

Europeanization Through Socialization?

The EU's Interaction With Civil Society Organizations in Armenia

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Abstract: This paper examines the European Union's interaction with civil society organizations in Armenia through the European Neighbourhood Policy as a potential example of normative socialization. Through examining the EU's interaction with domestic NGOs in Armenia, this paper offers an evaluation of the socialization mechanism coupled with a general critique of the EU's democratization policy in relation to civil society promotion. It is argued that while civil society promotion and interaction represents a potentially fruitful avenue for not only democratization but socialization strategies, the EU's utilization of Armenian civil society organizations as a target actor remains too ineffective to generate an environment conducive to the adoption and internalization of EU norms and rules.

Keywords: Armenia, civil society organizations, ENP, EU, Europeanization, socialization

In the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), wherein the EU no longer incentivizes political and economic reform in its neighborhood with the promise of membership, a newer mechanism for normative transformation—known as socialization—has gained momentum in scholarly literature.¹ This paper examines the EU's democratic strategy with Armenia through the perspective of interaction with civil society organizations (CSOs). It is noted that civil society interaction and promotion has gained notable weight in the international community and in EU policies as a viable and fruitful avenue for achieving democratic gains. Furthermore, CSOs are argued to be resourceful targets for socialization initiatives and strategies. Consequently, this paper

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critiques the EU's interaction with domestic NGOs in Armenia in order to assess the EU's socializing ability in furthering Europeanization among domestic CSOs in the transitioning states of the Eastern Neighbourhood. Ultimately, the paper contends that the depth of the EU's interaction with Armenian CSOs has yet to reach a sufficient level at which socialization strategies can produce internalization of norms and roles by the recipient actor.

In examining the EU's socialization mechanism in the ENP by evaluating the EU's interaction with domestic CSOs, this paper will be developed with the following structure: First, it will engage with the literature on the role of civil society in the international context of democratization where a functioning civil society is now judged as an indelible component of successful democratization. Second, the pertinent theoretical literature related to socialization will be evaluated and shaped in order to specifically critique the EU's interaction with Armenian CSOs in the context of the ENP. Third, the place of civil society promotion and engagement in the democratic strategies and policies of the EU will be considered, with specific examination of the EIDHR instrument and the Eastern Partnership (EaP), both of which shape the ENP in relation to civil society engagement. Fourth, it will employ a case study of four domestic Armenian NGOs that intends to illuminate the EU's engagement CSOs on the ground. Lastly, the empirical findings of the case study will be reconnected with the theoretical measurements in order to posit the effectiveness of socialization in the context of the ENP. Although this paper does not claim to offer robust findings related to socialization of CSOs in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood, it intends to offer a snapshot of the role of socialization in the ENP, as well as contribute to the fledgling socialization discourse related to the EU.

Civil Society and Democratization

The term "civil society" can be traced as far back as antiquity, discernible in the works of Aristotle (and others) who used it to describe a "social order of citizenship, one where men (rarely women) regulate their relationships and settle their disputes according to a system of laws; where civility reigns, and citizens take an active part in public life."² However, civil society, until recently, has remained on the periphery of democratization scholarship. Although civil society has received ample philosophical scrutiny over the centuries from notable political philosophers such as Locke, Hegel, Marx and Gramsci, since the late 1980s the concept has become an increasingly important topic in the democratization discourse. This has occurred largely due to the work of intellectual dissidents from the authoritarian countries of Eastern Europe and Latin America, who have identified civil society development as a necessary avenue for breaking authoritarian rule.³ Furthermore, civil society has remained a focal point of the democratic debate with the rise of the "neo-Tocquevillian" school of thought influenced by the work of Robert Putnam,⁴ who argued that democratic government is strengthened when it faces a vigorous civil society.⁵ The contemporary democratic literature generally views civil society as playing a positive and significant role in both democratic transition and democratic consolidation. In relation to democratization, Larry Diamond has argued that civil society serves an important function in mobilizing pressure for political change through creation of organized social groups such as student groups, women's groups, farmers' organizations, NGOs, trade unions, think-tanks and the media.⁶ How such mobilization is manifested varies from state to state and can be rapid, such as in the Philippines, or more measured, as in South Africa. Additionally, civil society is believed to play an important role in the

consolidation of democracy by placing checks on the abuse of state power, preventing authoritarian reversion, advocating wider citizen participation, and enabling public scrutiny of the state. As Thomas Carrothers has argued, through the strengthening of civil society “democratic forms could be transferred into democratic substance.”⁷ However, civil society formation does not necessarily guarantee a successful democratic transition, which has been illustrated by instances of failed civil society promotion throughout the post-Soviet space.⁸ Indeed, a number of studies have identified civil societies as often being fragmented, unorganized, uncooperative and weak.⁹ Philip Nord argued that “civic activism may well be the bedrock of democratic life, but not all civil societies, however dense and vibrant, give birth to democratic polities.”¹⁰ Thus, while a strong civil society can breed democratic practices, it is important to realize that civil societies are neither inherently good nor inherently bad, but rather dependent on the “wider political context.”¹¹

The emergence of civil society promotion as a bastion of international democratic promotion strategies owes to a number of factors emergent in the post-Cold War international setting. Predominantly, this has been facilitated by the rise and adoption among international actors (notably the US) of the neoliberal paradigm embodied by the “Washington Consensus,” which was largely built upon the notion of reducing a states control through privatization of both the economy and social service delivery.¹² Subsequently, under a neoliberal system, the state primarily fulfills the roles of maintaining domestic order and external stability—a complete transformation from the Soviet system based on totalitarian state control. In other words, the democratic strategies pursued by Western donors are built on the philosophy that democracy requires a vibrant and autonomous civil society coupled with an effective state capable of balancing the demands of different interest groups.¹³

In practice, the majority of civil society promotion strategies implemented by international actors have suffered from a narrow scope that has tended to equate civil society solely with NGO formation.¹⁴ Indeed, civil society promotion through the proliferation of NGOs owes to the “forces of political and economic neoliberalism as mediated through financial institutions, states, and international donors,”¹⁵ which has allowed for widespread funding of NGOs since the 1980s—a phenomenon that Armine Ishkanian calls the “NGOization” of civil society.¹⁶ The proliferation of NGOs has undermined civil society development, as many NGOs exist purely for the pursuit of acquiring international funding, often called “capital darlings.”¹⁷ Subsequently, civil society cannot simply be built with NGOs and requires an array of actors and organizations, something for which international actors are beginning to account in their recent democratic and civil society promotion strategies.¹⁸ Thus, two decades of international democratic promotion focused on civil society-strengthening has illustrated that civil society promotion is not a quick fix or a guarantor of democracy; rather, it is a complicated arena that requires long-term investment rather than short-term impulses.

Theoretical Framework: Socialization Through Civil Society Interaction

The burgeoning literature on the socializing effects of international institutions owes to the work of Jeffrey Checkel, Frank Schimmelfennig, Judith Kelley (and others) who have pioneered a framework on how institutions (most notably the EU) utilize socialization in an effort to further policy (and normative) transfer.¹⁹ Explicitly, Checkel identified the “conditions under which, and mechanisms through which, institutions in Europe social-

ize states and state agents, leading them to internalize new roles or group-community norms” as the driving theme of his inquiry.²⁰ In other words, socialization in the context of the EU implies “multiple personal and institutional contacts, which inevitably serve as a mechanism of Europeanization.”²¹ Adhering to a classical definition of socialization, defined as a “process of inducting actors into the norms and rules of a given community,” Checkel argued that in adopting community rules, socialization entails that target actors switch from following a “logic of consequences” (where an actor’s choice is rationally selected based on their calculations of expected consequences) to a “logic of appropriateness” (where actor’s see action as based on identities, obligations, and conceptions of appropriate action).²²

Checkel identified three mechanisms of socialization: *strategic calculation*, *role-playing* and *normative suasion*. *Strategic calculation* stems from rationalist social theory and subsequently, actors are viewed as “instrumentally rational” as they cautiously calculate and seek to capitalize on given interests, adjusting their behavior to the norms and rules favored by the international community.²³ Schimmelfennig added that socialization at its basic level requires effective incentives (typically membership) that make it rationally beneficial for recipient states to internalize EU norms.²⁴ However, strategic calculation as a stand-alone strategy is inadequate to socialize an agent (it is generally utilized in conjunction with conditionality strategies) and cannot facilitate a switch from a logic of consequences to a logic of appropriateness.²⁵ *Role-playing* as a mechanism of socialization has roots in organization theory and cognitive psychology. Actors are viewed as “boundedly rational” and organization environments trigger the creation of roles appropriate to particular settings.²⁶ Anne Morrissey noted that agents learn a specific role by “acquiring the knowledge that enables them to act in accordance with expectations in order to protect their reputation—irrespective of whether they like the role or agree with it.”²⁷ When role-playing occurs, the shift from a logic of consequences to a logic of appropriateness has commenced. Normative suasion, born out of the school of international relations-based constructivists, holds that “communicatively rational social agents do not so much calculate costs and benefits, or seek cues from their environment.”²⁸ Rather, these agents present arguments and try to convince each other that their interests and preferences are open for redefinition. Thus, when normative suasion occurs, actors intentionally and reflectively internalize new understandings of appropriateness. In formulating this framework, Checkel is attempting to connect rational choice theories with social constructivism to form a compact and relevant model for socialization. Therefore, while the three mechanisms originate from different theoretical perspectives, they can be argued to occur incrementally in the process of socialization. As Morrissey noted, “socialization (long-lasting changes) becomes deeper and more stable as one moves from incentive-based (behavioral adaptation) to normative mechanisms (belief alteration).”²⁹

Adaptation of the socialization literature in relation to EU action (until recently) has tended to focus on internal socializing efforts rather than the socialization of external actors. However, in the post-enlargement era, EU external action through the ENP is widely viewed as an active attempt at socializing the external partners of the Eastern Neighbourhood with the normative principles of the EU.³⁰ An obvious limitation with examining socialization is the lack of concrete measures on offer. Nevertheless, Kelley argued that “the tools of socialization under enlargement are also evident in the ENP’s

structure of processes and dialogues between the Commission and ENP countries, the engagement with domestic actors and the use of social influence.”³¹ Kelley cited the emphasis on “soft diplomacy” in the ENP through interaction based on specialized dialogues, action plans, annual progress reports and a general orientation toward close interaction as the major socializing tools utilized by the EU in their new neighborhood.³² Whether the socialization capacity of the ENP can facilitate a switch from a logic of consequences to a logic of appropriateness is hard to assert. Nevertheless, this paper adopts the viewpoint that socialization represents the dominant normative mechanism embodied in the ENP.³³ Furthermore, this paper argues that CSOs represent potentially resourceful agents for socialization given that they are likely to be more receptive to Europeanization than state actors. Indeed, Europeanization strategies are likely to have lower implementation costs for CSOs than state actors, and in many cases resonate more closely with their specific goals and interests (i.e. democracy and human rights). As Kristian Nielsen, Eiki Berg and Gulnara Roll have argued, “civil society can contribute to the sort of milieu shaping that the EU typically favours as external relations strategy” as “the EU seems to be in a position to influence political decisions from below, and become the main partner for organizations working for change.”³⁴

To measure the impact of socialization on CSOs in Armenia, through the ENP, this paper utilizes a number of measurements offered by Schimmelfennig related to socialization from a constructivist viewpoint.³⁵ Subsequently, this paper forgoes examination of the rationalist variables of socialization such as *incentives*, *credibility* and *costs* (largely covering the strategic calculation mechanism). It is argued that the constructivist variables require greater evaluation in relation to Armenia as the rationalist approach relates more closely to older political conditionality strategies of the EU (i.e., enlargement). It is contended that EU interaction with CSOs in Armenia is more connected through generating closer interaction rather than conditionality-based interaction. Schimmelfennig offered three variables related to the effectiveness of socialization (see Table 1): namely *legitimacy*, *identification* and *resonance*.³⁶ *Legitimacy* measures the perception from target actors as to whether the EU itself complies with the norms they promote and whether they promote them on a consistent basis. Effective legitimacy would result in a perception that the EU strongly adheres to their normative principles when interacting in Armenia; ineffective legitimacy would result in a negative perception that the EU is compromising their normative core in favor of other interests.³⁷ *Identification* measures the extent to which the target actor identifies itself with the EU and the promoted norms. Effective identification occurs when there is a compatible ethos and world-view between the actor and the EU; ineffective identification occurs when the target actor has an alternative (or conflicting) ethos and world-view to the EU.³⁸ *Resonance* measures the extent to which the domestic institutional setting of the recipient state matches the normative promotion from the EU. *Effective resonance* occurs when EU rules/norms tie in with existing or traditional domestic rules/institutions; ineffective resonance occurs when EU rules/norms are incompatible with the traditional domestic rules/institutions.³⁹ Essentially, actors that have a positive perception of the EU in relation to legitimacy, identification and resonance are likely to be salient agents for EU socialization (through role-playing and normative suasion). Actors that have a more negative view of the EU are likely to be reduced to interaction based on strategic calculation.

TABLE 1. Measurements of Socialization

Variable	Effective	Ineffective
Legitimacy	Adherence toward the stated or prescribed policy	Conflicting action to the stated or prescribed policy
Identification	Similar ethos and worldview	Opposing ethos and worldview
Resonance	Compatible domestic rules	Contradictory domestic rules

EU Democratic Promotion and Civil Society

The EU as a democratic actor in the international arena—similarly to the US—has dabbled with the ideology of strengthening civil society as a key component of successful democratic transition. However, as opposed to the US, whose initiatives have strongly promoted civil society since the early 1990s, the EU has gradually evolved its democratic policies to incorporate measures related to civil society strengthening and NGO formation.⁴⁰ Indeed, EU interaction with third countries has generally focused on building strong relations with state and elite actors within the recipient countries at the expense of engagement with non-state actors.⁴¹ Furthermore, although since the late 1990s the EU has openly identified civil society as a key area within their democratic strategies, actual allocation of funds toward civil society promotion has remained minuscule as a percentage of total EU assistance and in relation to the US. For instance, when examining the financial assistance given to Belarus between the period 1998 to 2004, although the EU’s total financial contribution to Belarus was more than double the contribution of the United States, their contribution to civil society was more than four times smaller.⁴² Additionally, civil society assistance accounted for approximately 5 percent of total EU assistance while US channelled 50 percent of their total assistance toward civil society.⁴³ Thus, while there is an acknowledgment and some assistance toward civil society promotion by the EU, actual commitment has fallen far shorter than the US.

The EU institution that predominately deals with foreign civil society promotion and investment is the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), which was founded in 1994 for the purpose of promoting human rights, democratization and conflict prevention in the international setting. The EU has utilized the EIDHR framework when dealing with civil societies because of the flexibility of the institution compared to the other more rigid institutions and policies.⁴⁴ The greater flexibility allows for more independence from national governments in recipient countries as the EIDHR can engage with a wider range of actors, including CSOs such as NGOs, labor unions, political foundations and interest groups.⁴⁵ However, the flexibility exhibited with the range of actors the EIDHR can interact with is not replicated with how the EIDHR is administered, as its impact in promoting civil society to date has been widely criticized because it lacks administrative flexibility.⁴⁶ Subsequently, EIDHR initiated policies have endemically suffered from long lead times, ineffective relationships with “capital darling” NGOs, a lack of reform despite criticisms and a constant undermining by host governments.⁴⁷ The ineffectiveness of the EIDHR in promoting civil society, coupled with the complex

and diverse instruments and policies related to democratic promotion, illustrates the wider difficulties of the EU as a democratic actor given that it often struggles to homogeneously project “the European approach.”⁴⁸ That is, the EU lacks a specific democratic vision, resulting in a “scattered and ad hoc approach” that is highlighted glaringly in their civil society promotion strategies.⁴⁹

The EU’s engagement with civil society as a facet of their democratic promotion in the ENP is a double-edged sword. On the one side (particularly evident in the strategy papers), development of civil society is ostensibly enlisted as a major priority of the ENP along with the other key areas of human rights, democratization and economic reform. For instance, the ENP strategy paper identified “support for the development of civil society” as a key component of the shared values the EU aims to uphold in their interaction with third countries.⁵⁰ However, on the other side, explicit civil society strategies are conspicuously missing from the EU–Armenia Action Plan (AP) with greater emphasis placed on electoral reform and anti-corruption measures.⁵¹ As Thijs Rommens observed, the omission of civil society development from the ENP APs illustrated that “the stress put on democratization and civil society empowerment at the highest level of policy making is not being translated into concrete terms.”⁵²

The dearth of explicit policies related to civil society in the Armenian AP does not necessarily represent a total absence of civil society engagement, as since the signing of the AP the EU has overtly attempted to re-engage with CSOs, particularly in the Eastern Neighbourhood of the ENP. Firstly, through the EIDHR instrument, a number of NGOs in Armenia have cooperated closely with EU actors on specific projects ranging from election-based education initiatives, anti-corruption programs, and general monitoring tasks.⁵³ The EIDHR, while operating autonomously to the ENP, should not be treated as an exclusive policy but rather as a reinforcing and complimentary tool for advancing socialization through the ENP, particularly for CSOs.⁵⁴ Additionally, EIDHR civil society initiatives receive funding allocation in the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) strategy paper for 2007–2013 with civil society promotion identified as a sub-priority of the wider “support for strengthening of democratic structures and good governance” priority area.⁵⁵ Secondly, the EU has actively sought to increase the dialogue and interaction between themselves, state actors and CSOs, through the active promotion of closer cooperation through the nascent EaP. An example of the closer cooperation signified by the EaP is the Civil Society Forum (CSF), which aims to “promote contacts among civil society organizations and facilitate their dialogue with public authorities” among the states incorporated in the EaP; in developing the CSF, the EU acknowledged that “ongoing reforms [in ENP East partner countries] require stronger participation of civil society to enhance oversight of public services and strengthen public confidence in them.”⁵⁶ As Michael Emerson and Andrei Yahorau noted, the “Civil Society Forum is obviously an exercise in socialization... between the EaP states and the EU, with the norms and values of the EU as its foundations.”⁵⁷ Despite potential hindrances,⁵⁸ the CSF represents concrete action by the EU in relation to utilizing and strengthening civil societies in ENP partner countries as a way of promoting bottom-up democratization.⁵⁹ Therefore, it is argued that while in the initial stages of the ENP, civil society promotion was conspicuously absent, recent EU-led initiatives (under the umbrella of the ENP) have placed civil society as an increasingly important resource for furthering Europeanization.

Case Study: EU interaction with Armenian CSOs (NGOs)

Civil society development in Armenia, as with the majority of post-Soviet states, has been fractured, undemocratic, and superficial. Ishkanian argued that the “emancipatory vision of civil society envisaged by dissidents and activists” never materialized in Armenia, where civil society development has largely resulted in the proliferation of “professionalized advocacy and service delivery NGOs.”⁶⁰ That is, the NGOization of civil society at the hands of international donors has created an inefficient and indolent civil society in Armenia. Additionally, despite close interaction with Western donors over the last couple of decades, post-Soviet CSOs have continued to draw on older

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knowledge and patterns of behavior intrinsic to the Soviet system. Thus, Western civil society promotion strategies in Armenia have suffered from narrow scope and ethnocentrism (i.e. lack of regard for the domestic political environment in Armenia). As Chris Hann observed, ethnocentric democratization strategies have generated “an abortion of local processes of change” that compromises the true essence of civil society: “the freedom to imagine the world could be different.”⁶¹ This somewhat explains the

fractured nature of civil society in Armenia and the proliferation of capital darlings disguised as NGOs, which in turn has thwarted natural political growth. Subsequently, although the number of Armenian NGOs peaks at around 5,000, as few as 500 actively engage in civic activism.⁶² Such numbers illustrate the potential limitation of utilizing CSOs as target actors for socialization in the post-Soviet setting as the majority represent ineffective and superficial organizations. However, it is argued that there is nevertheless a vibrant and underutilized core of CSOs in these states (witnessed firsthand in Armenia), which the EU could harness as resourceful vehicles for Europeanization.

This paper examines four domestic NGOs as a case study of EU interaction with CSOs in Armenia.⁶³ The four NGOs examined operate in four areas deemed important to democratization: the promotion of free media, transparency and anti-corruption, human rights education and religious tolerance. Analysis of the EU’s interaction with NGOs will be broken up into five sections. The first section examines historical interaction (i.e. prior to the ENP process) between the NGO and EU. The second section covers interaction between the NGO and EU born out of the ENP process. The third section evaluates the likelihood for future interaction between the NGO and EU with consideration of the proposed EaP. The fourth section assesses the nature of the interaction between the NGO and EU outlined in the previous three sections. The last section briefly examines the NGOs relations with other international actors comparatively to their interaction with the EU. The case study is utilized in an effort to identify thematic trends inherent in the EU’s interaction with CSOs; a way of illuminating the nature of socialization-based interaction in the ENP setting.

TABLE 2. EU interaction with the four case studies (NGOs)

Variable	NGO-A	NGO-B	NGO-C	NGO-D
Historical EU cooperation	No	Yes	No	No
ENP cooperation	Monitoring with some critique	Critical with some monitoring	Minor role	None
Future EU cooperation	Likely	Likely	Unlikely	Uncertain
Interaction with other international donors	INGOs, United States, United Kingdom	INGOs, OSCE, United States, United Kingdom	INGOs, Netherlands, CoE, OSCE	Netherlands, CoE, Diaspora

Historical Interaction

Of the four NGOs examined, only one (NGO-B) experienced ties with the EU prior to the beginning of the ENP process. The interview participant for NGO-B recalled two projects undertaken with the EU institution TACIS, related to monitoring the media during the 1996 Armenian presidential elections and an unspecified second project on a broader regional level. Furthermore, the interview participant attributed NGO-B's early growth to the financial support of the EU, as stated, "I can say that as an organization we developed due to this [EU] support, and in that period we also were participating in most of the events in Brussels about NGO involvement and democratization." Of the other three NGOs examined, the lack of interaction with the EU was attributed to a combination of different policy directions and the dominance of the Armenian government over CSOs when participating and interacting with the EU. As the interview participant for NGO-C observed in relation to pursuing closer ties with the EU in the pre-ENP setting, "we didn't feel it was a priority ... as our main goal was human rights ... we felt that there are topics and problems and issues in Armenia that need a bit more attention than for example the ones dealing with EU."

ENP Interaction

All but one of the NGOs examined had some level of cooperation and interaction with the EU since the ENP process began. Interaction with the three NGOs ranged from progressive interaction based on monitoring roles, consolidated interaction based on critique and one-off project cooperation. The increase in interaction between NGO-A and the EU was related to an overlapping of the ENP AP's anti-corruption priority and NGO-A's specialization and expertise in regards to corruption and transparency in Armenia. The interview participant stated that "why we are involved in the ENP is ... because it has eight anti-corruption measures for two-plus years ... [so] we are doing monitoring." While the interview participant for NGO-B recalled that "sometimes we were involved on official level consultations or sometimes not, we never looked at it, we were always providing our ideas, our suggestions." Through a grant offered by the EIDHR instrument, NGO-C, with the cooperation of the EU, produced a handbook related to the electoral code and interpretations of the code. The interview participant noted that the collaborated project was

intended as “a training kit and a guide for the electoral actors, for example proxy observers ... even polling station members and commission members ... it was designed to be multi-functional.” However, apart for the sole project collaboration, NGO-C, similarly to NGO-D, had no real involvement in the ENP process.

Future EU Interaction

Two of the examined NGOs explicitly identified the nascent EaP and resulting CSF initiative as a likely source of future interaction, while a third NGO suggested a possibility of interaction in the future and the last NGO (NGO-C) seemed unlikely to seek future interaction. NGO-A identified the EaP as a potentially positive outcome for civil society as “the EU is trying to be more open to civil society” with formation of the CSF a “logical continuation of the ENP.” As the interview participant conveyed, “with the Civil Society Forum under the Eastern Partnership they are already more open ... I had been invited to the event in Prague [May 2009] and then a meeting in Yerevan where we had the troika, the current, previous, and future European presidencies ... so at least formally they welcome civil society participation in the new program at the very highest level.” Similarly to NGO-A, NGO-B was involved with the EaP and CSF initiative. As the interview participant portrayed, “we have some very modest hopes that with the Eastern Partnership things will change back again [to pre-ENP style of interaction] and there will be some independent channel of cooperation between European Commission and civil society, first of all the civil society forum.” Furthermore, NGO-B believed the CSF would shed light on “what role we will play, whether it will just be attachment to official relations with no separate voice ... this will be important watchdog for monitoring our programs within the policy.” NGO-D, although yet to formally cooperate or interact with the EU, noted that “maybe in the future we will look also for funding from the EU but it is also a little bit hard because ... the funding has conditions ... the input of the local organization ends up being about 20 percent which not everyone can afford.” Additionally, in regards to the prospect of interaction through the proposed EaP, the interview participant remained cautious, stating that “I don’t know whether it will happen, I cannot see whether anything is going to change in that sense.” Future interaction between NGO-C and the EU seemed unlikely due to a belief that their objectives and the objectives of the EU were presently incompatible as “they deal with, for example, post-Soviet issues ... with issues referring to developing countries ... on a very operative level and they need kind of close look and kind of close public control.”

Nature of Interaction

Given that interaction between the EU and CSOs varied in terms of substance, depth, and roles, the nature (or essence) of interaction was sought from the participating NGOs. When asked about the nature of interaction between NGO-A and the EU, the interview participant felt that the EU “recognize us as an actor; they recognize us as an opinion leader... so we are known.” However, NGO-A perceived the EU as only treating the government as equal partners (or stakeholders) and CSOs as secondary or auxiliary actors. As the interview participant portrayed, CSOs are “never taken very seriously ... no serious dialogue and no acceptance of criticism ... it’s just to mark the box and that’s it ... but this is symptomatic not only for ENP, the government in our country is very hostile to civil society participation.” NGO-B argued that “it depends on how the orga-

nization sees itself ... the organizations that are minor or junior partners, they depend on funding so they try to do whatever European Commission likes, in this case of course they cannot be equal, but if organization has its principles and a very strong positions and never conditions its activity ... in this case we have an equal partnership.” However, according to the interview participant, the majority of NGOs in Armenia suffered from uneven partnerships due to financial necessity. Furthermore, there was a perception from NGO-B that the EU strongly underutilized and underestimated the potential role of civil society in Armenia. The interview participant noted that “without responsible and independent NGOs here you cannot assess the situation properly... [but] to secure success and good relations with the big partner [the government] they sometimes sacrifice the other partners [civil society].” The remaining two NGOs gave less fruitful indication of the nature of EU interaction given their limited ties; however both acknowledged a perception of the EU as an ineffective actor with civil society through favouring interaction with the government as well as protecting their salient economic and security goals at the expense of their normative principles. As the interview participant from NGO-D expressed, “they [EU] are investing a lot of money in Armenia but I think they are not following it up in a good way ... especially project support to the government ... I have heard many criticisms from CSOs that it’s not really going toward the point.”

Interaction With Other International Actors

All of the four NGOs examined, albeit at varying levels, experienced greater cooperation and interaction with other non-EU international actors. The typical foreign partners for these organizations were international based NGOs (INGOs) (such as the George Soros-financed Open Society Institute (OSI)), bilateral state partners (the Netherlands, US, and Switzerland, for example) and other IGOs such as the Council of Europe (COE) and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Cooperation and interaction with international actors for the examined NGOs (particularly NGO-A, NGO-B and NGO-C) ranged from collaboration on joint-projects, forum-style interaction and monitoring roles; all generally at a greater depth and level than interaction with the EU born from the ENP process. Lastly, NGO-D, while interacting with some INGOs and bilateral actors, predominately received sponsorship from the Armenian diaspora.

Thematic Trends of EU CSO Engagement

Examining the four NGOs of the case study presents a number of thematic trends identifiable in the relationship between the EU and CSOs in Armenia. Certainly, on the surface, there seems to be an upward trend of interaction between the EU and CSOs since the beginning of the ENP process. Of the four NGOs examined, two experienced increased interaction with the EU during the ENP process, a third NGO maintained their pre-ENP established relations with the EU; the last NGO experienced only a minimal increase. This visible increase reflected the greater propensity of EU interaction in Armenia since the signing of the ENP. Interaction based on monitoring or advisory roles, forum-style settings, and a lesser role of project collaboration constituted the bulk of EU interaction with the NGOs that were examined. However, despite the apparent increase in interaction with CSOs, the nature of EU interaction through the ENP had noticeably shallowed (i.e., became less substantial) from pre-ENP interaction. Four thematic trends

were identified in the case study, which provides a snapshot of EU interaction with Armenian CSOs.

Firstly, an observable theme was that the ENP represented a regression in how the EU treats CSOs. All four NGOs conveyed (albeit at varying degrees) a feeling that the EU treated CSOs as inferior to government actors. The government was seen as an equal partner and subsequently had a far greater role in formulating the AP. Although CSOs cooperated with the EU on the AP, their voice was muzzled comparatively to the government. This contrasted from the pre-ENP interaction perception that CSOs were on an equal plane with government actors.

A second identifiable theme in the case study was the criticism of the EU's democracy and human rights intention in Armenia. The general perception of the examined NGOs was that the EU was prepared to compromise their democracy and human rights policies in favor for their more salient economic and strategic policies. The ENP was adjudged by the key informants as being an unmitigated failure in its normative areas, which severely hindered the credibility of the EU among domestic CSOs.

A third theme delineated in the case study was the stronger levels of interaction between Armenian CSOs and other international actors in comparison to the EU. All four NGOs cooperated closely with international actors, especially INGOs (OSI being the most active), IGOs (predominately OSCE and CoE), and bilateral actors (the US, the Netherlands, and so on). Interaction with other (non-EU) international actors generally occurred on a far greater level than interaction with the EU. Subsequently, the NGOs tended to portray greater confidence in other international actors given the more substantial interaction and their greater equality in the collaboration and decision-making process.

A last theme clearly demarcated in the case study was the potential benefits of the EaP, particularly the CSF initiative. Three of the NGOs were optimistic that the EaP would install a greater role for CSOs in cooperating with the EU; cooperation that was experienced prior to the ENP. The CSF events in Prague and Brussels were identified as positive steps in reintroducing CSOs into the framework of the ENP, at the very least it illustrated an acknowledgment of civil society, which had been noticeably absent during the earlier ENP process. However, skepticism remained as to whether the EaP represented actual concrete intent or merely further rhetoric.

Overall, the case study examining EU interaction with CSOs in Armenia illustrated a tenuous relationship; while the volume of interaction had increased, favoritism toward the government and the economically driven agenda of the ENP, coupled with the greater activity of other international actors, suggested the EU currently interacts inefficiently with civil society. Potential for more thorough interaction through the EaP could perhaps improve the role of CSOs. However, such hope was attached with realism and skepticism by the examined CSOs.

Evaluating Socialization Through EU Interaction With Armenian CSOs

Re-examination of the socialization measurements offered in the second section of this paper, within the context of EU interaction with CSOs, provides further scrutiny related to the socialization aspect of the ENP (see Table 3). Subsequently, the three measurements formulated by Schimmelfennig are assessed here: namely legitimacy, identification, and resonance.⁶⁴

TABLE 3. Measurements of Socialization vis-à-vis EU interaction with CSOs

Variable	Case study	Effective/ineffective
Legitimacy	Perceived gap between normative core and concrete action	Ineffective
Identification	Strong identification with EU norms; small identification with the EU as an institution	Neutral
Resonance	Conflict between EU norms/policies and domestic institutional design of Armenian civil society	Ineffective

Legitimacy

It was clearly illustrated in the case studies that among the NGOs examined, the EU was perceived poorly in relation to legitimacy. The examined NGOs widely believed that the EU consistently compromised the normative aspects of their policy in Armenia in favor for economic and strategic goals. Furthermore, the majority of NGO respondents argued that the EU did not care about democracy or human rights in Armenia; the strong identification of the EU with normative values was judged as purely rhetorical, with little observable concrete action. An example conveyed in the interviews was the failure of the EU to condemn the Armenian government's actions in the March 1 riots, which greatly hampered the EU's legitimacy among Armenian CSOs.⁶⁵ Therefore, it is argued that the EU, from the perspective of Armenian CSOs, suffered from illegitimacy as there was an observable gap between their normative projection and their concrete action on the ground.

Identification

The examined NGOs illustrated a strong identification among CSOs in Armenia with the normative values that the EU projects. All of the NGOs identified robustly with democracy and human rights, thus exhibiting a comparative world-view and ethos with the EU. Conversely, a number of the NGOs did not identify strongly with the EU as an institution or as a positive vehicle for democracy and human rights in Armenia. However, membership in the EU was widely judged by the NGOs as a potential positive outcome of EU interaction, although realistically this was seen as a long-term aspiration. Ultimately, it is argued that CSOs in Armenia strongly identified with the normative values of the EU (i.e., democracy and human rights) rather than with the EU institution itself. Thus the EU experienced both positive and negative identification among CSOs in Armenia.

Resonance

In relation to the resonance between the normative approach of the EU and the domestic institutional design of Armenia's civil society, the case study illustrated, on the whole, ineffective resonance. It was observed that the Armenian government strongly constrained and regulated CSOs in Armenia. This affected the ability of CSOs to effectively interact with the EU (on a level playing field) as well as adopt and internalize the normative aspects of EU policy. Thus, the lack of autonomy of the Armenian civil society hindered

the effectiveness of the EU's normative policies related to democratization and human rights. Additionally, the EU's interaction and policies aimed toward civil society suffered from ethnocentrism as the EU did not adequately account for the domestic civil society setting in Armenia. Overall, it is argued that the EU's policies and norms suffered from ineffective resonance with Armenian CSOs.

Summary

Evaluation of the three measurements for a viable environment for undertaking socialization illustrated that the EU's interaction with Armenian CSOs has yet to reach an effective setting for productive socialization. Indeed, the EU failed to score effectively with either the legitimacy and resonance measurements, while achieving moderate success with regards to identification. In relation to legitimacy, Armenian CSOs strongly viewed the EU as an illegitimate actor given the perceived favouritism of their economic and strategic goals at the expense of their normative values. In terms of identification, Armenian CSOs identified strongly with the normative core of the EU (namely democracy and human rights) but not with the EU as an institution. Lastly, with regards to resonance, it was argued that the EU's norms and policies in Armenia did not effectively resonate with the domestic setting; Armenian civil society was hindered by a lack of autonomy while EU policies suffered from ethnocentrism. Subsequently, the EU currently lacks the ability to utilize socialization-based strategies when interacting with Armenian CSOs as their relationship is not built on effective legitimacy, identification and resonance, but rather on widespread distrust and skepticism. Therefore, Armenian CSOs remain strategically calculated toward the EU; interaction on the whole tends to occur when it is strategically beneficial to the recipient actor. Role-playing perhaps occurs between the EU and the NGOs that they more closely interact with (i.e., NGO-A and NGO-B); however, whether internalization of EU norms results from such role-playing is questionable. In terms of normative suasion, the lack of a suitable environment coupled with the shallowness of EU interaction with CSOs has resulted in no observable internalization of EU norms or policies in the examined case studies. However, given the long-term scope of socialization strategies and the likely deepening of interaction between the EU and Armenian CSOs through the EaP, one can hypothesize socialization becoming more apparent in future interaction.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the phenomenon of the EU's interaction with domestic CSOs in light of the scholarship on socialization. This dynamic has been explored in the context of democratization in Armenia: a recipient state of the ENP and a target actor for Europeanization. It has been argued through engagement with scholarly literature that civil society promotion and engagement represented a viable and fruitful avenue for furthering democratization: as civil society can mobilize pressure for political change as well as check state abuses of power. Subsequently, it has been posited that CSOs also represented viable targets for socialization; that is the transfer of norms and rules through generating multiple personal and institutional contacts through fostering greater level and depth of interaction. A theoretical framework of socialization, as identified in the literature, was outlined; covering the pertinent mechanisms of socialization offered by Checkel (strategic calculation, role-playing and normative suasion) and employing three measurement variables of socialization offered by Schimmelfennig (stemming from the constructivist angle of socialization, i.e.

role-playing and normative suasion): legitimacy, identification and resonance. In order to test and illuminate the phenomenological and theoretical aspects of this paper, a case study examining the interaction between the EU and four domestic NGOs in Armenia was undertaken. Four thematic trends were identified in the case study. Firstly, since inauguration of the ENP, the EU had relegated CSOs to a secondary actor behind the government. Secondly, the EU was perceived as often comprising their democratic goals in favor for more salient economic goals. Thirdly, comparatively to other international actors involved in civil society promotion, the level of interaction between Armenian CSOs and the EU occurred on a far lesser level. Lastly, CSOs were optimistic that the EaP would allocate a greater role for civil society in implementing EU and ENP policies. Reconnection of the empirical findings with the theoretical measurements aimed to provide evaluation of the effectiveness of the EU's socialization mechanism in the ENP. It was ascertained that on the evidence of the four NGOs, the EU suffered from inadequate legitimacy and resonance among the NGOs and from partially-effective identification. Consequently, it was argued that the current environment in which EU and CSOs interacted was not conducive to the adoption or internalization of EU norms. Therefore, CSOs remained strategically calculated toward the EU; choosing to interact when it suited them rather than actively embracing role-playing or exhibiting normative suasion. However, this paper contends that utilization of socialization-based strategies likely represents the most fruitful avenue for EU democratic facilitation in the post-enlargement era where conditionality is no longer a viable strategy due to the removal of the incentive of EU membership. Ultimately, the EU needs to persevere with generating an environment with domestic actors (both state and non-state) in the ENP recipient states that are suitable for undertaking socialization. Subsequently, the EU needs to invest in fostering higher levels of interaction based on joint-project collaborations, forum-style cooperation and interaction; attributing greater roles and weight to CSOs in policy formation and implementation, and providing a greater presence on the ground in these states. Furthermore, it is apparent that the EU should embrace and invest more trust in CSOs; CSOs represent an important catalyst in furthering democratization movements in transitioning states as they provide rich avenues for grassroots initiatives.

NOTES

1. Traditionally, the EU transferred their normative principles, such as democracy, through the tool of enlargement whereby the incentive of membership in the EU was conditioned with the political and economic reform prescribed in the Copenhagen Criteria (Pridham, 2007). However, the EU states that the ENP is an endeavour at creating a 'ring of friends' in their immediate neighbourhood through extending the benefits of economic and political cooperation. Essentially, the new neighbouring countries of the EU (in two broad regions: South Mediterranean and Eastern Neighbourhood) have been offered 'everything but institutions' as membership has been explicitly ruled out of the ENP.

2. Krishan Kumar, "Civil Society: An Inquiry into the Usefulness of an Historical Term," *The British Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 3 (1993): 377.

3. Armine Ishkanian, *Democracy Building and Civil Society in Post-Soviet Armenia* (London: Routledge, 2008): 11.

4. Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002): 42.

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7. Thomas Carrothers, “The End of the Transition Paradigm,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 1 (2002): 7.

8. Ishkanian. and Antoaneta Mateeva, “Exporting Civil Society: The Post-Communist Experience” *Problems of Post-Communism* 55, no. 2 (2008): 3–13.

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11. Sheri Berman, “Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic,” *World Politics* 49, no.3 (1997): 426–427; Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore, “Cities and Geography Of ‘Actually Existing Neoliberalism,’” in *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*, ed. Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002): 3.

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13. Manal A. Jamal, “Democracy Promotion, Civil Society Building, and the Primacy of Politics,” *Comparative Political Studies* 20, no. 10 (2010).

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15. Ishkanian, 18.

16. *Ibid.*, 27.

17. Fred Powell, “Civil Society, Social Policy and Participatory Democracy: Past, Present and Future,” *Social Policy and Society* 8, no. 1 (2009): 49–58.

18. Jeffrey T Checkel, “International Institutions and Socialization in Europe: Introduction and Framework,” *International Organization* 59, Fall (2005); Frank Schimmelfennig, Stefan Engert, and Heiko Knobel, *International Socialization in Europe: European Organizations, Political Conditionality and Democratic Change* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); and Judith Kelley, “New Wine in Old Wineskins: Promoting Political Reforms through the European Neighbourhood Policy,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 44, no. 1 (2006): 29–55.

19. Checkel, 802.

20. Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, “EU Enlargement and Democracy Progress,” in *Democratisation in the European Neighbourhood*, ed. Michael Emerson (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2006): 15.

21. Checkel, 804.

22. *Ibid.*, 804–807.

23. Frank Schimmelfennig, “Strategic Calculation and International Socialization: Membership Incentives, Party Constellations, and Sustained Compliance in Central and Eastern Europe,” *International Organization* 59, Fall (2005): 832.

24. Checkel.

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26. Anne Haglund Morrissey, “EU Value Promotion and the European Neighborhood Policy,” *Journal of Southeastern Europe* 31–32 (2007): 6.

27. Checkel, 812.

28. Morrissey, 6.

29. Schimmelfennig; Nelli Babayan, “European Neighbourhood Policy in Armenia: On the road to failure or success?,” *CEU Political Science Journal* 4, no. 3 (2009): 358–388; Gwendolyn Sasse, “The ENP Process and the EU’s Eastern Neighbours: Conditionality-Lite, Socialisation and Procedural Entrapment,” in *The Study of the European Neighbourhood Policy: Methodologi-*

cal, Theoretical, Empirical Challenges (Nottingham, UK: University of Nottingham, 2007) and Iryna Solonenko, “The EU’s ‘Transformative Power’ Beyond Enlargement: The Case of Ukraine’s Democratisation,” in *European Research Working Paper Series* (Birmingham, UK: European Research Institute, 2007).

30. Kelley, 34.

31. *Ibid.*, 40.

32. Conditionality, although identifiable in the ENP, is argued to represent an auxiliary and somewhat ineffective strategy without the underpinning incentive of EU membership.

33. Kristian Nielsen, Eiko Berg and Gulnara Roll, “Undiscovered avenues? Estonian civil society organisations as agents of Europeanisation,” *TRAMES* 13 no. 3 (2009): 255.

34. Schimmelfennig et al. (2006).

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*

37. Jeffrey Checkel, “Why Comply? Social Learning and European Identity Change,” *International Organization* 55, no. 3 (2001): 563.

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42. *Ibid.*

43. Ishkanian, 27.

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45. *Ibid.*

46. Esther Barbe and Elisabeth Johansson-Nogues, “The EU as a Modest ‘Force for Good’: The European Neighbourhood Policy,” *International Affairs* 84, no. 1 (2008): 81–96.

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53. Varya Axyonova, “European Democracy Promotion in Difficult Environments: the case of Central Asia,” Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics Working Paper No.5 (2011) and Kristina Kausch, “Morocco: A Flawed Response,” in *The European Union and Democracy Promotion: A Critical Global Assessment*, Richard Youngs, ed. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

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60. Chris M Hann, “In the Church of Civil Society,” in *Exploring Civil Society: Political and Cultural Context*, David Lewis, Hakan Seckinelgin and Marlies Glasius, eds. (London: Routledge, 2004).

61. USAID, *The 2009 Sustainability Index* (Armenia: USAID, 2010).

62. Primary fieldwork was undertaken in Armenia in September 2009, all un-cited quotations in this section are taken from the interviews conducted with key informants from the participating NGOs. The NGOs were sourced through meeting with the European Commission delegation to Armenia in Yerevan and through contacts made while on the ground in Armenia. It is acknowledged that four NGOs represents a small sample size, however the four examined represent active Armenian CSOs with strong activism and output. Ultimately, the results cannot be claimed to be representative but rather present a snap-shot of the phenomenon and a starting point for further research.

63. Schimmelfennig et al. (2006).

64. On May 1, 2008, Armenia experience widespread protests, four days after the 2008 presidential election, which was hampered by accusations of electoral violations, eight people died in protests. This led to imposition of martial law by the government.

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