

Thomas STIEGLER (DE), *Reaching for a Calculator or a Mirror? : Why Does the EU Join International Human Rights Treaties? A Case Study* (supervisor Prof. Damro)

While the European Union (EU) recently entered the stage of international human rights treaties, dedicated, systematic assessments of its motivations remain under researched leaving stakeholders (states, institutions, NGOs) and scholars with deficient explanatory models or short-circuited inferences about which conditions and rationales drive EU choices. Seeking to make a contribution to addressing this gap, this thesis assesses a “paradigmatic hard case” (Hathaway) of accession to international human rights treaties (IHRT) to explore and compare factors and underlying motivational causes of the EU’s historic recent accession to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) with those dominating current non-accession to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). To reveal both factors and rationales, my analytical framework locates variables derived from literature within (non-mutually exclusive) motivational profiles pertaining to a “logic of appropriateness” and a “logic of consequentiality”.

Based on public sources and personal interviews, a cross-case analysis suggests that – as a strongly confirmed rational choice actor – among significant factors, internal strength of opposition and external norm-shaping benefits can best account for the variation in EU behavior. Analysis of social and intrinsic factors indicate that despite limited susceptibility to persuasion and a “preference to be seen” outweighing a “preference for esteem”, internalized commitments are observed and interpreted to play significant roles in the EU’s considerations moderately confirming a logic of appropriateness hypothesis.

Taking the question of IHRT accession from a legal to a political domain and from explaining state-based to supranational dynamics, I make the case for more extensive motivational inquiries to gain authentic insights into how the EU views the world not least to improve performance assessments, facilitate predictability by negotiators and institutions seeking inclusion or to provide a grounding for political and ethical appraisals of its evolving activity towards IHRTs and future rites of passage as a global actor.