within the normative narrative. This is different from stating “close cooperation with the countries in south-east Europe” is a “strategic case” and necessary “for the sake of Europe’s own stability” during the presentation of the 2015 enlargement strategy (Hahn, 2015). Secondly, the second narrative of the EU contradictory, referring to the EU as “ready to grow” and needs to be “stronger [...] before it can be bigger”. This does not fit within one of the meta-narratives that form the analytical framework of this thesis, but does fit within the functional narrative which disconnects the EU values from the enlargement of Kuus (2011). Further research would be needed before a conclusion on the functional narrative of the

new Strategy can be made. The initial inclusion of functionality of the EU in setting is linked to several democratic and bureaucratic reforms needed *within* the EU for successful enlargement in the Strategy (Commission, 2018, p.15-17), and shows that the bureaucratic narrative is still present, despite the overall focus on a normative construction of Europe and the EU.

4.4 Characterization

In this subchapter the element characterization of the Western Balkan countries will be reconstructed. In narrative analysis characterization is the element where characteristics are given to the actors involved, which in this research are the Western Balkan countries. First, the narrative is constructed as it is told in various speeches during the Juncker Commission mandate. Then, a few paragraphs are dedicated to Serbia and Montenegro, two countries which receive special attention by the Commission both in the new Strategy and in the narrative. Lastly, the position of the narrative around the new Strategy and the narrative in the first years of the Juncker Commission mandate are briefly analysed and compared.

A European history

One feature of the characterization that returns repeatedly throughout the Juncker Commission narrative is the Western Balkan as an integral part of Europe and European history. “Your history is the history of Europe” and this shared history “has too much violence in it; in this region but also in the rest of Europe” (Mogherini, 2017c). This history-based feature in the characterization of the Western Balkans emphasises the violent start of the Western Balkans as it exists today, but also frames how far they have already come since then. “It was in the Balkans where one of the most awful pages of the European history was written” twenty years ago (Mogherini & Hahn, 2016a), “but we can move forward and we have the responsibility to move forward” from this history. One frame Hahn uses several times is that BiH has to “move from a Dayton logic to a Brussels’ perspective” (Hahn, 2015d). This characterization feature also includes a reference to the violent history of Europe in general, which indicates that the Yugoslavian wars are not an exception in Europe or happened outside/on the edge of Europe but was a part of the common European history of violence. This is part of the normative narrative, because the wars are linked to European history, and not to instability which would influence the interests of the EU.

Not just the shared history of the Yugoslavian war is invoked when the Western Balkan is characterized. While Hahn (2016a) calls the Balkan a region that grew from “our backyard” to an “enclave” in the middle of the EU which makes “the right reforms” “in everyone’s interests”, Mogherini uses “the heart of Europe” as a metaphor to explain the position of the Western Balkans in Europe (Mogherini, 2017a, 2017f). Their place in Europe is based on geography, culture, and our shared history and future. But this does not mean that the Western Balkan countries lose their own identity, “being a patriot and a European is not a contradiction”, it is one and the same (Hahn, 2017). The end goal of enlargement is not just increasing the market, but the accession of “our friends” (Hahn, 2014). This is a normative-based narrative which highlights shared characteristics as the basis of a close relation, unlike a pragmatic narrative which would highlight the usefulness of the Western Balkan.

Democratic potential, economic markets and a delicate region

Besides the history of the EU, three further characterizations of the Western Balkan are included in the enlargement narrative. These are: the democratic potential, the economic potential and the geostrategic position of the region.

Starting with the first, the democratic potential of the Western Balkan countries is often mentioned in the speeches and documents on enlargement. The enlargement strategy documents include a recurring assessment of the democratic progress in each of the Western Balkan countries because the enlargement process is based on the “fundamentals” of the EU itself, including European values, human rights and democracy. As Juncker states in his 2017 State of the Union: “Accession candidates must give the rule of law, justice and fundamental rights utmost priority in the negotiations.” As such, the current state of democracy is a central theme in the evaluation of candidate countries, which are often narrated as having potential for improvement. This focus on democratic potential is one of the normative features from the operationalization. For example, “fundamental rights are largely enshrined in the legislation of the enlargement countries but more needs to be done to ensure they are fully implemented in practice”, while “the democratic institutions remain fragile in a number of countries” (Commission, 2015, p.6-9). Mogherini also uses the third normative feature of characterization, which is desire of the people in the Western Balkan for human rights, by saying that the people in the Western Balkan countries “*want and deserve* the same opportunities, the same safeguards and rights as all other citizens of this continent” (Mogherini, 2017. Emphasis added). Therefore, all four of the normative features of characterization are present in the narrative on enlargement.

The second feature present in the narrative of enlargement is that of economic potential, which fits within the pragmatic narrative. Hahn (2014, p.3) starts his mandate saying that “to convince our people in the Member States about the benefits of future enlargement” you have to look at the emerging markets, which “are in the (south)east, and therefore it is justified to invest” in this region. At his yearly speech during the Business Forum of the Berlin Process summits, he reiterates this economic potential every time. The Western Balkans have gone through “a significant economic transformation” (Hahn, 2015a). The countries have shown “strong commitment to the Economic Reform Programme process”, although “much remains to be done in order to unleash all of Serbia’s economic potential” while the region should not stay “a blank spot on the maps of roads, railways and energy grids” (Hahn, 2015a, 2016a, 2017). As the “first trading partner of Serbia” and providing “more than three quarters of foreign investments in this country” from inside the EU, it is clear that the EU has “a very clear immediate interest in deepening our cooperation” (Mogherini, 2017c). This narrative includes both the willingness to be influenced (because the states are committed to the reforms), the importance of foreign investment and calls the Western Balkan one of the emerging markets in Europe and thus follows three of the four pragmatic narrative features.

One feature that returns several times, is that of the Balkan as a ‘fragile region’ of ‘strategic importance’. This frame is part of a pragmatic and a (new alternative) narrative that links the Western Balkans to threats Europe is facing, such as migration. Although this ‘delicate’ frame is first linked to the “demons of the past” by Hahn (2014, p.2), it becomes increasingly linked to current developments that decrease security in Europe. At the Western Balkan Summit in 2015 Hahn argues that “migration pressures” show again “that the EU has a vital strategic self-interest to reach out, stabilize [the Western Balkan] and bring it closer to the EU” (Hahn, 2015b). A year later, it is terrorism and radicalisation that “continue to pose a security threat to the EU and especially the enlargement countries themselves”, which are still “in a fragile and shaky shape” (Hahn, 2016a). As “pressure on this delicate region is growing”, “peace cannot be taken for granted anymore” and “challenges [the Western Balkan countries] face are the same challenges we face” (Mogherini, 2017c). This alternative narrative explains the Western Balkan as a risk by highlighting the instability of the region and linking the region to several of the risks the EU is facing. Thereby forming a narrative arguing engagement with this region is necessary for the security of the EU. As Mogherini summarizes in Serbia, “it is not idealism that tells us that we are bound together. It’s realism and interests that tells us that we need each another” (ibid.).

Highlighting Serbia and Montenegro

Serbia and Montenegro are the only two countries in the Western Balkans currently in the negotiations phase of the enlargement process and are singled out in the Strategy for their frontrunner position. This position makes them the most important actors in the process of enlargement, which is why it is expected that particular emphasis on their characterization in the narratives. This also becomes clear from the effort of Hahn to convince Serbia and Montenegro of the Commission's narrative. They are the first Western Balkan countries Hahn visits after the start of his mandate in November 2014 and the first he visits in the days following the presentation of the Strategy to present the Commission's new strategy to the government.

In November 2014 Hahn emphasises the economic development of Montenegro and Serbia. Montenegro has to be "economically fit" because this is "what citizens in [Montenegro] want" (Hahn, 2014a). As he congratulates Montenegro on their economic development so far, he says that the "developing economies in our neighbourhood" are important to the EU (ibid.). Next to these pragmatic features Hahn also includes normative elements. The "lawmakers have final responsibility", but this country "must behave as a candidate for EU accession [...], especially where the function of democratic institutions is concerned" (Hahn, 2014b). Thus, Hahn links being a good (candidate) EU member state to the importance of a functioning democracy which is one of the normative characterization features. Although Hahn mentions needed economic reforms for Montenegro in the Commission's 2015 enlargement strategy and the 2018 Strategy, he does not mention the economic conditions in his speech in the Montenegrin parliament after the presentation in of the Strategy. Instead, he says that "geography is destiny"; focusses on "the common heritage and history" of the region and Europe as well as "shared opportunities and challenges"; and shows his gratitude for setting a "good example" on "key criterion good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation (Hahn, 2018a). All of these phrases are part of a normative narrative.

This normative narrative is also present in his speech in Serbia, during which he focusses on reconciliation and bilateral disputes. "Your country and your region have to deal with the difficult transition to democracy and functional market economies", but he adds, "your region also faces the legacy of the past" (Hahn, 2018b). The challenges of enlargement "require the full involvement and backing of Serbia" which has to "mobilise all the talent of the country" to work on reforms, "in particular rule of law, fundamental rights and the normalisation of relations with Kosovo" (ibid.). Both countries in the Western Balkan are thus narrated within the normative meta-narrative in these more recent speeches. The narrative employed by Hahn

in Montenegro has changed from a partly pragmatic to a more normative characterization by highlighting the shared history and the effort the country made in normative policy areas such as good ‘neighbourhoodness’. While in Serbia Hahn mentions the difficult past of the region which the countries had to overcome and the role of people in the success of reforms, especially those regarding human rights and rule of law.

Western Balkan Strategy: “a reality that the Western Balkans are European”

Now, this thesis turns briefly to the way the Western Balkan is characterized in the (presentation of) the Strategy. Unlike the narrative element of setting, which was not included in the Strategy, the narrative element of characterization can be found, although only briefly.

The Western Balkans are **part of Europe**, geographically surrounded by EU Member States. The peoples of the EU and the region have a common heritage and history and a future defined by shared opportunities and challenges. The EU has long been strongly engaged in the region. From the Thessaloniki European Council in 2003, it has supported the future of the region as an integral part of the EU. (Commission, 2018, p.1, emphasis in original)

Nevertheless, this short paragraph is more than what is included in 2015 enlargement strategy. This first strategy written by the current Commission contains no references to the EU as a setting or a characterization of the Western Balkan countries outside of the country reports (and summaries) (Commission, 2015). Secondly, this normative narrative of the Western Balkan is reiterated during the presentation of the Strategy. Both Hahn and Mogherini use the “history and geography” to show that “the region is already part of Europe”. “They are surrounded institutionally by EU Member States”, they are “emotionally and culturally” part of Europe and “want to have the same opportunities, the same guarantees, the same standards and rights, the same rights, the same fundamental freedoms, the same systems of governance and the same environment that our friends, colleagues and relatives share inside the European Union” (Mogherini, 2018; Hahn, 2018a). The Strategy even states that: “Ultimately, citizens yearn to live in countries that are prosperous and equal, where the rule of law is strong, and corruption is rooted out” (Commission, 2018, p.2). In conclusion, they need a “European Union perspective”, not a “European perspective” because the “Western Balkans are European already” (Mogherini, 2018). This narrative of the Western Balkan fits within several of the features of a normative meta-narrative. It includes a reference to the history and common heritage of the EU and the Western Balkans, the fundamental rights the people of the Western Balkan want and the democratic potential.

However, there are also several pragmatic or alternative characterizations of the Western Balkans in the presentation of the Strategy. The “economic ties are as strong as they have ever been” with our security being “more and more connected and our foreign and security policy is more and more coordinated” between the Western Balkan countries and the EU (Mogherini, 2018). The recent developments in Europe, such as the migration crisis, showed us that “we were one” and that “borders do not exist” between the EU and the Western Balkans when there are issues “affecting all of us” (ibid; Hahn, 2018a). Therefore, it is necessary “to give those people a European perspective”, not least “in terms of European interests” (Hahn, 2018). Mogherini concludes, the EU is “facing a reality” that the Western Balkan countries are European, which suggests both the knowledge that the Western Balkan is part of Europe and at the same time a reluctance to base EU accession purely on this normative feature of a European belonging.

Analysis and comparison

The characterization of the Western Balkan countries in this enlargement narrative is much less conclusive than the setting. Table 6 on the next page summarizes the words used most often per meta-narrative in the data on characterization (total uses in all the phrases is added after the word). According to the total phrases and sentences collected in the data set, there are more references to normative features than to pragmatic features or to the alternative narrative based on security (see table D.2 in Appendix C.). However, many of these normative phrases are based on history, geography, culture and a shared identity, while other normative elements such as values, democracy and the people of the countries are referred to less (but are not excluded). Because a setting based on shared identity and shared values was dominant in the narrative, it would be expected that values played a larger role in characterizing the Western Balkans. However, values were not included in the characterization often until the Commission notes that “it is both fundamental values and interests that bind the EU and Serbia to one another in a deep friendship” (Hahn, 2017c) to describe a country in the Western Balkans in the speeches included in this analysis. Although this quote links both the EU and Serbia to values, this single inclusion of values would indicate that it is not an integral part of the characterization of the enlargement, unlike (human) rights, which appear more frequently.

Table 6: Features of characterizations

Normative features	Pragmatic features
Common European history (19); rights (13); geography (12); culture (8); Europe not complete without WB countries (4); heart of Europe (3); identity (3)	Economic (12); investment (12); (self-)interests (12); strategic importance (5); infrastructure (4); Trade (3); connectivity (2)

On the other hand, in the pragmatic characterization the concepts of economic, investments and interests are dominant, while the willingness of the countries to align themselves with the EU, is given less attention. Instead, in many of the speeches and the two analysed strategies the leaders, as well as civil society and politicians, are called upon to deliver on their commitments, to increase “genuine local ownership” and “to do their part [...] when the interest of the people [...] is at stake (Hahn, 2016b; Mogherini, 2017a). These calls for action are not necessarily linked to either one of the meta-narratives as ‘taking ownership of the process’ can mean both improving the position of journalists and instituting liberalisation market reforms.

Nevertheless, the normative meta-narrative has influenced the characterization of the Balkan in the narrative of the Commission more than the pragmatic or security-based narrative. This supports the idea of Sjursen (2006) that rights-based arguments are used most often to explain enlargement. This can also be seen in the narrative regarding Serbia and Montenegro, as well as the characterization in the Strategy. Although the other two meta-narratives have influenced the discourse on enlargement by the Commission, only the normative narrative is present in the key strategy document itself as part of the characterization as well as in the presentation and the speeches of Hahn in Serbia and Montenegro. By including a paragraph on the ‘Europeanness’ of the Western Balkan, the Commission reminds the readers of the document that these countries are not a backyard of the EU but are part of this ‘not yet united’ continent. This, however, does not mean that the plot, the enlargement process, itself is not narrated as a security or pragmatic process. Which is why in the next subchapter the plot is reconstructed.

4.5 Emplotment

The final element that will be reconstructed is the plot of the narrative. The plot of a narrative revolves around the events that take place, or in the case of this research is expected to take place. The plot of this research are the fundamental reforms, which are based on the ‘core of the EU’ and officially shape the enlargement process. First, the three fundamentals as they are included in the 2015 enlargement strategy are reconstructed, followed by a reconstruction of the plot in the speeches of Juncker, Hahn and Mogherini and a focus on the plot in the new Strategy, called ‘A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans’.

The fundamentals

Enlargement is a “historic success that brought peace and stability to our continent” (Juncker 2014, p.11). “The fall of the Berlin wall and the iron curtain was the beginning of the reunification of our continent” but this reunification “will only be complete with the accession of all the six countries of the Western Balkans to the European Union” (Hahn, 2017d). In the meantime, the enlargement process should “not get caught up by the mechanics of the process” and we should “keep our eyes on the big prize: accession!” (ibid.).

“Enlargement policy remains focused on the "fundamentals first" principle. Core issues of the rule of law, fundamental rights, strengthening democratic institutions, including public administration reform, as well as economic development and competitiveness remain key priorities in the enlargement process. These issues reflect the importance the EU attaches to its core values and general policy priorities.” (Commission, 2015, p.5)

The content and importance of the “fundamentals” links enlargement to the most important values of the EU, while “promoting economic development and strengthening competitiveness” (Hahn, 2014a). It is “the model on which the EU itself is founded upon”, due to this “smart mix of democratic values, fundamental rights and free market economic” the EU countries were able to become prosperous (Hahn, 2017d). The three “‘make or break’ issues” are therefore the same. “Rule of law and fundamental rights” are basics “on which we cannot compromise” and there has to be “true and deep democracy” and effort “for growth and jobs” (Hahn, 2014, p.3). This means that the official policy has not changed. The fundamentals include both normative and pragmatic reforms, therefore further research is needed to find the narrative of the emplotment of events.

Rule of law and economic development: two sides of the same coin

Next to the official reform priorities, explained above, it is important to research which of these (or if all of these) reforms are equally prioritized in enlargement discourse. Despite the official equal attention to rule of law, fundamental rights, democracy and economy, a clear preference can be found in the data. As Hahn summarizes: “The rule of law and economic development are two sides of the same coin. Rule of law, in particular legal certainty and a functioning judicial system, foster investments and economic growth” (Hahn, 2016b).

Rule of law is crucial, which includes a long list of reforms such as “judicial reforms and tackling organised crime and corruption” as well as “public administration reform” (Hahn, 2014a, p.6). There is also a strong focus on “fundamental rights”, which includes discrimination “notably against the LGBTI community and Roma” and freedom of expression (Hahn, 2015c). At the occasion of the membership application BiH Hahn and Mogherini state that the challenges faced by the countries in the judicial system have to be “addressed constructively, in a spirit of dialogue and mutual understanding” (Mogherini & Hahn, 2016a). This will build a “stronger European continent”, one where “all communities live side by side” and cooperation is possible “beyond ethnic, national and religious divides” (ibid.). These phrases would indicate that rule of law is linked to the values and rights which the EU promotes. However, more often rule of law is called a “precondition” for economic prosperity, because “rule of law and economic development go hand in hand” (Hahn, 2017).

For example, rule of law is essential in order to create “the right conditions for businesses to flourish” and “the right business environment” which “attract[s] foreign direct investment”, “stimulate entrepreneurship and create jobs” (Hahn, 2015, 2016). Rule of law creates “legal certainty [...], like property rights”; “this is why we put so much emphasis on chapter 23 Judiciary and fundamental rights and chapter 24, Justice, freedom and security” (Hahn, 2014c). All the Western Balkan countries need “to work on those ‘fundamentals first’ because “without them, economic actors will not have the confidence and certainty they require to undertake much needed investments” (Hahn, 2015b). From this narrative it can be concluded that the Commission does not see rule of law as a fundamental goal on itself but also as a necessary condition for ‘good economic governance’. As was operationalized in the previous chapter, rule of law has to be considered an objective on its own for it to be part of the normative narrative. Therefore, a pragmatic narrative seems to dominate the discourse on rule of law reforms in enlargement.

Pragmatic connectivity

The second element of the enlargement narrative is ‘connectivity’. Although this policy area does not seem part of a particular narrative, the Commission has narrated connectivity as a pragmatic process (unlike a normative, reconciliation based normative). The Commission showed their intention to focus on regional cooperation, during the hearing of Hahn in the EP. Hahn states that “one of the areas of concentration in the future could – and should – be to work on very concrete projects which also connect the countries of the Western Balkans, not only by words but also by action” (Hahn, 2014a). In their 2015 Enlargement Strategy the Commission reiterates that “particular emphasis is given to regional cooperation and boosting regional economic development and connectivity” in their medium-term strategy for the period of their mandate.

Connectivity has to create “opportunities for business and people” as well as more “potential for growth and investments” (Hahn, 2017). The Commission links the connectivity agenda to the Berlin process, which aims to increase regional integration and improve ‘neighbourly relations’. Connectivity is “crucial not only to create economic opportunities but also to foster good neighbourly relations and help overcome bilateral disputes” and therefore contributes to “promoting peace and reconciliation” (Hahn, 2016a). Increasing connectivity is narrated only as a pragmatic process, with energy and infrastructure at the centre of the story. The focus of the connectivity agenda is on pragmatic reforms, such as “building and connecting transport and energy infrastructure” which are at “the very heart of the Commission's efforts to reinforce integration” (Commission 2015a). Although reconciliation is framed as a result of pragmatic connectivity, neither the strategy nor the speeches used in this thesis link the social and normative basis of reconciliation to the process of economic connectivity. This connectivity agenda is therefore a reoccurring example of the pragmatic narrative to enlargement by the Commission.

European interests

Lastly, there is considerable attention to the interest of EU member states in the emplotment of enlargement reforms. The interests of the European citizens are included in the narrative multiple times because enlargement “is our interest as the European Union and it is the interest of all the citizens of this region” (Mogherini, 2017d). Hahn reiterates throughout his mandate that it is in the interest of everyone in Europe to support accession. Accession is “not only what citizens in [the Western Balkan] want, it is also what citizens in the EU want to see” but “EU citizens see enlargement as a burden rather than a benefit” (Hahn, 2017). Which is why “the

public image of enlargement has to change” by “communicating to our citizens why all this is necessary, why it is also in our interest” (Hahn, 2014b; 2018a). Reasons of prosperity and stability fit within the pragmatic narrative because they refer to economic and political influence, while stability also creates a more stable economic market.

However, the enlargement process has also been narrated with a different narrative. Enlargement “is not social work or a philanthropic gesture” (Hahn, 2017), it creates “security, stability and prosperity for our partners – and especially ourselves” (Hahn, 2016). “The EU has a vital strategic self-interest to reach out, stabilize this region and bring it closer to the EU” (Hahn, 2015b) The interests of the EU citizens and member states are predominately mentioned in relation to security and stability and not for economic reasons. For example, the importance of linking enlargement and migration policy is combined. “Nowhere has this enlightened self-interest been as visible [...] as in the migration crisis” (ibid.). This means that the ‘European interests’ discourse is narrated from both a security meta-narrative and a pragmatic meta-narrative.

Western Balkan Strategy: geopolitical normativity

In this final part of the analysis of the plot, this research focusses on the narrative of the new Strategy, which is the key document for the renewed interest in the Western Balkan by the Commission. The new strategy was presented as an incentive for reforms and a renewed engagement of the EU with the Western Balkan. Nevertheless, in a first reading, the approach for the Western Balkans accession has remained largely the same. The ‘fundamentals’ remain the core principles around which the enlargement strategy is structured. As Hahn confirms, the “criteria [for accession] are clear, and they will not change: they are [...] about European values” (Hahn, 2018a). However, despite this continued attention to the fundamentals, the narrative around which of the fundamentals is most important has changed.

Rule of law was one of the few normative features that was present in the employment of the Commission throughout their mandate, although this normative concept was mostly linked to its contribution to a strong and sustainable economic environment and not included because of its intrinsic values. In the new Strategy, rule of law is narrated as an important reform on itself. “**Rule of law, fundamental rights and good governance** remain the most pressing issues for the Western Balkans” (Commission, 2018, p.4, emphasis in original). The lack of rule of law is still narrated as “a deterrent to investment and trade”; still, this is a different narrative than the previous pragmatic arguments for rule of law. This change in frame of rule of law, shows that

the Commission has incorporated normative narrative features into their narrative on enlargement.

Next to this, more explicit language is used to explain how the Western Balkan countries have to change. In the first years of the Juncker mandate, vague phrases such as ‘high level corruption’ are repeated to exemplify the lack of rule of law. The Commission now uses clearer examples, such as “state capture” and “strong entanglement of public and private interests” (Commission, 2018, p.3), to narrate the need for reforms that improve democracy. The presence of normative narrative features, such as ‘democratic potential’ and ‘promoting democracy’ has increased, in part by using more explicit language on the democratic situation and the reforms needed for improvement. Both the 2015 enlargement strategy and the 2018 Strategy list fair elections and public administration reforms as important changes for accession. The new Strategy, however, calls explicitly for “constructive dialogue” [...] notably within the **parliaments**” (ibid., p.5) and states that each country must embrace fundamental values more actively, from their foreign and regional policies right down to what children are taught at school” (ibid., p.2). Where the previous enlargement strategy said that an “empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system” (Commission, 2015, p.9) it did not give an explicit task to civil society. In the new strategy, the political leaders are not only called on to create an “enabling environment for civil society”, the Commission also emphasizes that reform priorities have to be made “with the involvement of an empowered civil society” (Commission, 2018, p.5). This again highlights normative explanations of employment, especially those on democracy promoting, improvement of human rights and internalizing values.

Lastly, the Commission has put more emphasis on reconciliation in the narrative on good neighbourhood relations and cooperation. “One thing is especially important: All countries must work even harder on reconciliation and ensure good neighbourly relations” (Hahn, 2018a). The Commission explicitly states that the leaders must “**take full ownership**” of these reforms, “lead by example” and “commit, both in word and deed, to overcoming the legacy of the past” (Commission, 2018, p.7, emphasis in original). This call for action is exemplified by mentioning that “there is no place in the EU for inflammatory rhetoric, let alone for glorification of war criminals from any side” (ibid.). This narrative is much more explicit and more normative than that of the strategy in 2015 or the previous employment of enlargement. These changes in narrative increase the normative features of the enlargement discourse. Next to this, the Commission writes that financial assistance is “to be linked to the progress on implementing

fundamental reforms *and* good neighbourly relations” (Commission, 2018, p.16). Meaningful contact and effort at reconciliation are two important frames of these neighbourly relations, which is different from the previous narrative that linked neighbourly relations to pragmatic economic relations.

Despite this renewed interest in normative reforms such as reconciliation and democracy, the interest in the Western Balkan is still explained following a geopolitical narrative=. The Strategy starts with a quote from Juncker exemplifying this geostrategic but normative narrative:

“If we want more stability in our neighbourhood, then we must also maintain a credible enlargement perspective for the Western Balkans. [...] Accession states must give the rule of law, justice and fundamental rights utmost priorities in the negotiations” (Juncker, quoted in Commission, 2018, p.1)

The (presentation of) the Strategy contains further references to this geostrategic reason behind the renewed interest in the Balkan. “It is a geostrategic investment in a stable, strong and united Europe” but “based on **common values**” (Commission, 2018, p.1, emphasis in original). Likewise, a variation of this sentence is used in the presentation of the Strategy by Mogherini and in the speeches of Hahn in Montenegro and Serbia in the days following the presentation of the Strategy. Making this position clearer is Hahn statement in the EP, that “we must not leave a vacuum at our doorstep, for others to step in” (Hahn, 2018). Although pragmatic arguments for enlargement have been used before by the Commission, mostly based on internal stability, this new strategy alludes to the possibility of others becoming involved in European affairs.

Analysis and comparison

This section of the empirical analysis focussed on the narrative element of employment in the narrative of enlargement by the Commission. Several conclusions can be drawn with respect to this narrative element. First, as the narrative reconstruction and table 7 on the next page shows, a pragmatic narrative and an alternative security-narrative dominated the Commission’s narrative on reforms during the first years of the mandate. Even normative narrative features, such as rule of law reforms, were linked to pragmatic goals, such as creating a better investment climate. Secondly, much attention in the narrative went to ‘connectivity’ through infrastructure, digital connection and economic connections. Although some normative features were part of the Commission’s discourse – such as democracy and human rights as part of the “fundamental”

reforms based on EU values – these did not receive the same attention outside of the official strategy documents or the first hearing of Hahn in the EP.

Table 7: Narrative elements in employment

Normative	Pragmatic	Alternative (security)
Judiciary reforms (13); fundamental rights (12); democracy (10); values (10); reconciliation (7); good neighbourly relations (6); civil society (6);	(Economic) reforms (18); EU interests (13); business (10); economic growth (8); market (7); cost & benefits (6); (Western Balkan) interests (6); infrastructure (4)	Security (15); stability (14)
<i>Rule of law (30)</i>		

Lastly, the narrative of reforms has changed in two ways in the new Strategy of the Commission. First, the reforms that are highlighted by the Commission fit within the normative meta-narrative. The Commission has not ignored the importance of economic reforms and continued to place the economy as one of the key fundamentals. However, in the presentation of the new Strategy Hahn and Mogherini put specific emphasis on normative reforms, creating a normative-based plot of enlargement. This increased normative narrative is confirmed in the Strategy itself, because the Commission has used more explicit language about the need for rule of law, the role of civil society and democratic reforms. It also linked financial support to normative connectivity (good neighbourly relations and reconciliation) between the Western Balkan countries. On the other hand, the reason for the renewed interest is narrated from a more geopolitical narrative. The Commission has continuously narrated the reasons for enlargement as benefiting the EU because it creates stability, it has however only now included the geopolitical element that others might try to influence the Western Balkans if the EU does not change its position on enlargement. In conclusion, the plot of enlargement fits within the pragmatic meta-narrative for most of the Juncker Commission mandate but has begun to change towards both a normative narrative and a geopolitical narrative in the new Strategy.

4.6 Conclusion: ‘A credible enlargement perspective’, an incredible narrative?

This chapter was dedicated to retracing the narrative of enlargement towards the Western by the Commission. The analysis was based on the two meta-narratives which were found in the literature on enlargement, a normative narrative and a pragmatic narrative. The initial analysis of the setting and characterization showed that a normative meta-narrative has influenced the narrative of the enlargement more than a pragmatic or alternative meta-narrative. Although the global role of the EU was narrated as an important factor in setting and the economic potential of the Western Balkan was repeated in the characterization – the overall narrative was rather normative in character. The outlier in this normative narrative was, however, the plot. The pragmatic narrative dominated the plot of enlargement, by focusing on both the importance of economic reform and the political influence of the EU. Enlargement reforms were consistently narrated as pragmatic changes and economic development, such as infrastructure throughout the Western Balkans and strengthening the business environment to promote (foreign) investment. The narrative of enlargement was therefore primarily normative, with some economic elements when referencing the reforms.

However, the Commission has changed its narrative in the Strategy presented in February 2018. Both normative and geostrategic elements became more prominent in the narrative of enlargement. In the presentation of the enlargement strategy the normative reforms needed for successful accession were more prominent, while economic considerations were not mentioned. The analysis of the Strategy itself shows that although the overall structure of the enlargement strategy remained the same (equal attention to economic conditions, democracy, rule of law and human rights) the text on the later three subjects was both less vague and provided more explicit suggested changes before a country can become a member of the EU. Although the pragmatic meta-narrative thus still influences the narrative of enlargement, the normative narrative has gained more prominence in the narrative of enlargement.

5. Conclusion

The final chapter of this thesis offers a conclusion to this research. This chapter starts with a brief summary of the research, recapitulating the main aspects of each of the previous chapters. In the second subchapter the main question will be answered and interpreted based on the two meta-narratives which formed the analytical framework of this thesis. This is followed by a reflection on the contribution of this research and a discussion on the limitation of this thesis and recommendations for further research.

5.1 Summary

When Jean-Claud Juncker became President of the European Commission in 2014, he declared that no Western Balkan state would join the EU during his mandate. The presentation of the first enlargement strategy dedicated specifically to the Western Balkan countries in 2018, was therefore met with surprise (O'Brennan, 2018, p.2). Considering the renewed interest in the Western Balkans, it is important to research the positions of the actors involved in the enlargement process. This thesis argued that the Commissions discourse is an important study case because the Commission is dependent on discursive power in order to convince the involved actors of their position. This thesis therefore set out to research the narrative of the Juncker Commission on the future accession of the Western Balkan countries.

In the second chapter of this thesis an analytical framework was built based on constructivism and narratology to determine the narrative of the Commission on enlargement. The analytical framework of this thesis was formed by two contending meta-narratives which were found in existing literature on EU enlargement. The first meta-narrative was a normative narrative constructed around the concepts of identity, values and rights. The second meta-narrative was constructed based on pragmatic arguments, including economic interests, economic and political influence, and costs and benefits of enlargement.

Based on the two meta-narratives, the third chapter of this thesis was dedicated to building a suitable method of analysis. The two meta-narratives were operationalized to fit the conceptualization of narratives from Alexander Spencer's research on narratives in IR. Spencer derives three components, setting, characterization (of actors) and emplotment (of events) from narratology. Using the database of the Commission, official documents, speeches and hearings in the EP by Hahn, Mogherini and Juncker were collected. Through a predominantly deductive

content analysis phrases were collected and categorized according to the three narrative components and the normative, pragmatic or alternative meta-narrative. Chapter three is dedicated to the reconstruction of this narrative by making a ‘collage’ of the collected phrases. The reconstruction of the narrative shows that both the setting and characterization of actors fit predominantly within the normative meta-narrative. The third narrative setting, emplotment, however, was predominantly based on the pragmatic meta-narrative. These conclusions will be further discussed in the next subchapter where the major findings of this thesis are given and reflected upon.

5.2 Answer to the research question

The aim of this thesis was to determine the narrative on enlargement. The main question therefore was:

What has been the EU Commissions narrative of enlargement during the Juncker presidency and how has the Juncker Commission narrated its renewed focus on the Western Balkans?

Major findings

The analysis of this thesis provides several major findings which will be briefly presented here. First the narrative of the setting was presented, followed by an overview of the narrative of the characterization and the emplotment. Although the origin of the EU is explained as an economic cooperation, it is emphasised that the EU has become more than just that. Instead, words such as ‘community’, ‘family’ and ‘identity’ are used to narrate the setting. By including references to the norms and values of the EU, the Commission narrates the EU/Europe as a cultural and value-based community where all European countries are part of. Likewise, the relationship between the EU and the Western Balkan is narrated more positively than the expected pragmatic narrative feature of political influence.

The characterization of the actors, the Western Balkan countries, is dominated by references to the common European history, the culture and identity of the EU and the Western Balkan countries. For example, the Yugoslavian wars are not explained as a Western Balkan war, but as a European war and a part of European history. Likewise, the Western Balkan is consistently called already culturally and geographically a part of Europe. However, references to European values and the way the people of the Western Balkan countries want EU values, are only marginally included. There are several references to the economic potential of the countries as

well as foreign investments and interests of the EU countries in the Western Balkan countries. They are, however, used less frequently than the normative narrative features.

Lastly, the events of the narrative are explained in economic terms by highlighting economic reforms, infrastructure and economic connectivity, and economic growth. Besides focusing on economic reforms, there is much emphasis on rule of law. Rule of law is described as lack of corruption and a trustworthy public administration. These changes are mostly linked to the importance of rule of law for a stable economic climate and not as a reform that has independent importance. The narrative of employment changes in the enlargement strategy. Although economic reforms were still part of the narrative, there were more references to normative reforms present in the enlargement Strategy and most importantly in the speeches given by Hahn and Mogherini in which they defend the Strategy. For example, financial aid is linked to good neighbourly relations and not only to economic reforms. Likewise, more attention is given to democratic reforms and reconciliation.

Interpretation of results

Based on the above findings, several conclusions can be made. The normative narrative is most prominent in the narrative of the EU, but not all elements of the narrative are equally important. Several features of the normative narrative can be confirmed to be present in the Commissions narrative on enlargement. The narrative of the Commission confirms that European identity and universal rights are an important part of the narrative. Less conclusive are the results on European values and a moral duty to protect. Although both are present in the narrative, as the EU is considered a union based on communal values, these narrative features are not included as often as the other normative narrative features of setting. This would partly support Sjørnsen's (2006) argument that European values are based on universal rights and not only on European ideas of what is morally right. The moral duty that is expected to go hand in hand with a rights-based argument is only referenced a couple of times. Secondly, the concepts of identity and family are used frequently to describe both the EU and the relation between the EU and the Western Balkans. The characterization of the narrative also showed that not all normative narrative features receive equal attention. The research confirms that a (shared) history and being a part of Europe – which are identity-based features– are used to describe the Western Balkan. However, the link to values and rights is less clear. Less phrases in the narrative link a democratic potential or a 'longing for human rights' to the Western Balkans and a contesting narrative of economic market and security being equally present in the narrative. The value-based narrative features in characterization could only partly be confirmed, they are present but

they are not the only characterization features of the Western Balkans. The employment is only rarely mentioned in terms of normative reforms/changes. When it is mentioned, it was part of the 'fundamentals' narrative which is continuously repeated, although the economic and rule of law part of the fundamentals still receive the most attention. However, together with the emphasis on identity, the normative narrative is still most prominent in the narrative of the Commission.

The pragmatic narrative could not be confirmed in this thesis as only one of the narrative elements incorporated pragmatic narrative features to a large extent. Secondly, the employment narrative changed in the Strategy, indicating that the Commission is now aware of the importance of normative narratives and is trying to create a more consistent narrative. Nevertheless, there are still some features of the pragmatic narrative present in the narrative. First, the research confirms that the global role of the EU is an important feature of enlargement discourse as it is the most prominent pragmatic narrative feature. Although economic explanations of the EU are used sometimes, these few inclusions are always linked to the past. Therefore, the EU is not explained as an economic cooperation. Regarding the characterization of the actors, the narrative analysis shows that especially explaining the Western Balkan as a potential market and foreign investment climate is present in the pragmatic narrative. However, the strategic location of the Western Balkan and the willingness to belong to an alliance with the EU was rarely or not mentioned in the data. Therefore, this thesis cannot confirm the domination of a pragmatic narrative in characterization. Finally, employment was the outlier in this research as economic reforms received considerable attention of the Commission, which is unsurprising as the enlargement proceedings are the most important part of the enlargement narrative. Next to the dominance of pragmatic features, employment is the narrative element with the most collected phrases. In the employment narrative, the features of economic reforms, infrastructure and EU interests (influence) are dominant while costs/benefits of enlargement were rarely mentioned.

Lastly, the Strategy confirms a new focus on the normative narrative. The new Strategy fits within the normative characterization of the previous narrative of the Commission, because it emphasizes that the Western Balkan are already a part of Europe, just not of the EU. The employment turns to a more normative narrative as normative reforms were emphasized in the speeches by Hahn and Mogherini during the presentation of the Strategy in the EP, Serbia and Montenegro. By looking at the Strategy itself, the normative reforms are mentioned more explicitly, such as democracy, reconciliation and rule of law (not mentioned in the same context

as economic reforms). However, this renewed focus on normative reforms coincided with an alternative narrative to explain the interests of the EU in further enlargement, as explained below.

Two alternative narratives were found that were not originally part of this thesis. A functional narrative of the enlargement is found in the setting of enlargement, which focusses on the capability of the EU to process enlargement. Reflecting on the construction of the meta-narratives in chapter 2, scholars often focuses on the role of EU capacity in the enlargement process and concludes that there is doubt about the ability of the EU to process the enlargement successfully (Börzel et al., 2017, p.158). More importantly, security/geopolitical narrative are found in the emplotment of the narrative, which explains emplotment as a method to provide security to the EU. First, this narrative is used to support the idea that the EU has a self-interest in the region to securitize the EU by linking the Western Balkan to stability, the migration crisis and criminality. However, at the presentation of the Western Balkan strategy, a new motivation is given for enlargement. This new geopolitical is based on the idea that a strong united Europe is needed for security and that this cannot be achieved if there is a (power) vacuum in the Western Balkan. Security has been theorized to be an important motivation for EU member states to support enlargement by several scholars (Koff, 2005, p.398; Higashino, 2004, p.348). In this thesis security-based arguments are present again, especially in the motivation for the new Strategy.

Although several narratives are used to explain enlargement to the Western Balkan, the normative narrative is used the most. The enlargement of the Western Balkan accession is narrated during the Juncker mandate by a combination of economic emplotment and normative setting and characterization. However, this changed in 2018, when the new Strategy was narrated based on a combination of a normative and geopolitical narrative.

5.3 Reflection on research contribution

Considering the findings above, it is important to reflect on the contribution of this thesis to the knowledge of narratives and the Commissions discourse on enlargement. This research is build on a theoretical framework of constructivism and narratology. This thesis shows that discursive constructivism contributes to an understanding of the world, by investigating the narratives in discourse and how these narratives frame the construction of the involved actors. The identity of the Western Balkan countries as well as the meaning of the EU is formed by discursive

practices in according to linguistic constructivists. This research shows how the enlargement discourse incorporates characterizations of the Western Balkan countries. The meaning given to actors (as well as the international system, etc.) influences the identity of the Western Balkan countries. Thus, this research tests a new way to determine discursive identity construction in IR and linguistic constructivism. This research therefore helps the understanding of this theory and the methods that can be used to find the discursive identity construction; and shows how linguistic constructivism can provide important insights into the enlargement process by focussing on the discourses of actors (without formal voting-powers), who are often ignored in many rationalist theories.

First, this research introduces a new analytical framework to research the discourse of actors involved in the EU enlargement process. Narrative studies can contribute to the understanding of discourse because it researches the structure of the discourse employed by actors by linking frames, metaphors and explanations of the setting, actors and events in a story. Although previous scholars have argued that normative arguments are used by actors (for example Schimmelfenning, 2001), these elements have not been gathered in one narrative before. Using narratives this research has shown that different meta-narratives can be dominant in discourse, which can contribute to the perception of certain arguments and frames are perceived as valid or consistent (Boswell, et al., 2011, p.3).

Secondly, this research has tested the specific narrative construction as it was conceptualized by Spencer. Spencer has used his framework to analyse both meta-narratives based on different sources from government, society to entertainment, to reconstruct micro-narratives of particular actors. This research is one of the first to test Spencer's narrative analysis outside of his own research and within a new field of studies, namely EU foreign policy and provides a large database of narrative phrases from sources of the Juncker Commission and the meta-narrative they belong to. The weaknesses of Spencer's narrative analysis are further elaborated upon in the next subchapter.

Third and finally, this research contributes to the understanding of meta-narratives and the theoretical assumptions that underly these meta-narratives. The research shows that both pragmatic and normative arguments are used to explain the enlargement process. This thesis is built on the assumption that narratives fit within constructivism, as Spencer argues that narratives are part of the mutual construction of the world and language. The emplotment of enlargement reforms was dominated by a pragmatic narrative. However, this research still provides strong support in favour of the normative meta-narrative as two-thirds of the narrative

is dominated by normative features and the renewed strategy shifts the employment narrative from economic reforms to both economic and normative reforms. This supports a constructivist reading of enlargement support.

5.4 Limitations of research and recommendations

In this final part of the thesis, the limitations of both the theory and methodology will be explained and recommendations for further research on narratives in enlargement discourse are made. First, Spencer argues that narratives are heavily influenced by intertextuality, narratives in one text are dependent on the narratives in other texts or narratives employed by other actors and applies his conceptualization to both micro- and meta-narratives. Spencer argues that not all three of the narrative elements have to be present in each narratives but does not provide a clear explanation why it is not important that all three elements are present and why a missing element means that the narrative is inconsistent/incomplete. In this research it was more difficult to find sources on setting and characterization. This could lead to a lesser validity of the research because it is difficult to determine whether the lesser amount of data on setting and characterization is due to a fault in source selection or due to the lack of both in the narrative.

Secondly, Spencer argues that intertextuality plays an important role in the change of narratives, but he does not provide an explanation of how and when the narrative changes and how the analysis can capture the change. This thesis shows that the Commission was able to change the narrative around the enlargement at the presentation of the new Strategy. Where the employment was still predominantly narrated around economic features in 2017, this changed in the next year at the presentation of the Strategy. Similarly, there is some distinction between the narratives used by Mogherini and Hahn. Although this is not further researched in this thesis, this result indicates the ability of independent actors to change the narrative (even within the Commission discourse). Likewise, the intertextuality of narratives ignores the role of events in changing narratives. Spencer's theory only explains how these events can be described and not how events can influence the narrative. For example, the economic crisis is often argued to have influence on enlargement (Vaduchova, 2014), but this is not mentioned in the official narrative. The influence of this event is therefore not researchable in the framework of Spencer.

Next to the limitations in methodology that were addressed beforehand in the chapter on method and methodology, the research shows limitations to the method that need to be addressed. Due to the time limitation of this thesis, it was not possible to investigate all sources that addressed

enlargement. Secondly, due to the lack of a narrative in the official enlargement strategy documents, the narrative analysis of setting and characterization depends mostly on speeches. By only including sources that focussed explicitly on enlargement, other sources that could have been part of the narrative on enlargement were excluded. The validity of the research would be increased if different types of sources were included in this thesis. Thirdly, by only focussing on the narrative of the Juncker Commission, it was not possible to compare the narrative of different Commissions or other actors. Although it was initially the intention of the empirical analysis to compare the narrative to other researches on the Commissions discourse, this was not possible due to the limited research on this subject.

There are several ways in which this research could be further developed, because the concept of narratives has only been applied sparsely to EU foreign policy and enlargement. Spencer gives three alternatives to an intertextual analysis of narratives, based on the narrator, the story and the audience (Spencer, 2016, p.181). One way to combine these three approaches is to develop a critical narrative analysis. A narrator-based and audience-based approach would research the role of an actor in the construction and change of narrative. It is a power-based approach looking at who has the power to change the narrative. In this case, it would for example be interesting to look at when and where a speech was given by Hahn and Mogherini and the influence of this location/audience on the narrative. It is likely that the speeches directed at the member states of the EU or the (potential) candidate states are different, because each group of states has a different position in the enlargement process.

Another way to improve the knowledge of narratives on enlargement is to expand the analysis to different actors or to do a longitudinal analysis of the Commission's narrative in order to determine more precisely how the narrative has changed over time and whether different Commissions have had influence over the narrative. One example could be to combine Spencer's narrative construction with Roe's (1994) policy narrative analysis, which focusses on the dominant or marginal narratives of different actors and comparing those to establish the meta-narrative on a subject. Roe, however, does not have a clear method on how to find the narratives, which is where Spencer's theory can play an important role.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Map of the Western Balkans



Source: Author

Appendix B: State of play: EU enlargement

Steps to EU membership	Montenegro	Serbia	FYROM	Albania	BiH	Kosovo
SAA signed	15-10-2007	29-04-2008	09-04-2001	12-06-2006	16-06-2008	27-10-2015
SAA enforced	01-05-2010	01-09-2013	01-04-2004	01-04-2009	01-06-2015	01-04-2016
Membership application	15-12-2008	22-12-2009	22-03-2004	24-04-1009	15-02-2016	
Commission opinion	15-12-2008	14-10-2011	09-11-2005	09-11-2010		
Candidate country status	17-12-2010	01-03-2012	16-12-2005	27-06-2014		
Council decision to open accession negotiations	26-06-2012	28-06-2013	26-06-2018	26-06-2018		
Start of accession negotiations	29-06-2012	21-01-2014				
Progress (30-06-2018)	Chapters open: 31(19) Chapters closed: 3	Chapters open: 14 Chapters closed: 2				

Source: Commission, n.d. (bold is during the Juncker Commission mandate)

Appendix C: List of documents used for narrative analysis

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Appendix D: Tables narrative analysis

Table D.1: Summary narrative features per narrative element

	Normative	Pragmatic	X
Setting	38	27	15
Characterization	57	47	22
Emplotment	70	104	42

Table D.2: Number of normative and pragmatic arguments of Hahn and Mogherini (without the Strategy)

Narrative element	Mogherini		Hahn	
	Normative	Pragmatic	Normative	Pragmatic
Setting	25	13	11	12
Characterization	26	13	26	31
Emplotment	10	20	58	73