

**The EU's decision to re-energize accession
negotiations with Turkey: a moral dilemma between
interest and norms**

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3 August 2016

A Thesis submitted to the Board of Examiners in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
the degree of Master of Arts in Conflict Studies & Human Rights

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3 August 2016

Program Trajectory: **Internship** (15 ECTS) and **Research & Thesis Writing** (15 ECTS)

Word Count: 11203

Abstract

This thesis examines how the interaction of the EU's willingness and social ability to violate its normative aspiration to uphold and promote European common values permitted the EU to revitalize negotiations with Turkey on 29 November 2016 despite the increasing limitation of the freedom of the Turkish media. It aims to contribute to the understanding of the conditions under which either norms or interests prevail in EU foreign policy. It is based on the assumption that the EU was caught up in a conflict between promoting and protecting its values and securing Turkish support to address the refugee crisis resulting from the war in Syria. The political psychology perspective as proposed by Shannon served as the analytical lens to examine how the EU was able to free itself from this conflict. This paper consequently argues that the EU was both willing and socially able to violate their aspiration to promote and protect its values due to the situational context and the interpretation of its aspiration underlying the decision. The EU was therefore capable to re-energize membership negotiations with Turkey. This paper furthermore highlights that there nevertheless existed differences in the EU's willingness to revive negotiations due to differences in contextualizing the decision situationally and in interpreting the intention to promote and protect their common values.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The EU caught in a moral dilemma

The European Union (EU) is increasingly developing into an important player in world politics. In the Treaty of the European Union (TEU), the EU commits itself to uphold and promote its values and interest in its relations with the wider world (Art. 3.5). Until now the EU has been characterized as a civilian (Whiteman, 1998; Nicolaïdis & Howse, 2003) or normative power (Manners, 2002), and most recently as an ethic power (Aggestam, 2008) due to its emphasis on its common values and universal principles. The concrete role of norms in EU foreign policy, particularly if they are in conflict with other EU interests, is strongly debated. On the one hand, rationalists argue that EU policy is mainly interest-driven and on the other hand, constructivists claim that it is norm-motivated. One of the policy fields of EU foreign policy in which the protection and promotion of its common values plays a crucial role is EU enlargement. Article 49 of the TEU provides that any European state that respects the values stated in Article 2 and is committed to promote them, is able to apply for EU membership. However, this policy area also harbours a potential conflict between interests and the EU's intention to protect and promote its common values, since due to geographic proximity accession candidates are of particular strategic interest to the EU.

A dilemma between advocating its common values and pursuing strategic interests can be observed in the case of Turkey. At the moment¹, developments in Turkey are alarming since president Erdoğan is increasingly controlling the media: newspapers become governmentally controlled, regime-critical journalist are losing their jobs or are wrongfully accused of working for terrorist groups, espionage or other crimes. These developments were rightly denounced as the “biggest crackdown on press in Turkish history” (Shaheen & Safak, 2015). Freedom House assesses Turkey as only “partly free” in 2015 (Report Turkey, 2015). This severely limits freedom of press, freedom of expression – two fundamental components of democracy - and rule of law in Turkey. These developments should consequently eliminate Turkey from EU membership or should at least put membership negotiations to a hold. Nevertheless, the EU decided to revitalize accession talks on 29 November 2015 at the meeting of heads of states or government with Turkey and to open chapter 17 on economic and monetary policy (EU-Turkey statement, 2015). This decision took place in the context of

¹ This study was set up on the basis of the conditions in November 2015. Until then there have been severe changes in Turkey. This does however not make the findings of this study invalid, but they are even more relevant, since the dilemma the EU was facing in November 2015 only became larger.

the refugee crisis and went hand in hand with a joint action plan to deal with the refugee crisis created through the war in Syria.

The EU decision to reopen membership negotiations at a time in which European values are deteriorating in Turkey raises severe questions about the relation of EU's normative aspiration to promote and protect its values and its interests to find a solution for the refugee crisis. This paper aims to investigate the EU decision from a political psychology perspective as proposed by Vaughen P. Shannon. Political psychology argues that the violation of a norm or a normative aspiration depends on the interplay of the individual will of the actor and the social ability to violate. This paper sets out to answer the research question: *How did the interplay of the EU's will and social ability to violate permit the EU to re-energize membership negotiations with Turkey in November 2015 despite the increasing limitation of the freedom of Turkish media?*

This paper argues that the EU was willing and socially able to violate their aspiration to promote and protect its values due to the situational context and the interpretation of its aspiration underlying the decision. It claims that the context of the refugee crisis made the decision to re-energize accession negotiations with Turkey seem defensible and justified. The aspiration to promote and protect its values was filtered situationally and the decision to revitalize negotiations with Turkey was therefore not seen as a violation of its interpretation. The EU was consequently willing to revitalize negotiations with Turkey despite current developments in Turkey. Justifications and excuses served as an account and enabled the EU to justify its decision socially or to downplay its significance. This paper furthermore highlights that there nevertheless existed differences in the EU's willingness to revive negotiations due to differences in contextualizing the decision situationally and in interpreting the idea to promote and protect their common values.

This paper goes beyond the rationalist-constructivist debate whether EU foreign policy is interest-driven or normatively motivated, but instead it aims to look at the conditions under which either norms or interests prevail. It therefore aims to contribute to the understanding of EU foreign policy decisions and to offer a nuanced view on the role of norms and interest in EU enlargement. It does not serve the purpose to categorize the EU as an actor in world politics, but it rather aims to provide more in-depth knowledge about the concrete role of norms in EU foreign policy and particularly in the field of enlargement.

The paper first gives a short overview of the academic debate regarding the role of interest and norms in the Turkish accession process and presents the theoretical framework and the methodology underlying this study. It subsequently analyses the impact of the situational context and the interpretation of the aspiration to promote and protect its values on the EU's willingness and social ability to revitalize negotiations with Turkey despite the alarming developments within the country. It finally presents the conclusions drawn and highlights their implications on the role of norms and interests in EU enlargement policy.

1.2 Interest and Norms in EU enlargement policy: The case of Turkey

This section gives a short overview about the debate regarding the role of European norms and interests in EU enlargement policy and particularly in EU membership negotiations with Turkey. Subsequently, the effects of the refugee crisis on Turkish membership negotiations are presented and some initial conclusions about the role of norms and interest are outlined.

In the discussion of the role of norms and interests in EU enlargement policy the focus remains on the question whether interest or norms are the driving force behind EU enlargement. Helen Sjursen and Karen E. Smith (2004) look at the logics underpinning EU foreign policy by means of the example of enlargement. Reflecting a rational perspective, they conclude that the EU is a primarily self-interested actor in the enlargement process and that if universal principles contradict with specific national interests, the principles will be secondary (p. 138). Offering a more nuanced approach, José Ignacio Torreblanca (2002) highlights the contradictory pressures in EU-Eastern enlargement policy. He argues that some EU institutions pushed towards the protection and satisfaction of the EU's constitutive goals and principles while others pursued the maximisation of interests (p. 48). Consequently, there is no clear consensus on the role of norms and interest in EU enlargement policy. Further research should go beyond asking for the decisive force driving EU enlargement policy, but apply a more context-specific analysis looking at the factors and conditions determining under which either norms or interests prevail in EU enlargement.

Focusing on EU enlargement policy towards Turkey, Asa Lundgren (2005) argues that Turkey has been treated differently than other applicant states (p. 169) and consequently looks at the incentives underlying EU enlargement policy towards Turkey. She concludes that the motivation underlying EU-Turkey enlargement is not necessarily based on strategic

considerations or interest, but on cultural affinity (ibid). She furthermore claims that the concern to protect human rights and democracy played a significant role in the decision to grant a candidate status to Turkey, while it however cannot explain the difference in treatment (ibid).

David Phinnemore and Erhan Icener (2016) point out that the Turkish rate of progress has been considerable behind other applicant states and that accession negotiations are mainly characterized by stalemate (p. 1). The refugee crisis in the summer of 2015 however constitutes a turning point in EU-Turkish membership negotiations. Pinar Gedikkaya Bal (2016) argues that the refugee crisis has led to a rapprochement between the EU and Turkey, since it put immense pressure on the EU's Schengen policy, which in his view is at the heart of the European project (p. 32). He moreover points out that the EU acknowledged Turkey as an important partner in finding solutions to the refugee crisis (p. 15). Similarly, David Phinnemore and Erhan Icener highlight the role of the refugee crisis in the recent revitalization of Turkish membership negotiations. They equally point out that Turkish membership negotiations have been characterized by 'stalemate' and 'impasse' in the last years, but that as a response to the need to secure Turkish support to stem migration flows to the EU and to fight terrorism, the European Council recognized the necessity to revitalize Turkey's accession process (p. 4). Bal, Phinnemore and Icener (p. 13) assess this rapprochement as a positive step, but nevertheless conclude that while EU-Turkish relations have been revitalized, the meaning of the reopening of Turkish membership negotiations should not be overestimated, since Turkey is only a little closer to accede to the EU.

Phinnemore and Icener furthermore look at the EU's decision to reopen negotiations in the light of the role of norms and interest in its decision to enlarge. They point out that while conditionality has played an increasing role in EU enlargement in the last couple of years, the recent decision to grant progress in negotiations despite the concerns that have been expressed regarding respect of the rule of law, fundamental rights and the strengthening democratic institutions, has been a temporary side-lining of EU norms and values driven by realpolitik (p. 6).

The existing literature consequently highlights the particular character of EU-Turkish membership negotiations. It moreover demonstrates that while the protection and promotion of norms and values always played an important role, cultural affinity was the dominant factor underlying EU's position towards Turkish membership until now. Additionally, the literature points out that the refugee crisis greatly affected negotiations and constituted an

important milestone in EU-Turkish relations. Phinnemore and Icener specifically indicate the resulting conflict between the need to find a solution to the refugee crisis and EU normative aspirations. The interaction of normative and interest-based concerns has however not been sufficiently explored in the case of Turkish membership negotiations and it needs to be investigated which underlying dynamics and processes accompanied the EU's decision to reopen negotiations. The next chapter introduces the broad academic debate regarding norms and interest in EU policy and subsequently presents the theoretical framework underlying this research project.

1.3 The Political Psychology of Norm Violation

This section presents the political psychology of norm violation, which serves as the theoretical framework of this study. It furthermore briefly refers to other existing theories regarding the role of norms and interests, and explains the benefits of this approach.

While the existence of norms is widely acknowledged, their role in international politics is highly debated. Two dominant theoretical approaches can be identified. First, rationalists see states as merely self-interested and argue that norms are only considered as long as they do not conflict with a state's defined interest and their protection provides benefits for the state (see: Morgenthau, 1978; Thompson, 1980; Mearsheimer, 1995; March & Olsen, 1998). In contrast, constructivists claim that norms have a strong impact on the shaping of state behaviour as they indicate what is socially acceptable behaviour in the international society (see: Keohane, 1984; Wendt, 1995; Finnemore, 1996; Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Both school of thoughts represent two extreme positions, and cannot account for deviations in state behaviour which differs from expected behaviour. This paper aims to offer a more nuanced perspective and assumes that actors are neither fully interest- nor norm-driven, but that both variables are decisive. It consequently focuses on the question under which conditions one of them prevails.

Vaughen P. Shannon (2000) presents a political psychological perspective on the role of norms and interests, which aims to bridge the logics of rationalism and constructivism. Political psychology assumes that actors feel both obliged to conform to social expectations and pursue individual or national interest. Choices thus result from the interaction of agent and structure, in which actors pursue their interests, but carefully consider what is acceptable according to the prevailing social structures (p. 294). Shannon defines three needs, which determine state leaders behaviour: to organize one's environment, to maintain social approval

and a positive self-image (p. 299). Political psychology therefore sees human action at a crossroad of social and individual needs and constrains. Norms provide simple organizing and decision rules for acting safely in one’s environment, and conformity guarantees positive social reinforcement and self-esteem. Norms are thereby defined as “collective expectation for the proper behaviour of actors within a given identity” (Katzenstein, 1996, p. 5 in Shannon, 2000, p. 294).

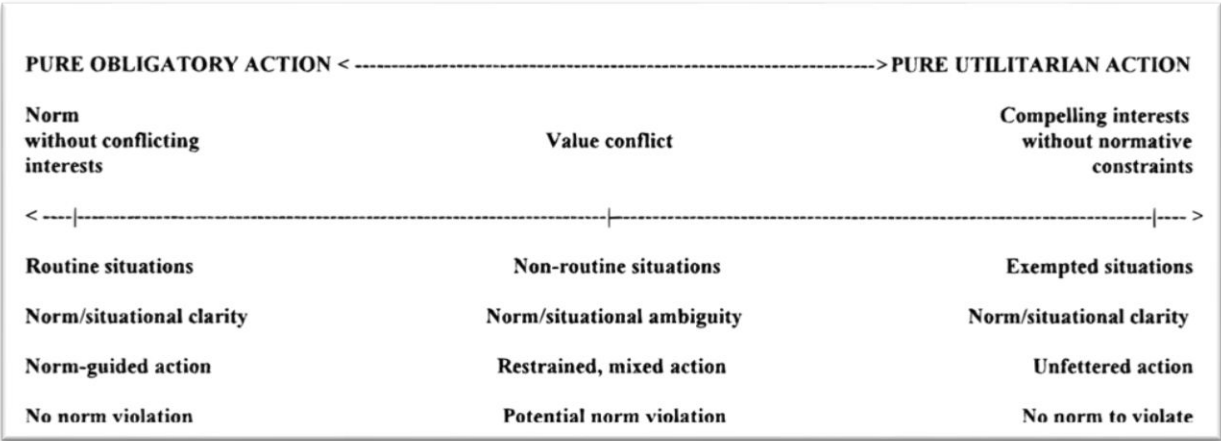


Image 1

Looking at the role of interest and norm in decision-making processes, Shannon presents a spectrum of choices (Image 1). At each end a conflict of norms and interests is absent, since it is either an utter norm-driven obligatory action or an unresented, utilitarian action (p. 299). Norm violation may occur if there is a conflict between national or individual interests and a given norm. Backman (1985) refers to this conflict when national interests challenge expectations of appropriate behaviour as of a moral dilemma. Whether or not such a moral dilemma results in norm violation depends on the interplay of the individual will of the actor and the social ability to violate (Shannon, 2000, p. 300). Norm violation is thus motivated by self-interest, but is permitted by the nature of the norm and the situation, which conditions an actor’s ability to define a situation in a way that allows a socially accepted violation (ibid).

The will to violate

Shannon argues that norm conformity fulfils psychological and instrumental functions of social approval, self-esteem and the organization of reality for effective action (p. 300). In order to be willing to violate, the view among decision-makers that such an action is

situationally defensible and justified must emerge in order to protect their social and individual needs. To violate a norm, state actors must therefore see their action not as a norm violation (p. 303). Shannon refers to this as the ‘process of self-diagnostics’ (p. 301). In case of a moral dilemma, states construct an identity that “facilitates the achievement of desirable outcomes” (Backman, 1985, p. 264) without losing their positive identity. Shannon moreover points out that norms are what states make of them. Since norms exist in the abstract, state leaders interpret them and the situation, as they perceive it. The less specific a norm is, the more room there is to interpret and contextualize the norm situationally. Consequently, in the ‘process of self-diagnostics’, norms that state leaders accept in principle become filtered situationally (p. 302). *Images* accompany this process of norm interpretation by actors. Images are cognitive schemata reflecting a subject’s mental representation of another political actor. Negative images or images linked to threats and opportunities can render the abstract norm inapplicable in the concrete context, resulting in a perception of exemption (ibid). The individual will to violate consequently depends on the interpretation of the norm or normative aspiration and the situational context.

The ability to violate

In order for an actor to be able to violate a norm, there must be a credible opportunity to claim exemption from the norm (p. 303). Considering the social needs of actors, they will only violate a norm with an invocation of an account that solves the moral dilemma in their minds and to the audience they are accountable to. Accounts serve to explain unanticipated or untoward behaviour and can occur in four forms: apologies, denials, excuses or justifications (p. 304). Whether an invocation of an account exists depends on the structure of the norm and the situational context (p. 305).

The political psychology perspective serves as the framework to analyse the EU decision to reopen negotiations with Turkey despite the criticism regarding the increasing limitation of freedom of press and freedom of expression and its unlawful acting against regime-critical journalist. According to Shannon’s analysis of the impact of norms and interests in state actor decisions, the EU is an intergovernmental and supranational organization. Nevertheless, it equally needs to please the needs to organize one’s environment, to maintain social approval and a positive self-image. Consequently, the theory can be applied to the EU as well. This study furthermore does not focus on a concrete norm, but on the EU’s normative aspiration to protect and promote its common values particularly in EU enlargement. Nevertheless, through

its own commitment and its perceived role as a normative or ethic power, this aspiration also serves as collective expectation for appropriate behaviour.

The refugee crisis put the EU into a moral dilemma, since on the one hand it was of great interest to find a solution to the crisis. On the other hand, Turkish standards deviated increasingly from EU common values, which the EU committed to promote and protect and which constitute an essential requirement for EU membership. Expected appropriate behaviour would have been a clarification on part of the EU, stating that it does not tolerate the disregard of media freedom in Turkey and that the respect of European common values is essential for EU membership. The EU consequently found itself in the middle of the 'spectrum of choice' where its interest to find a solution to the refugee crisis conflicted with its normative aspiration to promote and protect its values. The decision to revitalize accession negotiations with Turkey despite severe setbacks in the freedom of Turkish media, signals that the EU was rather turning a blind eye to the critical developments within Turkey to find a solution to the refugee crisis. The news agency *Politico* wrote that a revitalization of accession negotiations "would force the Union to ignore Turkey's record on human rights, intimidation of the media and manipulation of the judiciary" (Karnitsching, 2016) and the *euobserver* writes that opening a new chapter now "signals [...] that EU norms are up for grabs" (Bechev & Tocci, 2015). Consequently, this indicates a violation of their aspiration to uphold and promote its values. From a political psychology perspective, norm conformity would have fulfilled psychological and instrumental functions. Whether interests prevail over norms or normative concerns depends on the interplay of one's will and social ability to violate. This paper therefore answers the question: *How did the interplay of EU's will and social ability to violate permit the EU to re-energize membership negotiations with Turkey in November 2015 despite the increasing limitation of the freedom of Turkish media?* The analysis subsequently focuses on the following sub-questions:

- 1.) How did the situational context impact the EU's willingness and social ability to re-energize accession negotiations with Turkey despite current developments?
- 2.) How did the interpretation of its aspiration to protect and promote its values, particularly with candidate countries, shaped EU's willingness and social ability to advance the Turkish accession talks despite current developments?

Ontologically, the political psychology perspective looks at the interaction of agent and structure, since it considers how an actor's perception of the structural context impacts its

interpretation of a norm. Regarding the epistemological stance, this paper aims to understand the EU's decision to reopen negotiations with Turkey despite the EU's aspiration to promote and protect its values including the protection of freedom of press and expression. This bears implications for the design and methodology of this study, which are presented in the next section.

1.4 Methodology

The purpose of this section is to set out the research design underlying this paper. It therefore focuses first on the case selection, the sampling- and data collection method. It subsequently outlines the limitations of the findings presented in this paper.

In order to investigate the role of norms and interest in EU foreign policy, this paper focuses on EU enlargement policy towards Turkey. The EU-Turkish relations are not only relevant due to their topicality in light of the refugee crisis, but also since Turkey is one of the most strategically important partners for the EU due to its geographic location between Europe and the South-Mediterranean and Middle East region. At the same time, due to its perceived lack of cultural affinity, the protection of European values and norms played a central role in membership negotiations until now. Consequently, EU enlargement policy toward Turkey bears great potential of conflicts between norms and interests. This paper thereby uses the EU decision to reopen negotiations with Turkey as a case study, since it clearly demonstrates a moral dilemma between cooperation on migration and the aspiration to promote and protect European common values in the light of the limited freedom of Turkish media. While there are many alarming developments in Turkey, this paper narrows the focus of the case study on the limitation of media independence in Turkey. Free media is a crucial component of a pluralist democracy, one of EU's common values, which it aims to promote and protect. The case study is based on a single-case design and takes a holistic approach, by only looking at one unit of analysis.

To examine the EU's decision to revitalize membership negotiations with Turkey despite the increasing limitation of media independence in Turkey, this study focuses on internal decision-making processes within the EU. Research underlying this paper is consequently mainly bound to EU institutions and individual EU officials based in Brussels. The unit of analysis of this paper is the EU as an organization. It is however important to not consider the EU a monolithic body, but as consisting of different institutions which might

represent different positions and perspectives. This study therefore also reflects on the differences in EU's willingness to re-energize negotiations.

EU documents and statements as well as official speeches and references from the European Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament (EP) concerning the EU's decision to revitalize membership negotiations on 29 November 2015, serve as a basis to get an overall picture of the EU's position and justification of its decisions. In order to maintain an in-depth perspective, interviews with different EU officials working in the matter of EU-Turkey relations are conducted. The method of sampling is non-purposive sampling. Interviews have been conducted with:

- the head of the Turkey division of the European External Action Service (EEAS)
- a member of the CIVEX² Commission of the Committee of Regions (CoR) responsible for enlargement
- a member of the Working Group on Turkey of the CoR
- the Secretary General of the Friends of Turkey in the EP
- 2 EP officials, member of the human rights delegation to Turkey
- 3 EP officials, member of the EP delegation on Turkey

The interviews followed a semi-structured outline, to encourage two-way communication and thereby being less intrusive and opening up the conversation for sensitive topics. This is particularly important, since this research critically questions the EU decision to reopen membership negotiations with Turkey and careful dealing with the topic is necessary. Data triangulation serves the purpose to analyse the case in depth and strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings.

The design of this study nevertheless bears important limitations for the findings presented in this paper. The findings might be slightly biased for two reasons. First, the interviews were mainly conducted with official of the EP whereas the Council has concluded the decision. The limited access to the main-decision makers means that the analysis was dependent on the assessment of EU officials not part of the decision-making process. Second, it has to be considered that the number of interviews done was limited and that the findings thus might be shaped by the political affiliations and subjective perspective of the EU officials in question. Nevertheless, between minor differences in the interpretation, a consistent picture

² Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs

crystalized. Further research should include a greater number of interviewees and aim to get direct access to the decision-makers. It is furthermore often criticized that no general conclusions can be drawn from a case study. Nevertheless, “case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes” (Yin, 2002, p. 11). This paper therefore does not aim to come up with a general applicable answer, but the main purpose is to contribute to the understanding when interest or norms prevail in EU foreign policy decisions. The external validity of the results have to be tested in further research as well as by embedding it in debates about factors shaping EU foreign policy.

2. The EU decision to reenergize accession negotiation with Turkey

2.1 The situational context

2.1.1 Crisis resolution and enlargement: a dubious mixture

This section demonstrates that the decision to re-energize membership negotiations with Turkey has to be regarded in relation with the situational context of the EU-Turkish cooperation in the refugee crisis. It subsequently analyses the consequences this connection had on the EU's willingness and social ability to revive accession negotiations, despite the alarming setbacks in media freedom in Turkey. It furthermore refers to the differences in perception within the EU.

The decision to increase efforts to advance in membership negotiations with Turkey concluded in the meeting of the heads of state or government with Turkey on 29 November 2015 made no formal link between the revitalization of negotiations and cooperation in the refugee crisis. In the final conclusion of the meeting, the Council expresses its commitment to “confront and surmount the existing risks and threats in a concerted manner to reinforce the European Project” (EU-Turkey statement, 2015). However, the ‘existing risks and threats’ are not further defined and an official link to the refugee crisis can therefore not be derived. At that meeting, the EU furthermore activated a joint action plan with Turkey to tackle the refugee crisis (EU-Turkey statement, 2015). The consolidation of both issues indicates a connection between the revitalization of negotiations and cooperation in the refugee crisis.

The decision of 29 November was moreover taken in line with the European Council conclusion of 15 October 2015. Under the heading *Migration: Cooperating with Third Countries to stem the flow*, the Council emphasised the need to re-energize the accession processes with Turkey (European Council, 2015a, p. 1). The conclusion consequently drew a link between the revitalization of membership negotiation and the need to provide an answer to the refugee crisis. The timing of the decision to re-energize negotiations in connection with the conclusion of the joint action plan to stem the flow of refugees and the October Council conclusion strongly indicate that the cooperation in the refugee crisis and the reactivation of membership negotiations are closely linked and can therefore not be examined separately.

Interviews conducted for this research demonstrate that the reenergizing of membership negotiations and the refugee crisis have been closely entangled in the perception of EU policy-makers (see: Interview 4, Interview 6). While critically questioning the decision

to advance membership negotiations at a time in which EU's common values as freedom of press and freedom of expression are deteriorating in Turkey, the need to find a solution to the refugee crisis has been highlighted in every interview. The arguments brought forward to justify the decision on 29 November, analysed in the following section, furthermore illustrate that the EU closely linked the cooperation in the refugee crisis and EU enlargement.

Consequently, there were two different policy fields – EU enlargement and refugee- and migration policy – mixed together, which are and should not be interrelated. The artificial linkage made between the two political fields constitutes an important factor in the 'process of self-diagnostics' of the EU. The close entanglement of both issues led to a blurred and mixed-up perception by the EU: the EU-Turkish enlargement process was not considered independently anymore, but it became a tool to secure Turkish cooperation in the refugee crisis. The decision to revitalize negotiations with Turkey has been contextualized situationally, which significantly impacted EU's willingness and social ability.

Criticism of the European Parliament

The coupling of accession negotiations and EU-Turkey cooperation on migration has been strongly criticized by the EP (Interview 2; 8). Before the meeting of the heads of state or government with Turkey on 29 November, a number of MEPs wrote a joint letter to the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, criticizing that the EU-Turkey accession will be directly linked to the search of a response in the refugee crisis. They further claimed that Turkish membership prospects are used as a bargain chip (European Parliament, 2015). On 12 April 2016 the EP additionally passed a resolution demanding that both issues should be untangled. Kati Piri (S&D, NL) argued "EU-Turkey cooperation on migration should not be linked to the calendar, content and conditionality of the negotiation process" (European Parliament News, 2016). While the resolution acknowledges the strategic importance of Turkey, the MEP's highlighted the regression in key areas such as freedom of expression and the independence of the judiciary (ibid). In the interviews, it was furthermore stated that the EP "is not proud of the deal" (Interview 8) and that "there should not be a link between accession negotiations and the refugee crisis" (Interview 6).

The criticism by some members of the Parliament confirms that the decision to revitalize accession negotiations and EU-Turkey cooperation on migration has been coupled. It furthermore illustrates that there was no consensual interpretation of the situational context underlying the Council's decision. Consequently, there also existed differences in EU's willingness to re-energize accession negotiations. When the EU-Turkish enlargement process

was seen independent of the situational context, the background of the refugee crisis did not serve as a basis to explain the revival of membership negotiations with Turkey despite the increasing deterioration of European common values in Turkey. From this perspective, the decision could not be justified or excused and therefore limited the willingness of a number of EU officials. It is thus important to consider how the Council has used the situational context to validate its decision. The different arguments brought forward to justify the decision, reflecting a close connection of cooperation on migration and revitalizing accession negotiations, are elaborated in the following section.

2.1.2 The impact of the refugee crisis

This section examines the different reasons expressed for the revitalization of the accession negotiations. Subsequently, their impact on EU's willingness and social ability to revitalize accession negotiations with Turkey are analysed. In addition, the role of the situational context in the EU self-diagnosis is elaborated.

The decision to reenergize negotiations went hand in hand with the Turkey's promise to cooperate more closely with the EU to stop the flow of refugees coming to Europe (Interview 2, 8). The EU already received over one million refugees in 2015 (IOM, 2015) and the main burden was taken by Germany and Sweden. While the EU attempted to find a European solution to the crisis through resettlement, the lack of willingness by several member states to host more refugees made that only a few countries had to deal with a majority of all refugees (Interview 5). Many European member states reintroduced national border controls (Traynor & Smith, 2016). The EU did consequently not only fail to quickly respond to the crisis or to offer a European solution, but the crisis also threatened the Schengen area, one of the greatest achievements of the EU. Since there consequently seemed to be no European solution possible, cooperation with Turkey was perceived as unavoidable necessity (Interview 6). This discerned need was further nourished by the growing negative sentiments against refugees in Europe. There was a rise of populist and right-wing parties in most of EU's member states and an increasing radicalization of society could be observed (Interview 8). Next to the problems created within Europe, the huge number of refugees dying on their way to Europe, 3371 in 2015 (IOM, 2016), also put immense pressure on the EU to quickly find a solution (Interview 4).

It was therefore crucial that the EU put all its efforts into finding a solution to the crisis and limiting its consequences. Cooperation with Turkey thus seemed as the solution

promising the most success or as the only feasible option (Interview 4, 8). Gianni Pittella, chairman of the S&D in the EP, claimed that “without their cooperation, we cannot solve the refugee crisis.” (European Parliament News, 2015). In one of the interviews conducted for this study, a MEP additionally pointed out that the EU “wanted and needed this deal, so we put everything in, even if it is against everything we have been done before” (Interview 9). The revitalization of accession talks therefore seemed necessary and situationally defensible. The EU’s willingness to revitalize negotiations despite the critical developments in Turkey was consequently primarily rooted in the extreme pressure to find a solution to the refugee crisis and a feeling that there were no other options left. The exceptional circumstances created through the refugee crisis also permitted the EU to portray their decision as an exception and served as an account to justify their decision to the public and critical members of the EU.

Generally, Turkey is seen as one of the most important neighbour countries of the EU and due to its geographic location it is perceived as the door to the Middle East (Interview 8). The refugee crisis furthermore emphasized the strategic importance of Turkey and made the EU aware that it is necessary to deepen their relations to Turkey (Interview 3). Martin Schultz, the President of the EP, has argued that the crisis “is a real eye-opener on how interdependent we already are” (Levy-Abegnoli, 2015). In his speech at the informal Turkey-EU summit on 9 November, he furthermore pointed out that this was the first time a European Council meeting was held with a candidate state (European Parliament: the President, 2015). He subsequently elaborated that this was crucial in light of the common challenges the EU and Turkey were facing together (ibid). This was additionally confirmed in the interviews (Interview 3; 8). Therefore, close cooperation is perceived as essential and indispensable (interview 6). This is strongly reflected in the statement of EEAS official arguing “we do not have a choice” (Interview 3).

The acknowledgment of a need to generally work together consequently served as the basis on which the decision to re-energize accession talks was justified. The decision was seen as strategically necessary and cooperation as indispensable in the long run. The revitalization of accession negotiations was perceived as the first step to establish this cooperation and thus strengthened EU’s willingness. The perception of an inevitable need to cooperate also served as an excuse to defend their decision socially. It therefore increased EU’s social capacity to revitalize negotiations.

The refugee crisis and the EU’s failure to deal with it changed the power relations between the EU and Turkey. As pointed out before, the EU felt dependent on Turkey to deal

with the refugee crisis and to limit its effects. Turkey was thus in a powerful position to negotiate, while the EU was in a petitioner position. At the same time, the EU had lost much of its leverage, which mainly depends on EU membership prospects of Turkey (Interview 3). As pointed out by Phinnemore and Icener, EU-Turkish accession negotiations were mainly characterized by stalemate in the last years, leading to a feeling of frustration within Turkey resulting in a decreasing interest in membership. Additionally, several crises within Europe such as the financial crisis, the Greek issue and EU's failure to deal with the refugee crisis made EU membership seem less attractive, leading to a further loss of EU leverage (Interview 6).

The interviewees acknowledged that the EU should have advanced in negotiations earlier and that now Turkey is using this failure to its advantage (Interview 7). Moreover, it was repeatedly pointed out that Turkey exploited its power position and the dependency of the EU to pressure for the advancing of accession negotiations and that it thereby "played its cards well" (Interview 6; 5). Turkey was actually accused of blackmailing the EU by threatening to open its gate to let two million refugees floating in the direction of Europe (Interview 4). In one of the interviews conducted for this study, a member of the CoR clarifies this perceived predicament in which the EU found itself and stated "we opened negotiations, now we are forced into them" (Interview 7).

At first sight, it might seem bizarre that the EU is letting itself being 'blackmailed' by Turkey. The strong power position of Turkey and EU's dependency on Turkey however strengthened the feeling that the EU has no choice than to cooperate or is simply forced to reach out to Turkey. This again served as an excuse to justify why they need to push forward in the Turkish accession process despite the setbacks in democracy and rule of law. It furthermore absolved the EU from its responsibility, because it seemed like their freedom of choice was severely limited and they can therefore not be criticized for their decision. This contextualization of the decision consequently increased EU's willingness and social capacity to re-energize accession negotiations despite the critical developments in Turkey.

The strong Turkish engagement in the refugee crisis was a further decisive factor shaping the EU decision-making process to revitalize accession talks. In 2015, Turkey was hosting more than three million refugees, which is connected with high political and economic cost (Interview 3). The EU praised Turkey for its generosity and solidarity with the refugees (Interview 3; 4; 9). President Donald Tusk argued "our partners showed an approach towards refugees without any prejudice, without ideological orthodoxies, help-oriented and full of common sense" (European Council, 2015c). The perception that the EU has to

acknowledge Turkish efforts and to therefore offer its support strongly loomed in the interviews (Interview 3; 4; 6). This was further strengthened by a sense of guilt, because “the EU has failed” (Interview 6) and Turkey is better dealing with the crisis (Interview 8; 9). In one of the interviews it has been argued, “there are things Turkey has gotten right, we should acknowledge that” and that “we need to help them, and we do this through accession” (Interview 3).

The decision to reenergize negotiations could consequently be legitimated with the necessity to help and support Turkey and also as an acknowledgement of its efforts. Furthermore, the positive engagement of Turkey in the matter of the refugee crisis enabled the EU to partly overlook the setbacks in freedom of press and freedom of expression and to focus on the positive aspects in Turkish behaviour. The decision to re-energize negotiations could therefore be seen as defensible, which increased the EU’s willingness and served as a valid account to justify its decision socially.

The immense threats to the life and well-being of refugees further reaffirmed the EU in its decision to reenergize negotiations. In the interviews, it has been forcefully argued that the prime issue of supporting Turkey is to save the lives of refugees (Interview 3; 4). Next to the re-energizing of accession talks, the conclusion on 29 November also included three million Euros to support Turkey in dealing with the refugees and to stop refugees from undertaking the dangerous journey to Europe over the Mediterranean Sea (EU-Turkey statement, 2015). A MEP, member of the Human Rights Committee of the EP, argued that people were starving and dying and cooperating with Turkey was “better than doing nothing. It was the only possibility.” (Interview 4).

The EU was facing the moral dilemma of cooperating with Turkey despite its negative records in freedom of press and expression and the need to find a solution in the refugee crisis. At the same time, the EU however was aware that a quick solution was crucial to provide sufficient support and protection of the refugees. This enabled the EU to partly resolve the moral dilemma it was caught up in, since the view developed that the resumption of membership negotiations was not only based on the interest to find a solution to the refugee crisis, but also to save lives and protect refugees. This did not simply detach the EU from the moral dilemma to advance in negotiations despite current developments in Turkey, but also made the decision seem necessary and therefore reasonable. The need to save lives furthermore served as a strong account to justify its decision to revitalize negotiation despite current developments, increasing EU’s social capacity.

These arguments, repeatedly making a link to the refugee crisis, demonstrate that the contextual background of the refugee crisis and the strong connection made between cooperation on migration and accession played a major role in ‘the process of self-diagnostics’ of the EU. The EU constructed a definition or an evaluation of a situation that “facilitates the achievement of desirable outcomes” (Backman, 1985, p. 264) without losing its favourable identity. The perception of a need to cooperate, having no other choice or even being forced into it, made the decision to revitalize negotiations situationally defensible and exceptional. There was furthermore an assumed connection between revitalizing negotiation and helping Turkey to deal with the refugees and decreasing the incentives for the dangerous travel to Europe. This superficial connection strengthened the perception that it is not a violation of their aspiration to promote and protect their values. Consequently, the EU assessed the revitalization of accession negotiations as justified and excusable and was therefore willing to include it in its deal with Turkey on 29 November despite the apparent contradiction to its aspiration to uphold and promote its values and the criticism it had to face for it. Justifications and excuses served as an account to justify the decision before European citizens as well as critical EU officials, because the EU could claim exemption from its aspiration to uphold and protect its values, since the decision was indispensable and served the purpose to help refugees.

2.2 The interpretation of its aspiration to protect and promote its values

2.2.1 A violation of its aspiration

The interpretation of EU’s self-imposed goal to promote and protect European values has not been consensual. This section shortly presents the arguments brought forward stating that the decision to re-energize negotiations was not in line with the intention to promote and protect freedom of press and rule of law in Turkey. It moreover elaborates the implications for EU’s willingness and social capacity to nevertheless decide to revitalize negotiations. It subsequently refers to the different roles in the process of interpretation of the EP and the EU Council.

Particularly the EP emphasised that the revitalization of accession negotiation at a time in which rights are increasingly deteriorating in Turkey is conflicting with the protection and promotion of European values. In a joint letter to the President of the Commission, Jean Claude Juncker, a number of MEP’s expressed their deep concerns that the Council’s decision

“sets a bad precedent and creates an image that the EU is willing to soften its tone on internal developments in Turkey in exchange for cooperation on refugees” (European Parliament, 2015). In the interviews carried out for this study, it was furthermore claimed that European norms are “trampled underfoot” (Interview 9) and the Council was accused of selling European values (Interview 2; 4). It was moreover pointed out that the opening of chapter 23 on judiciary and fundamental rights and chapter 24 on justice, freedom and security would have indeed signalled that Turkey needs to respect European values in order to become a full member (Interview 8; 9). While this would have contributed to the promotion and protection of European values, these chapters however remained closed. There was consequently an acknowledgement by a number of MEPs that the decision on 29 November did not serve the purpose to protect and promote European values. Instead it was seen as an endangerment or treason of European values. The aspiration was interpreted without situating it in the context and therefore no situational filter was applied.

The criticism voiced at the Council’s decision to re-energize membership negotiations with Turkey demonstrates that there was no consensus on the interpretation of the aspiration to protect and promote European values. The interviews revealed that there existed particularly great differences of interpretation between the Council and the EP. Consequently, the EU’s openness to re-energize negotiations was mixed. These variations in interpreting its aspiration trace back to the differences in the self-attributed roles of the EU institutions. The EP generally sees itself as a protector and guardian of European values, and therefore often takes a more critical position in controversial issues. In contrast, the role of the Council is seen as much more restricted, since it needs to represent the interests of the individual member states (Interview 2; 4). The Council is nevertheless bound to their self-imposed goal to protect and promote the values underlying the EU. In order for the Council to be willing to re-energize negotiations, it must have therefore laid out its intentions differently through applying a situational filter.

2.2.2 The application of a situational filter

This section analyses how the aspiration to promote and protect European common values has been filtered situationally. It furthermore explains how the structure of EU’s aspiration made the application of a contextual filter possible. It subsequently outlines the effects on EU’s willingness and social ability to revive negotiations with Turkey despite current developments in Turkey.

The structure

The range of possible interpretations of a norm or a normative aspiration depends on its structure or whether it is precise and narrowly defined (Shannon, 2000, p. 300). Article 3.5 of the TEU outlines EU's aspiration to promote and protect its values:

“In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.”

The formulated intention to uphold and promote its values in relations with third countries leaves the EU with great room for interpretation. Article 3.5 defines the results which should be achieved; however there are no concrete provisions on how to reach these goals. Consequently, the EU is free to contextualize its aspiration situationally and adapt it to its particular needs depending on the specific background. Hence, the possibility to decide how the protection and promotion its values is achieved permitted the EU to outlay its aspiration in a way that it does not conflict with its decision to revive accession negotiation with Turkey despite the setbacks in media freedom. The interviews conducted for this study revealed a set of different interpretations.

The interpretations

Subsequently, the different interpretations of the aspiration to uphold and promote European values are outlined. It is furthermore analysed how this affected EU's willingness to re-energize negotiations with Turkey despite the deterioration of media freedom in Turkey, which usually constitutes on the values the EU aims to promote and protect.

In one of the interviews conducted for this study (Interview 3), it was highlighted that there are regularly two approaches to address countries, particularly candidate countries, which do not respect European values: The first approach is to minimize or stop cooperation to signal that the EU is not tolerating the disregard of its values. The second possibility is to carry on or even strengthen cooperation in order to increase EU's impact. It has been argued that the EU is therefore better placed to influence a country and encourage the respect of its values through close cooperation. An official of the EEAS stated in one of the interviews that the re-energizing of the negotiations also served the purpose to bring Turkey closer to the EU and to therefore be able to positively influence its development (ibid). Similarly, a MEP has

claimed that in order to help Turkey to improve its human rights standards, the EU needs to help them to move forwards (Interview 4). MEP Gianni Pittella (S&D) has moreover pointed out that Turkey needs Europe, because close ties to the EU contribute to the avoidance of authoritarian temptations and the impoverishment of its democracy (Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, 2015). Furthermore, the interviewees argued that the EU has to uphold and promote its values from within a country through mutual ties and close cooperation (Interview 3; 5).

The decision to step forward in accession negotiations with Turkey despite the critical developments in media freedom consequently constitutes the second approach. Stronger engagement is seen as the best option to positively impact Turkey and to tackle its setbacks in freedom of expression and freedom of speech and rule of law. The aspiration to protect and promote European values has thus been interpreted as a process that is achieved best through the creation of strong linkages with the country of concern. This interpretation consequently strengthened the EU's willingness to revitalize membership negotiations because it was seen as a tool to influence Turkey and guide it in the right direction instead of a violation of its aspiration. It furthermore increased EU social ability, because it enabled the EU to justify its decision and therefore served as an account.

In the interviews, it has been pointed out that the decision to re-engage in negotiations with Turkey is not perceived as a compromise to the aspiration to protect and promote the common values underlying the EU (Interview 3; 4). Nicolas Schmit, the Minister responsible for relations with the European Parliament during the Luxembourg Presidency of the EU Council, has argued in a speech to the Parliament that Turkey still needs to apply to all the conditions applicable to candidate countries (Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, 2015). Similarly, Frans Timmermans, Vice-President of the European Commission, argued that this 'new chapter' opened in EU-Turkey relations, does not imply the EU forgets divergences and differences such as freedom of expression and human rights (ibid). After the meeting of EU heads of states with Turkey, Donald, the President of the Council at that time, argued that "we are not re-writing the EU enlargement policy" and that "relevant conclusions continue to apply, including its merit-based nature and the respect for European values" (European Council, 2015b).

The interviews additionally revealed that the opening of chapters is primarily seen as technical process setting benchmarks and guiding the Turkish accession process (Interview 6). The promise to open new chapters of negotiations was therefore perceived as a mere technical matter. Additionally, it had been repeatedly pointed out in the interviews that the Council

conclusion to revitalize membership negotiations does not bring Turkey closer to EU membership and has therefore no severe political implications. The chapters opened are of minor relevance and therefore only have a limited impact on Turkish membership prospects (Interview 2; 4; 7; 9).

The EU thus interpreted its aspiration to promote and protect as detached from their decision to revitalize accession talks, since Turkey still needs to comply with all requirements to maintain full membership and the Council's Conclusion was of rather symbolic value. The EU therefore did not see the revitalization of membership negotiations, despite current developments in Turkey and the criticism expressed at its decision, as a violation of their aspiration to promote and protect its values. It was therefore willing to revive negotiations with Turkey. The downplaying of the implications of its decision served as an account and strengthened its social capacity to push through its decision.

It has furthermore been highlighted that the EU does promote and protect its values despite the Council's conclusion to reactive accession proceedings with Turkey (Interview 3; 4). On the one hand, it has been claimed that during all high-political talks, the EU criticizes Turkey for its setbacks in democracy and rule of law (Interview 6). The human rights delegation of the EP to Turkey has been mentioned as an example in which the EU further stands up for its values by examining the rights situation in Turkey and subsequently voicing criticism if necessary (Interview 4). On the other hand, a MEP highlighted that Turkey has a democratically elected president and a democratic system, which has to be carefully considered. He consequently claimed that it goes beyond EU's remit to constantly criticize the misdoings of a country, particular if it has a democratic basis (Interview 3).

The EU consequently construes its intention to protect and promotion as having a responsibility to call attention when its rights are disrespected and to actively encourage a country to address these setbacks, however only within acceptable limits. This interpretation enabled the EU to revive membership negotiations with Turkey despite current developments, because the EU did not perceive its decision as a violation of their self-imposed responsibility to protect and promote its values. The voicing of their concerns regarding the freedom of the media in Turkey was perceived as sufficient and further criticism was regarded as going beyond EU's remit. The EU could thus claim to have done everything in their responsibility to address the increasing limitation of media freedom in Turkey. The denial of a violation of their aspiration could also serve as an account to justify its decision socially and to EU officials critically questioning the decision.

It has moreover been argued that the promotion and protection of European values in Turkey needs to be pursued in relation to EU cooperation with other countries and the upholding of normative standards within the EU. In the interviews conducted for this study, it has repeatedly been pointed out that the EU also cooperates with other countries such as Saudi Arabia and Colombia, which disregard human rights more than Turkey (Interview 3; 4; 7; 9). It has therefore been claimed that the decision to revitalize negotiations did not differ from cooperation with other ‘undemocratic’ countries and Turkey should not be demonized, since it simply “has problems like others” (Interview 4). In the interviews, it was furthermore referred to the deterioration of human rights standards in EU member states such as in Hungary. It has been pointed out that the EU cannot demand different standards from Turkey than of other countries it is cooperating with or promote standards, which are not even fully respected in all its member states (ibid).

This interpretation of its aspiration to promote and protect its values enables the EU to make excuses for their decision and to justify it as just the same as ‘cooperation with other undemocratic countries’. The Council’s conclusion to re-energize negotiations with Turkey despite the increasing limitation of press freedom in Turkey has therefore not been seen as a violation to their aspiration. This interpretation consequently increased EU’s willingness to re-energize accession talks. It furthermore served as an account, and thus increased EU’s social capacity to revitalize negotiations with Turkey.

There was consequently no consistent interpretation of the aspiration to promote and protect European values, but a set of different interpretations. These interpretations were possible since the aspiration as outlined in Article 3.5 (TEU) is not specified or narrowly defined. The EU could therefore contextualize its aspiration situationally. The aspiration to promote and protect its values therefore became what the decision-makers made out of it. Through these different interpretations the EU was able to free itself from the moral dilemma to re-energize negotiations in connection with cooperation in the refugee crisis at a time when rights are deteriorating in Turkey. These interpretations consequently increased the EU’s willingness to revive negotiations, since it either contributed to the promotion and protection of European values or at least was perceived as not concretely violating EU’s aspiration. Justifications, denials and excuses constituted accounts and thereby increased the Council’s social ability to push through its decision.

2.2.3 Images

This section outlines the different images of Turkey, which accompanied the process of interpretation of EU's intention to promote and protect its values. Furthermore, the effects of these images on EU's willingness to revive membership negotiations with Turkey are analysed.

First, Turkey was seen as the key to solve the refugee crisis. (Interview 1; 2; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9) This image strengthened EU's perception that cooperation with Turkey was the only feasible option. The revitalization of accession negotiations thus constituted a great opportunity in the conception of the EU, since it went hand in hand with cooperation on migration. The decision to re-energize negotiations despite the critical developments in Turkey was therefore not seen as a violation to their aspiration to promote and protect European value, but as a defensible action due to the exceptional circumstances. The image of Turkey as key to solve the refugee crisis consequently increased EU's readiness to re-energize negotiations with Turkey despite the deterioration of values, usually constituting the basis for EU membership.

Second, Turkey was portrayed as a threat to the EU (Interview 2; 5; 7). In one of the interviews an MEP pointed out that Turkey was threatening to open the gates for two million refugees coming to Europe and the EU therefore had no other option than to cooperate with Turkey. The advancing of accession talks seemed inevitable and the normative aspiration was perceived as inapplicable to due to the circumstances. The need to prevent an even greater number of refugees coming to Europe, where the EU was already overburdened with the situation at that time, was dominant in EU's assessment of the situation. Consequently, the image of Turkey as a threat to Europe raised EU's willingness to re-energize negotiations with Turkey because the decision could be seen as a justified exception of their aspiration to protect and promote its values.

Third, the image of Turkey as a benefactor and saviour of the refugees also crystalized in the interviews (Interview 3; 4; 6). On the one hand, the EU acknowledged Turkey's resets in media freedom, but on the other hand, the EU also recognized that Turkey put great effort in the rescue and protection of the refugees. This greatly impacted the interpretation of their aspiration to protect and promote its values, since the deficiencies in freedom of press and freedom of expression could be balanced with the positive efforts of Turkey in the refugee crisis. Therefore, the decision to revitalize accession was not necessary made to contribute the promotion and protection of a free media, but it served the protection and support of refugees what is also in accordance with European values. The image of Turkey as a saviour and

benefactor thus reconfirmed EU's willingness to re-energize negotiations with Turkey, because the focus was not on the deterioration of rights in Turkey, but on the positive aspects of Turkish efforts in the crisis.

Images consequently played a significant role in the interpretation of the EU's aspiration to promote and protect its values. The perceived threats and opportunities connected with Turkey led to the perception that beside the aspiration to protect and promote EU values, revitalization of negotiations was necessary and defensible. Furthermore, the perception of Turkey as a benefactor made the revitalization of negotiations seem even more reasonable and the decision was no longer seen as a violation of their normative intentions. The EU was thus able to solve the moral dilemma between promoting and protecting its values and revitalizing negotiations despite the alarming developments in Turkey.

3. Conclusion

This study examined the decision to re-energize accession talks with Turkey on 29 November 2015 despite the growing limitation of media freedom in Turkey. It was based on the assumption that the EU was caught up in a conflict between promoting and protecting its values and securing Turkish support to address the refugee crisis resulting from the war in Syria. The political psychology perspective as proposed by Shannon served as the analytical lens to examine how the EU was able to solve this conflict. It therefore questioned how the interaction of EU's willingness and social ability to violate its normative aspiration enabled the EU to revitalize negotiations despite the increasing limitation of the freedom of the Turkish media. This study thereby aimed to contribute to the understanding of the role of norms and interest in EU foreign policy and to look at the conditions under which one of them prevails.

This study first highlighted that the revitalization of membership negotiations with Turkey was closely linked to EU-Turkey cooperation in the refugee crisis. The entanglement of both issues made the situational context decisive in 'the process of self-diagnostics' underlying the decision-making process. In the perspective of the EU, the revitalization of membership negotiations seemed necessary and inevitable due to the refugee crisis. It has furthermore been pointed out that Article 3.5 does not specify how the aspiration to uphold and promote European values should be concretely applied and it therefore left great room for interpretation. The aspiration could thus be contextualized and its interpretation adapted to the specific circumstances. Hence, the decision was either not seen as a violation or as a defensible exemption due to the circumstances. Images portraying Turkey as a threat or cooperation as an opportunity supported this perception of the decision as an exemption or justified action. Consequently, the EU was able to free itself from the moral dilemma and was thus willing to advance the Turkish accession process despite the apparent contradiction with its intention to uphold and promote its values.

Despite these results, the paper highlighted that EU's willingness was not consensual. It was partly acknowledged that cooperation on migration should not condition the Turkish accession progress and the decision was therefore not seen as justified. The decision to revitalize negotiations with Turkey was moreover seen as a violation of their aspiration to promote and protect European values by some EU officials, if it was not contextualized. The interviews conducted revealed that there was a divide between the Council, who was mainly responsible for the decision, and the EP. It has been indicated that these differences in

willingness trace back to the self-attributed roles of the EU institutions, in which the EP sees itself as the guardian of European values.

Justifications and excuses served as an account to justify the decision socially. The EU was furthermore able to downplay the significance of its decision by referring to the limited political implications or by directing the attention to the positive consequences like the safety and protection of refugees and its responsibility to support Turkey. The EU was thus socially able to violate its aspiration.

This paper consequently claims that the EU was both willing and able to violate their aspiration to promote and protect its values due to the situational context and the interpretation of its aspiration underlying the decision. It was therefore capable to revitalize membership negotiations with Turkey despite the deterioration of media freedom. The decision to revitalize membership negotiations was thus motivated by the interest to find a solution to the refugee crisis, but permitted by the context of the crisis and the interpretation of the aspiration to uphold and promote European values.

The findings of this study support Phinnemore and Icener's evaluation of the Council's decision on 29 November as a temporary side-lining of EU norms and values, but this study also explains how the violation of the EU's aspiration to protect and promote its values was possible. This study indicates that EU enlargement is not exclusively normative or interest driven, but whether interests or norms prevail depends on the interplay of an actor's willingness and social capacity to violate which is shaped by the situational background of the decision and the interpretation of a norm. This study furthermore bridged the logics of rationalism and constructivism by demonstrating that it is not possible to generalize whether interest or norms are the driving force in EU foreign policy. The findings rather suggest the role of interests and norms in EU foreign policy decisions depends on the conditions underlying a decision. If there is a conflict between norms and interest in EU foreign policy, in order to violate a norm or normative aspiration, it is a necessary condition that the EU perceives the violation as justified or as an exemption and there must be a credible opportunity to justify the decision socially.

The findings of this study are however limited, since they are based on only one case and focus on EU enlargement in particular. Further case studies need to be carried out and different areas of foreign policies have to be examined in order to increase the external validity of the findings and overcome their limitations. The choice of the analytical framework of this paper moreover restricted the analysis to only reflecting upon the situational context and the interpretation of a norm or a normative concern. Further research

should examine which other conditions or factors are decisive in the resolution of a norm-interest conflict and thereby contribute to the debate about the role of norms and interests in EU foreign policy. Despite the limitations of this study, the findings of this paper may in fact be valid for a number of EU foreign policy decisions.

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Figures

Image 1

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