EPS {European Politics and Society

European Politics and Society:
Václav Havel Joint Master Programme

Charles University

Master's Thesis

2021   **Norayr Mirakyan**

European Politics and Society:
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EU Cultural Relations with Partner Countries:

Case Study of Armenia

Master's Thesis

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Year of the defense: **2021**

Declaration

1 I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.

2 I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.

3 I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

Prague, 31st July 2021   Norayr Mirakyan

Bibliographic reference

Mirakyan, N. (2021). *EU Cultural Relations with Partner Countries: Case Study of Armenia* **[Master's Thesis]. Supervisor: Mgr. Eliška Tomalová, Ph.D. Charles University.**

Length of the thesis: 120,217 characters, 18105 words without abstract and appendices.

Abstract

International cultural relations are a key area in the EU external relations and, thus, have gained salience in recent research. There is a growing body of constructivist literature that recognizes the importance of this area. However, there is still uncertainty in the literature regarding the views and attitudes of the partner countries toward the international cultural relations policy of the EU. In this vein, the current thesis project studies the sources and trajectory of the development of cultural relations between the EU and Armenia are from 2014 to 2020. Furthermore, the suitability of the international relations theory of liberalism is revisited in the light of cultural relations with the partner countries when these countries have concluded politico-economic agreements, and it is namely the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in the case of Armenia. The conceptions of cultural relations are critically analyzed in relation to the theories of international relations in order to develop a normative hypothesis while excluding common conceptual fallacies and unintentional assumptions. The normative hypothesis, formulated through the process of critical analysis, is deductively applied to the case study of Armenia to help us develop a detailed and in-depth understanding of the realities of international cultural relations with Europe within the specified time frame. The conclusive argument of the current project is that the EU-Armenia cultural relations, initially aspired by cultural sector actors, reached institutionalization in the creative sector and need to be nurtured with the shared norms and values from historical identity for better resilience.

Keywords

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my profound sense of gratitude toward my professor and supervisor Dr. Eliška Tomalová for her endless patience and priceless knowledge that she gave me as well as her belief in me. I would also like to extend my thanks to all my professors in the EPS programme for the great learning experience during the last two years.

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Abbreviations

AA	Association Agreement
CEPA	Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Common Security Treaty Organization
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEU	same as the EAEU, Eurasian Economic Union
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
EU	European Union
ICR	International Cultural Relations
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OIF	Organisation internationale de la Francophonie
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

Introduction

The study of international cultural relations has been complicated due to the divergence between the theories of liberalism and constructivism in the scholarly literature. It is crucial to employ the right theory of international relation in order to properly review the EU policy of culture in external relations. In this vein, the theory of liberalism as well as its derivatives were evaluated in the context of Europe. The literature review has revealed that the plurality of goals of cultural relations is one of the main reasons leading scholars toward liberalist school and, in particular, toward Joseph Nye's soft power. These discourses on the role of culture in the EU foreign policy propose multiple goals to be pursued among which the EU's aspiration of "global actorness" lead to interpretations from this stance. It has been observed these type of aspirations were communicated at the same time when also statements regarding cultural benefits for the creative sector were highlighted. The opponents of the international cultural relations have argued that the EU attempts to gain influence while justifying their actions on the grounds of culture and the goods such as 'mutual understanding' brought by culture. The plurality of objectives was often interpreted as contradictions in the EU policy discourses by them. In other words, these arguments have been used to revitalize the debates on "capability-expectations gap" in the area of international cultural relations of the EU.

Following on the problematization of the topic, it has been observed that with the introduction of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) soft power appeared in the EU foreign policy discourses as a buzzword. Arguably, soft power has an inspirational impact on the ENP if not foundational. After the final wave of enlargement, there was a need to reinvent how the EU will interact with its new neighbors when they would not be shut behind "iron curtain" unlike in the near past. Hence, the major change of the ENP, in contrast to the former enlargement waves, is the reliance on attractiveness of the ENP. The will and discretion of the partner countries gained an important role in such a policy to adopt the EU norms. The practice has shown, however, that the EU's foreign policy reserved a special role and attached enough significance to the role for culture. The Preparatory Action (2014) on "Cultural in External Relations" was a turning point for the foreign policy, as a deliberative space was created for the discourses of international cultural relation. The current study contributes to our understanding of international cultural relation in relation to the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries following the Preparatory Action (2014).

In respect to the purpose and contribution of the current thesis, the research question and hypothesis are presented below.

Research Question: What are the sources and trajectory of development of cultural relations between the EU and Armenia from 2014 to 2020?

Hypothesis: Initially aspired by cultural sector actors, the EU-Armenia cultural relations have reached institutionalization in the creative sector and need to be nurtured with the shared norms and values from historical identity for better resilience.

The thesis project is composed of two main parts. The Literature Review comprises the first part. The Literature Review starts with the problem statement where we identify the research gap in the context of academic research. Then, the detailed discussion of theoretical frameworks follows. The conceptions of international cultural relations are reviewed in relation to the theories of international relations in order to exclude conceptual fallacies and unintentional assumptions by some authors. The study also adopts interdisciplinary approach while borrowing theories and concepts from Cultural Studies (i.e. conception regarding cultural products), Economics (i.e. rivalrousness and excludability), Game Theory (i.e. zero-sum and pisitive-sum games) among others. By the end of the chapter a normative hypothesis is formulated with the help of critical analysis of relevant theories.

The Empirical Analysis comprises the second part of the thesis. The section starts with the discussion of methods and data sources. The methodological justification is also provided for the case and time-frame selection. The contextual background for the empirical analysis is portrayed next. This portrayal includes the European context, South Caucasus as a political region, and other global and local contexts (the exogenous factors from these contexts are believed affect the EU-Armenia relations). Finally, the paper proceeds to the actual detail and in depth analysis of the case with the application of theoretical framework. The empirical analysis produces findings from a single case study which are not meant to be representative of any other case. The focus of the study is the case of Armenia in its own right, and it is not meant to be context for hypothesis testing, or inductive production of new hypothesis. On the contrary, the normative hypothesis developed through critical analysis of international relations theoris is deductively applied to the case to help us understand the realities of the case of Armenia between the specified time-frame. The thesis finishes with the section of Conclusions where we zoom out repaint the holistic picture and connect to our final statements.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Problem Statement

Cultural relations have gained salience and are a key area in the EU external relations. There is a growing body of literature that recognizes the importance of this area and has embarked on the journey of studying it. The field poses conceptual-empirical challenges to its students to interpret international cultural relations led by the EU. Among many issues, the international relations theory of liberalism is being questioned whether it is the right conceptual basis. It is noteworthy, the theories of liberalism were defining feature of forming the EU foreign policy. The adoption of a right school of thought possibly is a detrimental for the solid interpretation and analysis of international cultural relations in the European context. A brief recourse to resent research on the role of cultural in foreign policy would be enlightening and bring us a step closer to the research gap to be addressed in the current thesis project. Arguably, one of the reasons contributing to the challenges is the plurality of goals of cultural relations. These narratives on culture in the EU policy and elite discourses also propose multiple goals to be pursued with the partner countries through their cooperation. In a recent observation, McDonald (2020) has suggested that there is no overarching semantic field for the narratives on cultural relations. The evidence – McDonald (2020) has used to support his argument – juxtaposes the possible roles (prescribed by the official Brussels; cf. European Commission, 2016; Federica Mogherini, 2016) that culture can play. The contradiction is whether culture serves as an arts advocacy technique as seen in deliberations like "culture helps to promote dialogue and mutual understanding," or a utility with a convertible prospects for "economic and social development." Ultimately, both of these statements are reflected among the objectives the EU new strategy on culture in its international relations (European Commission, 2017). Beyond the strategy, they have been reflected in the Eastern Partnership factsheets on cultural relations for each of the partner countries. While McDonald (2020) has observed the contradiction in EU policy discourses, he has argued that 'they practice Cultural Diplomacy but claim to practice Cultural Relations.' The term of cultural diplomacy has been used and, consequently, linked to the soft power theory in the literature (e.g. Cull, 2009; Nye, 2004). Thus, McDonald (2020) has suggested that the EU is in fact practicing traditional liberal foreign policy with soft power goals. He has argued that the EU attempts to gain influence while justifying their actions on the grounds of culture and the goods such as 'mutual understanding' brought by culture. In a broader perspective, Tulmets (2007) has discussed emergence of soft power as a buzzword in the

EU foreign policy discourses a decade ago in the 2010s. It is suggested that the concepts of soft power theory were introduced alongside the launch of European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) as the EU was moving forward with the fifth enlargement wave in 2004. There was a need to reinvent how the EU will interact with its new neighbors when they would not be shut behind iron curtain unlike in the past (Tulmets, 2007). Hence, the EU made an attempt to position itself as a non-coercive and civilian polity. Tulmets (2007) has highlighted that the major development of the ENP, in contrast to the former enlargement waves, is the reliance on attractiveness of the ENP and, as a result, the will and discretion of the partner countries are of great significance to adopt the EU norms and enrich the shared set of values. Notably, it has been warned about the possibility of raising concerns regarding the 'capacity-expectations gap' unless the EU addresses its internal consistency issues in respect to the circulation of the soft power theory (Tulmets, 2007). The observations on the cultural in foreign relations and its problematization by McDonald (2020) is, in fact, revitalization of the exactly same exceptions-capacity gap debate and reassessment of the EU's culture in foreign relations through the prism of soft power theory. Hill (1993) has introduced the concept of 'capability-expectations gap' to describe disparty between the EU's "ability to agree, its resources, and the instruments at its disposal", and the heightened expectations of both member states and partner countries. There have been empirical studies conducted that evaluate the capabilities part of the issue (Tulmets, 2007; cf. Higgot, 2017; Higgot, 2020; McDonald, 2020). Furthermore, the issues facing internal publics of the EU have been studied to certain degree (cf. Higgot, 2017; Higgot, 2020).

There is still uncertainty in literature, however, regarding the views and attitudes of the partner countries toward their international cultural relations. Furthermore, the suitability of the international relations theory of liberalism remains unclear for research in relation to the partner countries given that these countries have concluded politico-economic agreements stipulating varying levels of partnership. Due to the theoretical and methodological considerations (discussed under Research Design in detail) this research will be preoccupied with the case study of Armenia.

While it is obvious that the EU foreign policy toward the neighborhood countries can be mainly characterized by solidarity, it is yet uncertain what the prospect are for cultural relations. An underlying theoretical issue is what explains the nature of culture in the EU foreign relations: Is neoliberalism, post-liberalism, or constructivism at stake? Finally, it needs to be analyzed in the context of the Preparatory Action (2014) on the role of culture in the EU's external relations. Hence, the current study attempts to answer the

following research question. What are the sources and trajectory of development of cultural relations between the EU and Armenia from 2014 to 2020?

1.2. *Conceptual Basis and Their Implications*

The literature on the role of cultural has been discussed from the perspective of the different contending theories of international relations. The main contending schools of thought are liberalism and constructivism (some scholars prefer idealism). Moreover, research has discussed the possible development of a post-liberal world order besides the well established theories of liberalism and constructivism. The theory of post-liberalism appears to be inspired by the older theory of multi-order world. Despite their basic conceptual similarity, that is the Western liberalism faces emerging challengers (i.e. China, Russia among other new actors), post-liberalism does not regard the challengers as sustainable competitors or, even more so, as alternatives for the West. However, the theory of post-liberalism suggests that liberal world order will only transform and become a more diluted due to their geo-political as well as geo-economic impact.

While it is true that the field has benefited from the wealth of theories, complications of theoretical and practical origin have surfaced due to the semantic broadening of the term of cultural diplomacy. As a result of the long-standing academic debates of the role of culture from the viewpoint of varying schools of thought, the meaning of the term of cultural diplomacy has expanded to denote "any practice that is related to purposeful cultural cooperation between nations or groups of nations" (Isar, 2015). In a more recent study, McDonald (2020) has restated the same sentiment claiming that the field has no "a stable definition [nor] terminology." He has further argued that the field of "cultural relations" in the context of European foreign policy crosses through wide range of concepts – mainly through soft power, public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and, finally, international cultural relations (McDonald, 2020). Consequently, the debate one exceptions-capacities gap in various policy areas of the EU have become a recurrent topic (cf. Tulmets, 2007; McDonald, 2020). A constructive critique should establish a feedback loop between policy analysts and the EU policymakers based on shared terms and conceptions. However, one needs to question where the expectations come from and whether they are justified. Most research on cultural relations have been carried out with certain conceptual basis in mind and, subsequently, have set their expectations of the practice of the EU foreign relations policies. The conceptual fallacy in such abstractions is the presumption that the ideals of the EU foreign policy goals would be the same as in any theory pertaining to the field of public diplomacy and, specifically, to the theory of soft

power. For instance, McDonald (2020) has argued that the coordination of the EU international cultural relations with that of its member states at the least, and even more so reaching an agreement to pull their individual cultural diplomacy programs together can be a serious challenge. It is obvious that culture is national and local prerogative and, naturally, there is no universal culture characterizing Europe. However, the constructivists have a differing view of the issue because they hold that common identity can be 'constructed' as any other social phenomenon. For instance, Davis Cross and her colleagues (2013) invite the reader to consider a hypothetical example of Hungarian musicians visiting to other countries and collaborating with locals to while creating shared narratives. They have argued that through such engagements (or trans-national socialization) the creation of shared culture and the European identity is possible. In other words, it is currently an imperative to review relevant theories and redefine the concepts of cultural diplomacy and cultural relations in the context of European cultural relations with the Eastern Partnership countries.

1.3. *Nexus between Cultural Diplomacy and Cultural Relations*

Cull (2009) has conducted a systematic review of the field of public diplomacy, where the idea of differentiating between the concepts of "cultural diplomacy" and "cultural relations" was first introduced to the academic debate. Similarly, Rivera (2015) has adopted the idea of differentiating between the terms in his study. They have argued that cultural diplomacy describes practices of engagement by foreign ministries or by their representations abroad (e.g. embassies) as opposed purely societal cultural exchanges and engagement defined as cultural relations (Cull, 2009; Rivera, 2015). Furthermore, Cull (2009) has positioned cultural diplomacy taxonomically as subordinate to public diplomacy. This proposal presupposes cultural diplomacy to be a "function", or an instrument, of building influence. Hence, he defines cultural diplomacy as "an actor's attempt to manage the international environment through making its cultural resources and achievements known overseas and/or facilitating cultural transmission abroad" (Cull, 2009). A relationship to Joseph Nye's Soft Power theory can be identified in the review by Cull (2009). The theory of soft power, in its own right, builds on the international relations theory of neoliberalism (cf. Keohane & Nye, 1989). The focus of neoliberalism is states and, thus, soft power theory offers a perspective where the entrepreneur state would be regarded as the main beneficiary of cultural diplomacy in the longer-term. The concept of soft power is widely accept to refer to 'the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment' (Nye, 2004).

Cultural diplomacy has been regarded as an instrument from the public diplomacy tool-set to achieve nation-states' goals in a sense reminiscent that of nation-branding theories besides soft power theory among scholars of this thread (cf. Cull, 2009; Cull, 2019; Gregory, 2011; Nye 2004; Zamorano, 2016; e.g. Gienow-Hect 2010 a strong proponent of "cultural diplomacy as an instrument" theories). This approach can be traced back to the American diplomat Arndt (2006) who has written that cultural relations develop "naturally and organically – without government intervention." Along the same lines of argument, cultural diplomacy constitutes practices that are formed and curated by official diplomatic channels (Arndt, 2006). However, we can observe that this distinction has been already lost in the systematic review of public diplomacy by Cull (2009). While Arndt (2006) highlights the role of entrepreneur and purposeful nature of practices to draw the division line, Cull (2009) considers the variable of recipient. It is noteworthy that both distinctions focus on the agents but with a significant difference in principle. While it may appear that the state practicing cultural diplomacy is the main beneficiary, it has to be emphasized that it is not the only beneficiary. Neoliberalism holds that mutual gains (or positive-sum outcomes) are possible through cooperation between states. Furthermore, Cull (2009) has deviated from strict adherence of neoliberalism and has made contribution by arguing that public diplomacy has gained transnational significance enabling individuals, civil society representatives and other private sector stakeholders to benefit from cultural diplomacy. Such a view would be more easily accepted in the emerging literature of hypothetical post-liberal world order (cf. Higgot, 2020). In the similar vein, Isar (2015) has asserted that cultural diplomacy transformed into a form of "intercultural dialogue." Isar (2015) has noted that official diplomacy practitioners have been delegating cultural diplomacy activities to cultural and educational institutions – supposedly operating without dependence on the national governments – in order to distance public diplomacy practices from propaganda. In this respect, Rivera (2015) has studied the case of British Council and the shift to using the term of cultural relations as opposed to cultural diplomacy. In a broader perspective, the tendency of distancing official diplomatic corps from the cultural relations has a long history with its origins in the USA, that has expanded to the European countries and beyond (Isar, 2015). Besides the activities of cultural relations, activities such as nation branding and promotion from public diplomacy domain were assigned to governmental departments and institutions other than foreign ministries. Even though these real world developments appear to hinder to clearly draw the differences between the terms, the current thesis project aims to sort any disagreement with

established scholarly literature and to develop a solid basis for empirical analysis of the case of Armenia.

International Relations Theory	Liberalism	Constructivism
Main Theoretical Proposition	Economics and politics are prioritized over the other considerations	Foreign policy and political role are shaped by the elite perceptions, norms and values, and historical identity
Main Units of Analysis	States	Individuals
Main Instruments	International institutions, economic interdependence, promotion of democracy	Construction of common narratives based on shared norms
Main Role of Cultural Policy	Cultural influence	Cultural relations
Remapping of Concepts to Theories	Cultural diplomacy	International Cultural relations

Table 1*: Cultural policy and terminology mapping to the theories of international relation.*

Isar (2015) has argued for attaching a greater importance and conceptual independence to international cultural relations. He has argued for "idealistic cultural diplomacy" as opposed to instrumentalist approaches or, as he has termed them, "expedient" theories of cultural diplomacy (Table 1 above has been composed to assist in mapping and relating the concept to their respective theories). He observes that international cultural relations have gained salience in the practices and discourses at the EU level and, yet, rarely is it referred as such but as "culture in external relations." His perspective of international cultural relations speaks to and is coherent with the theory of constructivism (or idealism). The term of "cultural diplomacy" has been used by Isar (2015) to denote the concept of international cultural relations in the sense indicated in the current paper. In other words, international cultural relations can be viewed as a model for evaluating the practices from the point of view of constructivism.

Isar (2015) has argued that the meaning of cultural diplomacy has been saturated while it is being used in various sectors by the government branches and has been effectively subjugated to public diplomacy. In other words, it is suggested to remap the term of cultural diplomacy to refer to international cultural relations. As a matter of fact, Isar has been working with Brussels on the new cultural relations strategy in the mid-

2010s. Despite the difference in the choice of terms, his contributions as scholar working for the EU policy can shed light on the envisaged trajectory of the EU international cultural relations. Moreover, Isar (2015) has contributed to the matter in question from scholarly perspective because he was the proponent of the idealist theory or, as we prefer calling it, the constructivism theory. To conclude Isar's (2015) proposition, it would be fair to claim that international cultural relations is a paradigm that find the culture sector valuable for its own sake, and allows interactions take place at the level of individuals, civic society actors as well as other stakeholders such as cultural managers, producers and consumers.

The meaning of the term of cultural diplomacy has often been used in broader sense as well as to refer to international cultural relations. Isar (2015) has noted that the term has not simply changed its meaning in recent times due to the use in many areas, but has drifted away from its historical meaning. In late 19th century France, the term of cultural diplomacy was used to refer to 'the processes occurring when diplomats serving national governments took recourse to cultural exchanges and flows or sought to channel them for the advancement of their perceived national interests' (Isar, 2015). Cultural diplomacy in the current sense is relatable and coherent with the neoliberal theory. The division line between the meanings of these two terms would, then hinge on the intention of engagement (cf. Davis and colleagues, 2013; Isar, 2015). In the current study, cultural diplomacy would refer 'to pretty much any practice that is related to purposeful cultural cooperation between nations or groups of nations' (Isar, 2015). As opposed to the aforementioned intention of cultural diplomacy, the term of international cultural relations – and in the current context 'culture in foreign relations', that is the term of the EU's preference – would refer to trans-national engagement for culture and people. The proposal of ideational cultural relations has been at the core of the EU's strategy on culture.

In this respect, McDonald (2020) has claimed that the EU and its institutions 'narrates its policy into existence.' The claim anchors on the earlier observation that the EU progressed with its integrations with the use narratives (Manners and Murray, 2016). That is the EU institution as well as the member states create ways for the realization of the identity of the EU as a civilian and civilizing power (Mitzen, 2006; cf. McDonald, 2020). These narratives create deliberative space for entities involved leading to synergy and, as a result, to collective external action. In fact, these arguments can be connected to the example at the beginning of this paper of how the EU elites narrate their vision of the role of the culture which, then, emerges in action-plans and eventually translates to the fact-sheets and reports of the EaP countries. In this vain, McDonald (2020) has argued that the EU's approach to culture in external relations has primarily been based on constructivism,

which allowed expanded circle of people get involved and contribute to the construction of narratives. Research has traditionally led to inclusion of mainly the member states as the contributors in the construction of narratives. In contrast to this traditional thinking, it is argued in the current paper that the countries of the Eastern Partnership also partake in the construction process although with significantly limited scope. The inclusion of the partner countries in the international cultural relation has not been considered so far because of the extensive application of the theory of soft power, which anticipates 'non-coercive' interferences through culture to advance one's interest and generate favorable results in future actions of the recipient country (Gregory, 2016). It is an interesting prospect, and if not early, to evaluate whether the involvement of partner countries with sharing and contributing to cultural narratives will grow into perception of a common identity based on shared norms. In other words, constructivist theory suggests drastically a different perspective to review the role of culture in external relations than what it has been observed with the employment of soft power approach over a decade ago in the ENP case (e.g. Tulmets, 2007), reaffirmed lately and reframed in the literature as post-liberalism for the European context (Higgot, 2020).

1.3.1. Emergence of Post-Liberalism

Most of the academic debate has revolved around the theories of soft power (or neoliberalism) and constructivism, while post-liberalism and its application to international cultural relations are only a recent addition in the literature (cf. Higgot, 2020). However, post-liberalism will be critically evaluated here to test whether it has solid arguments for international cultural relations. The emergence of post-liberalism is mainly explained by the emergence of new challengers to the liberal world. Higgott (2020) has noted that liberalism came to the existence with the end of Cold War when bipolar world order was over and the West – in particular, the United States – was optimistic with the spread of liberal values. He goes on to argue that this trend was successful in the last decade of 20th century and the first decade of 21st century until some countries in the east – including Russia and China – have become serious challengers. To connect the dots, post-liberalism suggests these global processes will not create alternative poles besides the liberal options from the West, but it will only lead to dilution of the established workings of the liberal world order because there is no alternative power with comparable alternatives. Hence, the implication of the current hypothesis are that geo-political considerations and, even, geo-economic considerations will be a given greater importance than neoliberal mutual gain cooperation when a bigger contexts of calculations would be at stake (Higgot, 2020). In the

defense of international cultural relations conception, a recourse to theoretical basis of neoliberalism needs to be made. Besides the shared recognition of the anarchic state of the world, the strategic game theory has also a significant role for neoliberalism as much as it does for realist theory. Neoliberals have extensively employed the concept of the positive sum games in order make and (normatively) prove their point that it is possible to achieve win-win outcomes, that is mutual gain results for all interacting parties. To emphasize the value of this counterargument, one needs to simply project the concept of positive sum game on the field of culture. International cooperation in the areas of preservation and promotion of cultural heritage can benefit both of the sides because this is an area of state protection and maintenance. For instance, the archaeological institution of one country may benefit with enriching its scientific capacities and experience while the other country benefit by having a historical site restored and made available for public exhibition. At the heart of liberalism, the key concept is creation of mutual interdependence – mainly economic – which is expected to prevent wars and conflicts happening between cooperating countries. This concept is foundational in namely democratic peace theories.

In terms of liberalism, Isar (2015) has made some stong arguments against the theory of soft power. He has argued that 'cultural attractiveness' is not soft power unless deployed in a clearly defined strategy to achieve policy goals. He has contened that it is a resource and only complementary to hard power (Isar, 2015). Furthermore, it can be argued that the primary resource behind the theories of liberalism is the economic component. However, the key issue is that the economic component is not soft at all. It is not soft power because it can easily take the form economic sanctions, and the deeper the engagement was in place; the more harmful sanctions can turn out to be. Even a more critical stance has been adopted by Zamorano (2016) who has argued that any art and cultural activity would transform into cultural diplomacy as long as there is systematic government intervention. Furthermore, the proponents of cultural diplomacy arguably may be unaware of the fact that agencies and institution may perceive their role as promotion of the cultural dialogue and exchange while their primary mission contributes the goals of government (McDonald, 2020). The use of similar lines of argumentation puts post-liberalist attempts of conceptualizing international cultural relations under a question, too.

1.3.2. Limits of Liberalist Theories

Liberalism along with its derivatives (namely neoliberalism and emerging post-liberalism) has enabled as to understand international relations of the past three decades but its application to interpret the role of culture in the EU's external relations needs to be

revisited. It is argued in the that liberalism and, hence, the theory of soft power are not conceptually the ideal suite to the area of culture in external relations. A brief but yet sufficient remark has been made above regarding the sanctions as a negative feedback to discourage otherwise unwanted behavior by the third countries. The first argument would suggest that culture cannot be instrumentalized as sanctioning tool with withdrawal of cooperation in that field alone. Indeed, culture does not create dependence, nor it is ever heard of 'cultural dependence' unlike the terms of economic dependence, energy dependence, or security dependence. To state the claim differently, it may be said there may be an economic power, but a cultural power is, at the least, questionable. The second argument would require us to consider a bigger context at the level of economic union integrations and free trade agreements. The world trade is organized in a way when a country enters into any economic union, it delegates trade-related decision-making capacities to the supranational institutions. While economic integrations bring down the 'boundaries' among the contracting countries, they can also exclude others to their common market (typically custom unions and deeper integrations). As opposed to this paradigm, cultural cooperation with one national, sub-national or supra-national entity does not exclude the possibility of cooperation with others. To crystallize the current argument, the concept of four types of goods from economics will be employed. Goods are categorized into the four types based on the two variables of excludability and rivalrousness. The good in question would be public attention of any recipient nation. It has been already argued that there can concurrently be present more than one cultural actor in the sphere attention of public because it is a non-excludable area. For instance, Armenia could not sign association agreement, which included establishment of free trade with the EU, because of the membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU/EEU) while its international cultural relations were characterized with diversity of actors. However, the employed economic concept also highlights the fact that gaining public attention is a rivalrous undertaking. It is rivalrous task because of the nature of individuals besides the more obvious fact that there would competition for public attention. By definition, rival are the goods 'whose consumption by one consumer prevents simultaneous consumption by other consumers.' Proponents of the liberalism will not be able to provide us with a response to the issue of why public attention is rivalrous because mainly because individuals are not their unit of analysis. However, social constructivism is the theory, that is able to resolve the current issue with the use of 'narratives – norms (or values) – identity' concept. Individuals – comprising the public of interest – would be receiving narratives from all sides non-excludably. However, they will filter and accept only the narratives that

are consistent with their norms and values already engraved in their identity. The norm and values, in their own right, will need to be true to their identity. A key argument from social constructivism holds that narratives are in continual construction. Hence, identities are not only point of reference for verification of new values but also source for generating and revising narratives. In an attempt to employ constructivism alongside other theories, Higgott (2017, 2020) has argued that cultural diplomacy and cultural relations should not be regarded as distinct and isolated ways of practice but the two form a continuum. According to him, a strategy on cultural engagement can be located anywhere on this continuum depending on the application of either practices. In practice, this might appear a valid argument, but it would generate collection of theories which have inconsistencies with each other due to their differences in basic foundational assumptions. In other words, liberalism and any of its offspring theories are not a solid analytical framework alone for the normative evaluation of international cultural relations, nor a comprehensive strategy for envisioning the role of culture in external relations of the EU.

1.3.3. Interdisciplinary Critique of Liberalism

The debate of international cultural diplomacy has benefit from an interdisciplinary contribution. The employment of cultural studies has presented a serious critique for cultural diplomacy approach based on liberalism. Cultural products are regarded as the unit of analysis in cultural studies as opposed to nation states in liberalism or individuals in constructivism / idealism. The argument of cultural studies relies on the fact the cultural consumers possess the freedom to make their interpretations of the cultural products (Clarke, 2014). When policymakers have little to no control over the meaning made out of their cultural product in the recipient countries, the pursuit cultural diplomacy on the basis of cultural diplomacy for the purpose of creating influence renders into being pointless investment of time and other resources. While this argument challenges variants of liberalism arguing for cultural influence, the meaning making capacity by the consumers of culture has been regarded as a significant cornerstone in cultural studies because it has enabled "the creative power of the apparently powerless" (Clarke, 2014; cf. Morris, 1996). In other terms, liberalist theories on cultural influence can be called into doubt due to their assumptions regarding the impact that the transfer of culture can have on another nation.

The conception of cultural diplomacy as per Nye's soft power interpretation would be subject to this critique in the same logic as above. When viewed through the prism of cultural relations, Nye's theory of soft power contains the same assumption regarding the functions of cultural products which do not necessarily hold true. It is worth emphasizing

the fact that there would be countries belonging to the same value-system who would interpret cultural products in the similar way and, thus, will be less resistant and willing to create an alliance with a common direction of foreign policy. However, the propensity of alignment to occur is higher on the basis of international cultural relations among those sharing cultural conceptions and unlikely, if not impossible, on the basis of cultural influence defined by soft power aspired "entrepreneur-recipient" relations (Van Ham, 2010). To sum up, the problem with soft power style agent-centred relations is its dependence on the assumption of the interpretations of invested culture in the intended ways which is not plausible from the point of view of cultural studies.

1.4.   International Cultural Relations

The need for an intensive analytical framework for international cultural relations has already been outlined in the discussions above and, in fact, there has been research conducted from the viewpoint of the public policy in this direction (or more specifically cultural policy). The proponents of cultural policy point of view regard culture "as a sector, one of the defining structural elements of global society, where cultural goods and services are traded and made available for cultural reasons" (McDonald, 2020). Indeed, this approach brings us closer to attaching some thought to the potential benefits for cultural producers and consumers instead of the interests of the national governments. However, it has been noted that foreign policy often is given priority over cultural policy in practice. From the point of view of public policy, McDonald (2020) has elaborated that the EU culture in external relations is the intersection of cultural policy and other transnational cultural activities with foreign policy. In respect to the question of which of the policies takes priority over the other, it has also been confirmed that "[i]nternational relations are traditionally higher up the traditional pecking order of policy priorities" while the importance of cultural policy in external relations has been acknowledged (McDonald, 2020). The later acknowledgment finds it support in the empirical evidence that people around the world appreciate culture in Europe the most (cf. European Commission-FPI; McDonald, 2020), it has been also noted that the respondents in the referenced evidence did not distinguish the EU from Europe. More importantly, their conceptions of "European cultural" were mainly associations with French culture. While the evidence provides the valuable confirmation of the generally held assumption regarding the priorities of policy areas, it needs to be treated critically to avoid slipping into "exporting-one's-culture" interpretations of policy. Normatively speaking, while foreign policy is given a due consideration, cultural policy should not be forgotten either. Nevertheless, we have reached

to the discussion of a concept that was floating throughout the current theoretic debate, that is the concept of international cultural relations based on the theory of constructivism. It would be misleading to assume that one nation or polity can simply promote its identity and transfer values to others through the channels of unidirectional cultural influence. Indeed, constructivists hold that processes of cultural engagement and collaboration define the identities of all participants and have the potential to shape a collective identity.

The current discussion has circled back to the term of international cultural cooperation for two reasons. Firstly, the discussion on constructivism will be expanded to concepts from social constructivism and their application will be analyzed in the light of the EU's external relations. Secondly, an attempt will be made to outline how international cultural relations addresses the issues raised in the theories of neoliberalism and post-liberalism.

1.5. *Social Constructivism in New Public Diplomacy*

The observation that the traditional national influence projection theories would not suffice to explain new processes of "cultural co-production across borders" has been around for quite a while and has found its applications in the studies of public diplomacy. Zaharna and colleagues (2013) have observed that public diplomacy has transformed into more advanced forms of communication – for instance, dialogue, engagement and collaboration. In this vain, Melissen (2005), Davis Cross and Melissen (2013) along with Zaharna and colleagues (2013) have relied on the constructivist school of thought to investigate more "social" public diplomacy. This paradigm shift also enables current research of cultural international relations as a societal and relational process (cf. Clarke 2014, Isar et al. 2015).

Even though public diplomacy is a vital part of diplomacy and is an evolving process in international relations, the substantial part of literature on international relations of realist and structuralist schools have treated it as a policy instrument to build soft power (Cross and Melissen, 2013; Manor, 2019). A legitimate cultural relations action plan would only be possible if it projects the true identity of the people it is expected to represent. In the case of the EU, this has its implications how European citizens see themselves, as an external image is actually brought into public attention through foreign policy (Cross & Melissen, 2013). People start to see how they are perceived in foreign eyes and, hence, develop narratives of how they wish to be perceived. Moreover, the institution of external image validation have emerged, in which people would be able to oversee how their governments represent them to foreign publics. The identity-image loop and external image

validation came to existence due to the information revolution which erased all the national borders for narratives (Cross & Melissen, 2013; Pamment, 2013). It has been argued that public diplomacy, which is not capable of targeting the foreign audience particularly of strategic interest particularly to capitalize soft power, was fairly enough termed as "glocalized" (global and local) or "intermestic" (international and domestic) due to the nature of new public diplomacy (Bjola & Holmes, 2015; Cross & Melissen, 2013; Haynal, G., 2011; Manor, 2019; Metzgar, 2012).

Besides the intermestic character of new public diplomacy, it is crucial to understand and consider certain other changes caused by the information revolution. One of the important changes, found in new public diplomacy, is the transformation of narratives from monologue to dialogue. Perhaps, this transformation is one of the main distinctive features of new public diplomacy from what it was in the past century. At present, public diplomacy comprises two-way information flow in contrast to post World War II period's one-way information flow and, hence, it was commonly associated with propaganda in the past century (Manor, 2019). Moreover, research suggests that public diplomacy practices are more successful when it is practiced on the basis of engagement and building relationships rather than only delivering information (Cross & Melissen, 2013; Manor, 2019; McNutt, 2014; P. M. Seib, 2016). Therefore, it would be appropriate in the evaluation of public diplomacy success or failure to give due consideration to the capacity of meaningfully engaging and building relationships. The key for any engagement to qualify as an effective one is the ability to build long-term relationships with diffusion of norms (P. Seib, 2012; Zaharna et al., 2013). Hence, diffusion of norms in the narratives can be considered as the start of construction of common identity.

Public diplomacy has been studied as a social process in recent research because it is all about human interactions in late evolutionary stages after the information revolution. The realist or liberalist schools of thought cannot be employed to elaborate "new" public diplomacy as a social process. Therefore, it has been suggested that constructivism has the potential to provide with a theoretical framework to build the solid conceptual basis for the study of new public diplomacy (Cross and Melissen, 2013). For constructivists, norms, identity, social interaction, and perceptions are key concepts of consideration that have been found to be relevant for new public diplomacy. Davis Cross and colleagues (2013) have studied international relations in the social context of time and, thus, their theory has enabled researchers to capture complex social processes and trends. Consequently, these concepts from the constructivist school of thought will be employed in this research because it has the right conceptual lenses for observing, understanding and explaining the

cultural relations of the EU. Beyond constructivism, current research positions itself within post-positivism because non-state actors such as NGOs, media representatives and public opinion influencers can be studied alongside the conventionally accepted actors. New actors are able to engage across the borders and practice public diplomacy due to the information revolution (Pamment, 2013). This argument can be extended to international cultural relations whose actors as well engage in transnational socialization. In other words, public diplomacy has been already reconceptualized as new public diplomacy (Melissen, 2005; Pamment, 2013) where social constructivist concepts were abstracted onto processes in international relations and can be also borrowed for research of international cultural relations.

There are certain categorizations of public diplomacy measures that need to be briefly reviewed and can be project to cultural diplomacy. For instance, there is the aspect of relationships at which public diplomacy takes place. The relationships are distinguished between and among the actors; public diplomacy may exhibit as a relationship of government-to-people, people-to-people, or a hybrid of the two (Cross & Melissen, 2013; P. Seib, 2012). The other possible aspects of categorization are differentiating between official and unofficial diplomacy, or purposeful and non-purposeful ones. These typologies may or may not be a powerful tool to assess the positive image or gaining soft power. Beyond the evaluation, these typologies are convenient descriptive tools to specify the target and intent of selected cultural diplomacy communication instances in the current paper.

Cross and Melissen (2013) have suggested a robust basis for transnational analysis. They have argued that public diplomacy is the process of "communicating narratives that embody key norms about a society." Narratives can be defined as the story of "the temporal character of human experience." Narrative by its nature is a non-coercive communication carrying subtle messages. The concept of narrative captures the fundamental and umbrella process of public diplomacy well. Firstly, the primary feature of public diplomacy as well as of any soft power tool is that they must not be coerced. Secondly, the concept of narrative is not restrictive and allows to consider all aspects of public diplomacy without leaving out any, i.e. be it formal or informal, governmental or nongovernmental, and purposeful or non-purposeful. Norms, in their turn, can be defined as established beliefs of appropriateness and inappropriateness of conduct in a society. The prevailing values within a society formulate based on the present norms. Public diplomacy narratives gain legitimacy if they are based on the real identity of the people involved. According to constructivists, the identity is socially constructed. From the primordial perspective, it is

supposed that internal identity is formulated before the creation and exhibition of external image and, in this context, the identity of an international actor to foreign publics. However, identity formulation and external image are in fact integral to the evolution of each other according to constructivists. As Cross and Melissen (2013) put it quite well, there is a "continuous feedback loop between image and identity."

While there has been extensive research of narratives with the use of discourse analysis, the concept of identity in foreign policy needs to be reviewed. In this vain, it has been argued that political and historical selves together comprise foreign policy identity (Tulmets, 2014). The political identity has been defined as the basic perceptions of alignment with one's foreign policy. The historical identity has been regarded the source for the creation of differences on the basis of constructed narratives as well as the vision of relations with the West and one's own past. The possibility to revisit one's historical identity arguably raises the questions of sustainability and amendment of foreign policy. Foreign policy identity would be sustainable only if a countries political and historical selves are consistent with each other. We will return to the analysis of foreign policy identity of the current case study, that is Armenia, later in this paper in order to discuss the perceptions of identities of post-communist countries by the EU and their impact on the nature of relationships.

The foreign policy identity of a country may translate into relations with the EU conceptualized as "of solidarity" or "of responsibility." The concept of solidarty is defined as "the will to support the diffusion of the norms and values building the political identity of the ECE countries, mainly EU and NATO values, which focus on democracy, human rights, the rule of law and market economy" (Tulmets, 2014). On the other hand, the concept of responsibility anchors in historical identity and entails moral obligations toward some of the post-communist countries due to relations in the immediate past. Depending on the importance attached to political imperatives or to the historical past, it becomes possible to estimate whether the foreign policy identity of a partner country (or even region) converted more into solidarity or responsibility. For instance, the later waves of EU expansion are commonly interpreted as "return to Europe" for a historical reason (cf. Zielonka, 2002; Zielonka, 2006). The word "return" suggests the fact that these countries had always belonged to the European community and, hence, the moral responsibility is assumed in supporting them to accomplish the return, given that political will of the countries has been expressed through the congruence between political and historical selves.

1.6. Interdisciplinary Critique of Constructivism

In respect to constructivism, it can be argued that the above discussed critique of the meaning-making assumption from cultural studies does not affect greatly. Constructivist approaches focus on the creation of shared identities in the process of international cultural relations rather than rely on imposing one's culture to the others with dubious expectations. In terms of the narrative – norms – identity conception, it is not argued that the norms or values of one side can be transferred to the value system of another nation while relying on cultural narratives, but it is the process of cultural engagement that creates a common identity on the basis of collectively constructed shared set of values. The concept of shared set of values has been proposed in the already cited hypothetical example of the Hungarian music group collaborating trans-nationally. It has been argued that not only the Hungarian music group represents their society and traditional values but also the collaborating external audience pull together their original values into a new set of shared values (Davis Cross and colleagues, 2013).

In fact, Clarke (2014) has made an attempt to extend the criticism of the assumption onto constructivism. He has argued that the example of Hungarian musicians is only hypothetical suggesting that such engagement rarely take place if none at all and most of the performative art circulates on a CD or on similar other digital media. Moreover, the degree of engagement during a live performance has been questioned with a claim that audience can follow the performance in salience and leave without any input. Generally, the argument has been that such cultural engagements will only be marginal (Clarke, 2014). Admittedly, the counterarguments to downplay the role of shared set of values are practical in nature. The charm of the Davis Cross's (2013) hypothetical example is the normative contribution to the literature. Pragmatically speaking, it may be challenging mission to create the shared set of values depending on the case of partner. We will return to this matter in detail in the empirical part of this paper while evaluating the case of Armenia. In other words, it has not been normatively refuted that the construction of a shared set of values is possible.

1.7. Concluding Thoughts and Statements for the Normative Analysis

It has been above stated that sphere of public attention rivalrous and non-excludable. To elaborate, the claim of rivalrousness, the analytical conceptions of political and historical identities will be applied the concept of shared identity. The current paper argues that shared identity is the congruence between political selves (or identities) of

culturally engaging entities. New aspects of their common identity are continually constructed with the use of narratives and verified vis-à-vis their values deriving from historical identities. The political identity translates into foreign policy direction of a country which is a valuable asset for establishing partnerships. While political self can change over time, it is unitary in nature. The political self of any country can be aligned only in direction of one foreign policy sector at a time and, hence, this fact makes international cultural relations rivalrous good. To conclude, the hypothetical argument of the current paper is that international cultural relations take place in a rivalrous context to attain or retain the political self of the country of interest.

2. Data Analysis

2.1. *Methods and Data Sources*

The current thesis project deploys the research design of case study of a single case. While a single case is selected, it is intended to conduct a detailed and intensive analysis. Traditionally, the objective of case study has been research of the complexity and specificity of the case in issue (Stake, 1995).

The current research design inevitably leads us to the crucial issue of the external validity or generalizability of case study research. From the methodological point of view, there may be the concerns how a single case study can be representative and the results can be applied to the other cases. It is important to emphasize that the current study does not use the case as a source of evidence to derive the proposed hypothesis of the current paper. The normative argumentation has been the method of deriving and supporting the proposed hypothesis.

In the literature on methods, there are two diverging conceptions of the "case study." The first conception entails the use of the term for studying typically a location per se, for instance a city, country, or an international organization. The focus of research of this type has an inclination to be an in depth interrogation of the setting itself. The other conception of "case study" aims at using the case as an evidence. In other words, a study of this strand would use the case as a context to ground the theoretical findings as opposed to keeping the case itself as the central object of research (Bryman, 2012). The case study of Armenia here is not regarded as one sample of similar other cases. In other words, the current paper deductively applies the theoretical framework for the detailed and intensive analysis of the EU-Armenia cultural relations rather than pursues to test or inductively generate a new hypothesis based on empirical evidence.

Given the issue of external validity, it should be helpful, and yet necessary, to indicate the methodological justification based on the types for our selection of the case. In general, there is distinction between fives types of cases: (1) critical, (2) extreme or unique, (3) representative or typical, (4) revelatory, and (5) longitudinal (Yin, 2009; cf. Bryman, 2012). These types can be regarded as rationales for justifying the choice of case and, thus, they may be combined. The theories discussed in the literature review influence the decisions at this point, too. Consequently, the case study of Armenia is at the congruence of unique and revelatory categories. It is unique case study because the EU and Armenia signed a partnership agreement without a free trade component giving it an intrinsic

interest from the constructivism point of view. Furthermore, the current study has characteristic of the revelatory cases. It is a revelatory case because there has not been research conducted in the field of cultural relations for partner countries perhaps to due to linguistic barrier and the unavailability of key primary sources.

The empirical analysis has been conducted on qualitative data derived from the content analysis of primary sources. Content analysis enables the current study to consider multiple types of units of analysis. This flexibility enables to engage in an analysis from the perspective of constructivism, where we interact with multilevel and poly-vocal relationships among individuals, civil society, and authorities. Hence, the primary sources have been on the basis of significant actors. The main objective of the purposeful selection of this type is to locate the main actors in international cultural relations and discover their roles as well as the nature of their relationships.

The primer sources have been viewed through the prism of intent and context during the review. Hence, a close attention was given to the questions of:

- Who was the author of item?

- What is the type of item?

- Who is the intended consumer?

- What was the context? What did lead to item?

As a result, the primary source can be represented under the typological structure below:

- The EU authored for policy purposes
  - Lisbon Treaty (2007),
  - The EU-Armenia CEPA (2017),
  - The Preparatory Action on Culture in External Relations (2014),
  - The Preparatory Action reports on Cultural Partnership (2015)[1],

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1   Preparatory Action "Culture in External Relations": Country Report
    https://www.cultureinexternalrelations.eu/cier-data/uploads/2016/08/Armenia_report47.pdf [Last accessed on 11 June 2021]
    European Commission: Factsheet on Culture
    https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/ factsheet_eu_support_to_culture_armenia.pdf [Last accessed on 11 June 2021]
    Country Report: International Cultural Cooperation
    https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/culture/policy/international-cooperation/documents/country-reports/ armenia_en.pdf [Last accessed on 11 June 2021]

- ○ Partnership Implementation report (2020), Action-Plan reports, and joint communications[2],
- Government of Armenian for policymakers and internal public
  - ○ Development Strategy of Armenia for 2014-2025[3],
  - ○ National Security Strategy (2020),
- The Russian media for public consumption in Armenia and other neighbourhood countries
  - ○ Internet publication on the Armenian governments regulation to drop the use of "Cognac" trademark in Armenia (specific links given along the quotations in the footnotes),
- The EU programmes internet publications for creative sector and policymakers

Besides the primary sources, the current research barrows secondary data from Prof. Isar's reviews and insights on cultural relations (2015). Prof. Raj Isar is academic, who was commissioned along with a team of researchers to work on cultural policy initiatives of the EU. The use of secondary data comes at a few advantages. Firstly, it enables to the current paper to employ a longitudinal analysis. Secondly, it provides high-quality data at a minimum cost and time.

2.2. Regional Context

The analytical framework of political and historical identities is capable of outlining the rationality behind arguably nominal regional designations including that of South Caucasus. As a reminder, it is claimed as a nominal designation because the countries comprising South Caucasus, that is Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, have neither

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2   Cf. https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/report_on_eu-armenia_relations_in_the_framework_of_the_revised_enp.pdf [Last accessed on 11 June 2021]
AND pp. 15-16: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/partnership_implementation_report_armenia.pdf [Last accessed on 11 June 2021]
AND the latest one from 2020:
https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/armenia_partnership_implementation_report_2020.pdf [Last accessed on 11 June 2021]
COMPREHENSIVE at the EC:
https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/armenia_en [Last accessed on 11 June 2021]

3   Chapter 24: Development Strategy for Armenia for 2014-2025
https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/armenia_development_strategy_for_2014-2025.pdf [Last accessed on 11 June 2021]

established regional cooperation among themselves, nor participate in a multilateral cooperation curated by the EU. In the context of the EaP, the regional distinction speaks of a political distinction and, at the same time, reveals the limited consideration of historical past. Typically, the relations of the EU with the countries in South Caucasus can be understood in terms of solidarity as opposed to responsibility (cf. Tulmets, 2014). In general, the EU foreign policies have not been defined with geographic regions or sub-regions in mind but according to conception of the political identities of the partner countries. In this vain, the EaP was composed of Eastern Europe (Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova) and South Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan). However, this original model of grouping does not reflect the current political alignments of the foreign policies of the countries under consideration. The reason for the outward movement from the original groupings is the fluidity of political identities and distinction based initial assumption of political roles for each of the country with their immediate past. The six countries of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) were subjected to the perception of "othering" due to their status as former republics of the Soviet Union (this assumption did not extend to the Baltic countries) as well as their affiliation to the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) in one way or another (cf. Tulmets, 2014). Moreover, Tulmets (2014) has argued that the role of historical identity is downplayed because of the bureaucratic aspect of relation with the EU. While the role of the political elites has been significant and primary driving force, there are also other actors shaping the identities such as public opinion, civil society representatives and, in the context of the current paper, cultural actors. In other words, the relations with the EaP countries have taken the format of solidarity based on political identity while it has undergone significant changes.

An overview of the Eastern Partnership countries reveals that the six included countries have reached different levels of integration with the EU. Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova have established their formal relations on the basis of Association Agreements (AA), Armenia has signed a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA), Azerbaijan so far relies on Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) signed in 1996, and the PCA with Belarus was not ratified by the EU. These agreements can be classified either as an association agreement, or as a partnership agreement, where the core pragmatic difference is inclusion of free trade aspect. The free trade aspect creates economic motivations for the pursuit of a deeper integration. The aspect of free trade included with the association agreements is an important interfering factor from the perspective of the current research project because it is, normatively speaking, hard power instrument. An association agreement should be anticipated to create interdependence and

consolidate the relations as suggested in liberalism. Nevertheless, the selection of Armenia for the case study is not coincidental but a strategy to analyze a case where partnership progresses due to the will and discretion of the country instead of the push by the economic motivations and considerations. The framework agreements defining the type of relationships, in fact, serve as an evidence for reconfirming a concept of grouping the partners based on their level of cooperate with the EU. Tulmets (2007) has grouped the neighborhood countries into three groups: (1) countries that lack the political decision or consensus to cooperate (e.g. Belarus), (2) countries that cooperate but have not expressed aspirations to join the EU (e.g. Armenia, and Azerbaijan), (3) countries that cooperate, have the right to join the EU and expressed their interest to join the EU (e.g. Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine). The countries of the EaP belonging to the Tulmet's (2007) grouping of the highest level of cooperation concluded AAs with the EU. Interestingly enough, Armenia had also negotiated an AA around the same time as Georgia and Ukraine, but the agreement was not signed at the EaP Summit meeting of 2013 in Vilnius due to Armenia's decision to join the Eurasian Customs Union (currently the Eurasion Economic Union). However, Armenia and the EU have later negotiation and concluded the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, which does not entail association and, thus, does not include the aspect establishing free trade relations between the EU and Armenia.

The selection of Armenia for the case study has been already justified from the methodological point of view. In terms feasibility, it is also straightforward to select a case that will not include an identified intervening variable when it is impossible to control it. It has to be noted that the current method of case study would yield in depth understanding of the case of Armenia, while the results will be argued for and will be relevant only for this case in the context of consideration. To conclude, the case of Armenia is selected because the interfering variable can be excluded from the calculations and, in the meantime, the partnership agreement with the EU is advanced enough to allow a deep and extensive cooperation including in the areas of culture.

Current research will be constrained to the 2014-2020 time-frame because (a) the narratives of "culture in external relations" at the EU level have emerged and lead to the Preparatory Action plan in the respective field in 2014. Moreover, the Armenia Development Strategy was adopted by the RA government for the period of 2014-2025

which can serve as source of empirical knowledge for evaluating the common denominator of cultural relations between the EU and Armenia[4].

2.3.   European Post-National Identity and Cultural Diversity

The role of culture in the external rations of the EU have gained salience after two significant developments. For the first one, the current academic debates on cultural relations would have not taken place possibly if the Lisbon Treaty did not come to existence in 2009. Due to the Lisbon Treaty (2009), The EU formulated the legal personality to enter into agreements, gained legal competence, established an institutional framework for external relations (EAES – the European External Action Service) and a post of High Representative which could take leading role for and provide deliberations on a strategic approach to culture in the EU external relations. For the second development, it needs to be outlined the personal contributions by Federica Mogherini since the start of her position as High Representative from November 2014. The constructivist studies, that conducted elite discourse analysis, have indicated that she had constantly reminded that cultural relations are central and of utmost significance for the EU's external relations (McDonalds, 2020). She personally contributed to the consideration of culture in the Commission's mission of making the EU a stronger member of the global community. The objective, arguably, was not set to be globalization and promotion of the EU's cultural production and support the sector of culture, but it was clear policy of international cultural relations.

The cooperation of member states has been a major and recurrent issue discussed in the literature. There were expression of disbelief regarding the inclination of the member states to pull their culture together for common foreing policy action because of unique understanding of the culture, lack of enthusiasm to delegate any possible competences in the area of culture and, final, difficulty of engaging non-state cultural actors. Beyond these pragmatic difficulties, scholars have noted that it is an area where separating policy ideas from the interests of people is difficult (Littoz-Monnet, 2001; McDonald, 2020). Even though these structural complications of culture have been speculated to render culture into ineffective for use in external relations – based on the first impression, the possibility of member states to cooperate cannot be excluded either, given that the EU can contribute with an added value to their efforts.

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4   Chapter 24: Development Strategy for Armenia for 2014-2025

https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/armenia_development_strategy_for_2014-2025.pdf [Last accessed on 11 June 2021]

The review of secondary sources has revealed that there is constant tension between culture's being globalized through the transnational channels and its localization to nations and sub-national contexts by the politician to present themselves as the defenders of their national identity (cf. Miller, 2016; Sassen, 2013). Consequently, cultural policy has been subjected to serious resistance to be uptake in the EU polices because of the disagreement of the interests between the globalizing processes of cultural promotion and localized applications of culture to serve national political purposes (McDonald, 2020; cf. Littoz-Monnet, 2013). Secondly, the EU is characterized by the diversity of cultures. As a result, the narratives of Europe are multilevel stories, blend of values and sources of information originating at the levels of local and national cultural heritages and, finally, merged to the new European shared identity (cf. "post-national plot" by Scalise, 2015). It has been argued that consensual merger of the national and local cultures to the transnational European narrative is accomplished with the use of, what is termed, "celebration of cultural diversity" Manners & Whitman, 2003). Despite the difficulties associated with use of culture, the EU has attached salience to culture, and it has been reflected in some foreign policy documents.

2.3.1. Preparatory Action for Culture in External Relations

The Preparatory Action (2014) has come to existence thanks to the efforts of the European Parliament (EP, 2011). The Resolution regarding the cultural aspects in the EU's external actions – passed by the European Parliament in May 2011 – had proposed to commence the work on a common EU strategy for culture in external relations of the EU. Moreover, the European Parliament designated a separate budget for a 'preparatory action' in the field of culture.

The Preparatory Action report (2015, following the Preparatory Action in 2014) certainly benefited from the commissioned team which was supervised by prof. Isar, who is a highly regarded academician in the field of cultural policy. This is a noteworthy development in the EU because the commissioned team to work on the Action in question comes from an academic and cultural management backgrounds as opposed to the political background and public services offices. As a result, the reports have relied on informants and consultation with cultural institutions, national and non-governmental experts and civil society actors to compose the recommendations (cf. Isar, 2015). The significant leap of the Preparatory Action was the attempt to carry out an evidence-based research and, then, develop policy though consultations with policymakers to remap the concepts and expectations. Hence, it was expected to yield action by administration and tangible results.

The Report (2015) is a unique and significant document and has served as a primary source in the current evaluation. It promised "a very considerable potential for culture in Europe's international relations" and reveals the fact that "many people across the world have a strong interest in engaging culturally with Europe." The content analysis suggests that the Report could have possibly introduced a new terminology into the discourse of the elites due to its surveys with cultural sector actors. The language is suggestive of the bigger objective of "mutual learning and sharing" in order to contribute global cultural citizenship. Consequently, the Report sets out the realization of policy which would be of international cultural relations approach instead of instrumentalist cultural influence approach

In this vain, the language started to shift towards international cultural relations: "…a world in which all cultural practice is becoming increasingly trans-national and trans-continental, as artists and creative people everywhere remain rooted in their own cultures yet have recourse to globalized repertoires, methods and strategies" (European Union 2014). Along these lines, it is even more impressive to observe a statement such as "…in this multi-polar world is to remain true to itself, yet to continue to position itself creatively in a globalized world of fluid and multiple identities and permanent cultural and social transformation." While the quoted statement acknowledges the current challenges for Europe, it also appears that the EU attempts to distances itself from the post-liberalist conceptions.

The Preparatory Action outlines its intentions from the outset for the use of "… cultural engagement with the rest of the world can serve the interests as well as the ideals of the EU and its member states." This type of statements are commonly found in policy paper as a justification argument for internal consumtion and, in this case, it is relied on the promise of benefits to both ideals and practical interests of the EU collectively as well as the member states individually. The anticipated benefits were both the direct result of cultural relations such as global solidarity and cultural diversity, and indirect ones such as trade, innovation, development and competitiveness. Beyond all, it was highlighted that cultural relations bring inherent "added value of the flourishing of culture and the richness of cultural exchange." In other words, culture in external relations was a way in which everyone could get involved and benefit from the exchange.

The role of the EU in cultural engagement is twofold. Firstly, the EU takes the responsibility of servicing the policy and bringing into existence for the member states and the third countries, that would engage. In regard to involvement, the partner countries are also expected contribute because the Preparatory Action report in its interrogations

registered their interest culturally engage with Europe. It can be deduced from this observation that the EU's cultural engagement policy with non-state actors such as artist extends to its partner countries. This fact also calls into reconsideration the assumed difficulties related to the coordination process among and unenthusiastic stance of the member states to channel their cultures in order to construct European shared identity. Secondly, the EU assumes the role of legitimizing European culture and bringing the shared political identity into existence. While keeping the analytical tool of political and historical selves in mind, the processes of cultural engagement can be regarded as an exercise construction of European narratives based on the historical identities of the individual member states. The partner countries, including Armenia, were invited to join by bringing their input as well as revisiting their own political roles in the foreign policy.

As far as the policy of cultural relations of Armenia is concerned, the starting point of studying it would be the government adopted document of Development Strategy of Armenia for 2014-2025. The development strategy document sets out the imperatives for the national policy on culture among other sectors. It expresses the objectives of supporting individual such as artists (including participation in international festivals), fostering cultural production, promoting education in the areas of cultural and expanding international cooperation (i.e. mobility of creative people, cultural manager and other experts), and strengthening cooperation with international networks. In other words, the review of national policy on culture has revealed that Armenia has interests of pursuing international cultural relations.

Indeed, the EU and Armenia have realized the possible mutual benefits of internation cultural relations. However, the cooperation is characterized with a few challenges. The results of the current evaluation suggest that some of them were possible to be given solutions within the current frameworks of agreements and the defined policy imperatives. On the other hand, the relationship also includes difficulties that are more complex in nature and require a robust analytical framework to be learned and understood. The normative discussion above on the basis of constructivism is an attempt to equip ourselves with the right analytical lenses to study the current case. A brief note on the origins of challenges and opportunities would be sufficient and necessary to depict global environmental context of the EU – Armenia cultural relations. While Armenia and the EU manage to find opportunities and start cooperation around those areas, Armenia at the same time has a special relationship with Russia. It has been already mentioned above that Armenia is a member country of the EAEU, which is an economic regime including Russia. Besides the EAEU, Armenia and Russia share membership in the Collective

Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Secondly, the Armenian politics revolve around the issues of the Republic of Artsakh (also known as Nagorny Karabakh). Thirdly, Armenia has a large diaspora worldwide and France being one of the biggest host countries among others in Europe.

The challenges existing in cultural relations of Armenia and the EU have been reviewed in the framework of two categories. It becomes possible to focus the attention to the core nature of the issues when they are reframed in categories. The two categories of challenges are (1) sensitivity of political role, (2) and professional capacity building. The challenges in the category of the sensitivity of political role perhaps are the most difficult to resolve within the current policy framework. The challenges belonging to the other category where given policy solutions within the period of time-frame under consideration in the current paper.

2.3.2. Sensitivity of Political Role

The sensitivity of political role is a reference to the issue of how Armenia has identified its direction in the foreign policy and associated rivalrous competition to retain or attain among some countries with interests in the region. In the paragraph above, we draw the attention to the facts that Armenia is a member country of the CSTO (since 1994) and the EAEU (since 2015). These two integrations in economic and security sectors already speak of the political role in the foreign policy, that has unfolded for Armenia after its independence from the Soviet Union. While, National Security Strategy of Armenia (2007, 2019[5, 6]) explicitly identified Russia as its strategic partner, it also stated that Armenia highly "...prioritizes deepening of the friendly relations and expanding bilateral and multilateral partnership with the EU" (National Security Strategy of Armenia, 2020). These lines come with recourse to the EU-Armenia CEPA. It is noteworthy that the strategy express Armenia's commitment to work the EU member states to improve the people-to-people contact and mobility which are priorities found in the EU external relations policy toward the EaP countries. Moreover, the development of bilateral cooperation with France and Germany as well as the trilateral cooperation among Greece-Armenia-Cypros was highlighted. In other words, Armenia found its political role in the

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5   National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia (2020). (in Armenian). https://www.seco.am/pdf/Ազգային_անվտանգության_ռազմավարություն_2020.pdf [Last accessed on 11 June 2021]

6   Ter-Matevosyan, Vahram. (2020). *Armenia's New National Security Strategy: Sharing First Impressions*. EVN Report. https://www.evnreport.com/opinion/armenia-s-new-national-security-strategy-sharing-first-impressions [Last accessed on 11 June 2021]

foreign policy to be aligned with Russia in practice – perhaps mainly due to the fragile security architecture and the ability of Russia to act in the region of South Caucasus – while the National Security Strategy (2020) conceptualized and also prioritized the significance of the relations with the EU and its member states at various levels.

Tulmets (2014) has suggested the impact of perceptual "othering" of former Soviet republics (with exception in the cases of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) by the West as possible reason for developing relations with these countries on the basis of solidarity as opposed to responsibility. It may be speculated that the lack of prospect for a more committed relationship forced Armenia along other countries originally after their independence to gravitate toward the security paradigm offered by Russia. This claim appears reasonable from the first inspection, nevertheless it needs to be researched comprehensively including ego-political theories which goes beyond the scope of the current paper. There is an assumed political role in the foreign policy of Armenia along with Russia, but little is know how coherent it is with the historical self of Armenia. Hence, the current paper reviews the historical identity to reveal the sources for construction of narratives for the political role in the foreign policy, which is multi-vector and reconciles opposing sides on the conceptual basis of complementarity.

To set the contextual background, it has to be noted that Armenians have a wider historical perspective and, arguably, people assume primordial conceptions of identity. The historical identity stretches back to the antiquity where Armenians are seen in relation to Greeks, Romans, Babylonians, etc. The history textbooks in schools typically start depicting the world with the conceptions of Ancient Greek as a center of cultural and scientific importance. There is common assumption that the Armenian alphabet was aspired from the Greek one which contributes to establish a strong cultural bond. Beyond the assumptions, it is known that Mesrop Mashtots, the inventor of the Armenian alphabet, knew the Greek language and the letter in both of the alphabets are ordered nearly in the same sequence. Moreover, Greek geographer and historian Strabo from Pontus is highly regarded in the community of Armenian historians for his contribution to the field. He documented the history of Armenia of the period as well as its dramatic relations vis-à-vis neighbors like the Roman Empire. These historical event may seem far away distant events to some readers, but the fact is that they resonate well in Armenia. When these facts are considered through the analytical prism of political and historical identities, it becomes clear that the trilateral relations between Greece-Armenia-Cypros have their sources of values in the historical identity. In the same fashion, it is possible to locate sources in historical self related to France which can serves as the basis of construction of shared

narratives. Specifically, the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia had close ties with the European countries. It is remarkable that there was also spoken Old French along Armenian, Greek and Latin. In our days, Armenia identifies itself as a francophone country. The political role exhibits itself in the way of Armenia's membership in the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF). To sum up, there are sources connecting Armenia to Europe in historical self that can and some are brought into existence to formulate a cooperative role political role.

In the theoretical part of the current paper, it has been argued that public attention can be turned into space defined with rivalrousness. The political roles assumed are valuable assets in a way because they can translate into partnerships in certain areas of common interest if not into total change of direction in the foreign policy. In this vein, Russia is a notable contender in the Armenian reality and beyond. This competition for gaining favorable political role can materialize in ways unthinkable. To elaborate these claims, we will consider a recent regulation passed by the government of Armenia. The regulation requires hard liqueur producers in Armenia to replace the term of "cognac" with brandy or any other acceptable alternative. For the context, the term of Cognac is a trademark in the European Union and may be used only for those liqueurs, that are produced from a particular specie of grapes originating in the region of Cognac in the South France.[7] Furthermore, the EU agreed to financially support the producers from Armenia within the budget of 3 million Euro in their efforts to remarket their product without the term of "cognac." This norm appears nothing but a justified request from the economic point of view. The region realizes marketability of the name and, thus, wants to assure exclusivity over it. However, little has been interrogated the cultural value, that the tradition of the grape-based hard liqueurs present. The term of "cognac" made it into the linguistic thinking of the Armenian language, and it is solely used to denote the type of drink. In the terms of economic competition, the Armenian producers had no inherent intention of gaining advantageous position in the market due to the association with French Cognac. Bearing this background information in mind, we can move to the analysis on the basis of conceptions of cultural relations and rivalrousness. In general, public rarly familiarizes with the policy papers directly because the traditional channels for receiving news are the TV, newspapers and internet publications. However, the fact is that these channels are redistributors or, so to say, "second hand" providers of original information. Thus, they happen to be able to alter, reframe and reinterpret the news according to their

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7   European Court of Justice. (2011) Press Release on the geographic indication of Cognac as a trademark. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/CJE_11_74 [Last accessed on 11 June 2021]

views or motivations. Back to the case of Cognac, it has been observed that the news of the adoption of regulation were reframed and reinterpreted by some Russian news agencies in a way that it would conflict with norms of many Armenian readers. As a result, such techniques create an antagonistic image of the policy proposer and backer. For instance, some internet publications entitled the article as "Brussels will pay only 3 mln Euro for the refusal of national dignity"[8] or "How the EU deprived Armenia from the national pride"[9]. Besides these loud titles, there are publications who choose subtler tone and covert methods for seeding resistance and delusions. For instance, Sputnik Georgia used the wording of "the EU intends to buy the refusal of dropping of the name of cognac from Armenia…",[10] where the use of "buy-sell" wording creates the delusions regarding the ownership over the term and seeds protectionism. Notably, these reframed news were also circulated in other neighborhood countries. The later example is taken from a Russian internet publication for the Georgian consumption. These reinterpretations may be intended to generate feelings of threat of risking or losing one's own norms and values while historical identities are expoited to awaken resistance towards otherwise unfavorable cooperation. In other words, political roles in the foreign policy are sought after by challengers and, thus, deserve an appropriate consideration at least in the EU's cultural engagements if not in most of the policies in external relations.

2.3.3. Development of Professional Capacities

The lack of professional capacities was identified as the next issue which complicated frictionless cultural relations between the EU and Armenia. The practical problems comprising this category are challenges related to individuals working in the sector of culture. In this respect, valuable set of information was documented in the Preparatory Action report (2015) which enables us to analyze the current challenges while keeping the original state of cultural sector in the hindsight.

The evaluation of this issue lends itself to policy analysis methods. In fact, it has been revealed earlier in this paper that the commissioned team to work on the Preparatory Action had expertise in research and cultural policy (see the section of Contextual Background of this chapter; also cf. McDonald, 2020). The commissioned team held

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8   Russian press example 1: https://svpressa.ru/economy/article/301047/elenanew/ [Last accessed on 11 June 2021]

9   Russian press example 2: https://www.rosbalt.ru/world/2021/06/15/1906569.html [Last accessed on 11 June 2021]

10 Sputnik-Georgia on Cognac: https://sputnik-georgia.ru/world/20210610/251986425/ES-khochet-vykupit-u-Armenii-nazvanie-konyak-za-3-milliona-evro.html [Last accessed on 11 June 2021]

consultations with the representatives from the cultural sector, summarized problems of crucial importance along with suggestions. On one hand, the documentations of their mission have the advantage of containing most of the possible problems and suggestions communicated through the interactions with the informants. On the other hand, these communications do not draw clear division line and linkages between the suggestions by the informants and actual planned policy proposals perhaps due to the inherent explorative approach. The Preparatory Action plan (2014) and the Preparatory Action reports (2015), the Partnership Implementation Report on Armenia (2020) are used as primary sources for the document analysis in this section. In other words, the purpose of this empirical analysis is to establish the proof of (1) the interest of individuals to engage in people-to-people contacts trans-nationally, (2) the implemented policies were in response to the challenges communicated by the cultural actors, and (3) the nature of culture in the EU's external relations is best elaborated with the use of constructivism.

One of the factions of the policy analysis is to communicate the possible solutions for problems to the policymakers in operationalizable terms. To this end, the first stage in the analyses of these type would be identification and definition of problems. It is the process of identifying the differences between the desired and actual situations. The Preparatory Action report (2015), documenting the consultations with the cultural actors, provides insightful depiction of the actual situation, while the desire situation is not clear defined vision but sparse suggestions along the problems. To define the core problem, the key points of their feedback are reviewed to build understanding of where the situation was and where it should be from the perspective of cultural relations theory. In other words, the actual situation is reassessed in relation to the normative conceptions as opposed to the perceptions of a preferred situation. In the second stage of analysis, the current paper attempts to deduce the programmes meant to remedy the problems. It has to be emphasized that policy papers would propose solutions or policy at this stage, but the current paper pursues to uncover the bigger picture, or that is to say the political logic and underlying relationships.

While keeping in mind the above described framework for the empirical analysis, the review has found that many of the difficulties collectively can be defined as deficiency of professional capacities. It needs to be noted that the actors are not uniform in the sector, that is there are individuals (e.g. artists, performers and other cultural producers), NGOs (e.g. Artist's Union of Armenia, the Composer's Union of Armenia, etc.) and, finally, institutions (e.g. galleries, museums, etc.). As a result, the policy for the cultural actors will have multiple types of beneficiaries, which is acceptable and possible to analyze from the

point of view of constructivism. However, the institutional actors like museums are not fully independent because they operate in constellation under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. This fact should be taken into account because it lifts the relationship to state-to-state level while distancing us from the actual actors belonging to the sector of culture.

Cultural producers from Armenia expressed their strong interest in collaboration with their peers and connections with cultural consumers in Europe. There was the realization that they need to readjust their cultural products for the new potential markets. In this regard, the Preparatory Action team has suggested that the individuals from the creative sector were constrained by the realities of the sector in Armenia, which throughout the Soviet period was shaped in relation to culture-sharing with the other Soviet republics. As a result, the need to help the creative sector in their efforts to reorient toward the new markets and adapt to the post-communist environment was outlined in the Preparatory Action report (2015). This suggestion is in line with the objectives of both the EU and Armenia. In the EU policies, this has translated into programmes with an objective of enabling cultural producers and performers to convert their creative talent into social and economic benefits such as new market vision, intangible and spiritual values, as well as added values for the community.

In 2015, "the Culture and Creativity" website was launched in line with the EU's objective aiming "to promote cultural contribution to the social and economic development"[11] of the six Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. The current project was an attempt to popularize and develop the skill-set of the cultural managers. The project pursued to achieve this goal with the use of electronic materials of success stories, online courses, and opportunities posted on their website. However, the fact, that the project was accessible only through the online channel, raises the pragmatic question of what share of the population could reach it given the constraints of generation and the level of internet penetration at the time. While the project is arguably a convenience solutions, it was not challenge by other difficulties such as the absence of legal frameworks, travel distance or visa restrictions. In respect to the reductionist conception of selection, it can be noted that the consent to participate by the competent authorities was a necessary step to overcome the difficulties in relation to the legal framework for cultural cooperation. Nevertheless, the

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11 Results from the content analysis of "the Culture and Creativity" website itself: https://www.culturepartnership.eu/en [Last accessed on 11 June 2021],

and document analysis of European Commission (2016). Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations. JOIN/2016/029 final. Brussels. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=JOIN%3A2016%3A29%3AFIN [Last accessed on 11 June 2021]

project from international cultural relations perspective is a significant advancement in particular equipping creative sector with knowledge to take on initiatives at the level of people-to-people relations.

In regard to developing the cultural managerial skills, CHOICE[12] (also an abbreviation that stands for Cultural Heritage: Opportunity for Improving Civic Engagement) was an actionable project in the period between 2015 and 2017. Four out of the six EaP countries took part in this programme, that is Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine were also participating besides Armenia. The project was carried out by a partner consortium is composed of non-profit organizations from the participating countries. While the project was carried in the sector of cultural heritage, it also aimed at fostering and encouraging NGOs (as well as non-profit organizations) to take a more visible role in the policy dialogues on issues of cultural heritage. Even though the funding for the project came from the EU's programme of the EaP Civil Society Facility, it went hand in hand with the observation from the Preparatory Action report (2015) that the transfer of knowledge in cultural management, and in particular in the areas of legislation on cultural matters, would be a crucial step for future relations with the EU. Besides the activation of NGOs in the policy dialogues on culture, the NGOs may have the functions of assisting the cultural producers and performers to engage trans-nationally. However, it was observed that NGOs working in the sector of international culture relations were limited in size and resources (The Preparatory Action report, 2015). Furthermore, the NGOs representatives were in consensus with the observations and expressed their interest in developing new managerial skills to be able to engage in cultural relations at the international level. Given the described situation in formal civil society, the project of CHOICE should have significant impact in setting the exemplar. The reason for regarding their operations as setting exemplar is due to the limited regional scope of project in Armenia. The project has delegated different NGOs to carry out their micro-projects in the Northern provinces of Lori and Shirak. On the other hand, the micro-projects exhibit different models including, but not limited to, an international cooperation to engage young photographers in visual representation of cultural heritage, or raising awareness of the cultural heritages by organizing events near the sites. To sum up, NGOs have a significant and multipurpose role for advancing future cultural relations between the EU and Armenia, while the next step in organic development of relation would be institutionalized relations in the field of culture which we discuss next.

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12 CHOICE Project website – "About" page http://choiceproject.eu/about-choice-for-home-page/ [Last accessed on 11 June 2021]

Empirical analysis shows that international cultural relations can be institutionalized when two sides having strategy agenda on cultural cooperation are able to agree on the terms of legal framework. Institutionalized cultural relations secure and provide efficient channels for the cooperation in the creative sector. Since the start of 2018, Armenia participates in the Creative Europe Culture sub-programme and cross-cultural strand. The Creative Europe Armenia desk was established in August 2018 with the support of the European Commission and the Ministry of Culture of Armenia. The first grants were awarded for cultural cooperation projects from Armenia in the same year according to the Partnership Implementation Report (2020). In relation to the Preparatory Action report (2015), it was possible to deduce the link between the founding of the desk and certain documented issues from creative sector representatives. In particular, it was mentioned that they found it difficult to find and receive information on the opportunities which the EU could offer them in the sector of internal cultural relations. Interestingly enough, the idea of founding a "council" on these issues was a suggestion from the cultural operators themselves in order to encourage the participation of Armenians in the EU's cultural initiatives. Moreover, the Preparatory Action (2014) reveals that the idea was expressed as early as in 2013 which was accepted positively in the perspective of the future Association Agreement (AA) between the EU and Armenia. However, the opening of the Creative Europe Armenia desk was postponed to 2018 because the CEPA was signed in November 2017 instead of the initially planned AA from 2013.

PCA	CEPA	AA
Not participating	*Countries fully Participating in the Culture sub-programme of Creative Europe programme*	
Azerbaijan Belarus	Armenia	Georgia Moldova Ukraine

Table 2*: Participation in the Creative Europe Culture sub-programme by the EaP countries.*

There are a couple of underlying considerations to be reviewed. When the participation of the EaP countries are compared and contrasted (see Table 2), the results suggest that Armenia has a significant and, yet, unrealized potential in historical identity which can serve as a source of finding shared values to reconnect with the European community. Among the six EaP countries, Armenia currently is the only case that does not

have high economic interest in terms of a free trade agreement but still pursues a closer political identity in the sector of culture which is non-excludable normatively. Moreover, it has been observed that the drive for a closer political identity is not top-to-down decision, but an aspiration held by many cultural actors.

Conclusion

To conclude the current thesis project, it should be appropriate to finish with following remarks and statements. Most of the academic debate has revolved around the theories of soft power (or neoliberalism) and constructivism (some scholars prefer idealism). Moreover, research has discussed the possible development of a post-liberal world order besides the well established theories of liberalism and constructivism. As a result, there has evolved slight confusion in relation to concepts of cultural diplomacy and international cultural relations. The current thesis project has aimed to sort any disagreements in the theory and to develop a solid basis for empirical analysis of the case of Armenia.

Cultural diplomacy has been regarded as an instrument from the public diplomacy tool-set to achieve nation-states' goals in a sense reminiscent that of nation-branding theories and soft power. The theory of soft power, in its own right, builds on the international relations theory of neoliberalism. Many scholars have deployed these theories to study the EU's soft power. It has been argued that liberalism and, hence, the theory of soft power are not conceptually the ideal suite for the study of the role of culture in external relations. In contrast to the instrumentalist intention of cultural diplomacy, the term of international cultural relations is defined to denote the trans-national engagement for culture and people.

The proposal of ideational cultural relations has been at the core of the EU's strategy on culture practically since 2014. Constuctivists have argued for attaching a greater importance and conceptual independence to international cultural relations and employing as the basis for the study of culture in the external relations of the EU. While EU's approach to culture in external relations has mainly been based on constructivism, it has allowed expanded circle of people get involved and contribute to the construction of a common identity on the basis of sharing norms. While it is obvious that the EU foreign policy toward the neighborhood countries can be mainly characterized by solidarity, it is yet uncertain what the prospects are for cultural relations. Research has mainly focused on the member states as the contributors in the construction of identity. In contrast to this member state only oriented focus, the current study has shown that the countries of the Eastern Partnership receive the chance to take part in the construction process at least with some limited scope due to challenges and constrains in the reality of the cultural sector.

The current paper argues that getting and keeping public attention is a rivalrous undertaking because of the nature of individuals. By economic definition, rival are the

goods 'whose consumption by one consumer prevents simultaneous consumption by other consumers.' Proponents of the liberalism will not be able to provide us with a response to the issue of why public attention is rivalrous because mainly because individuals are not their unit of analysis. However, social constructivism is the theory, that is able to resolve the current issue with the use of 'narratives – norms (or values) – identity' concept. Individuals – comprising the public of interest – would be receiving narratives from all sides non-excludably. However, they will filter and accept only the narratives that are consistent with their norms and values already engraved in their identity. The norm and values, in their own right, will need to be true to their identity. Moreover, identities are not only a source of reference for validation of new shared values but also a source for generating and revising the existing narratives. This proposal is in line with earlier referenced constructivism, which holds that common identity can be constructed as any other social phenomenon.

The EU's culture in external relations is the congruence of cultural policy and other transnational cultural activities with foreign policy. This perspective brought us closer to attaching some thought to the potential benefits for cultural producers and consumers instead of the interests of the national governments. However, it has been noted that foreign policy often is given priority over cultural policy in the policy-oriented viewpoints. In this vein, it would be misleading to assume that one nation or polity can simply promote its identity and transfer values to others through the channels of unidirectional cultural influence. Constructivists hold that processes of cultural engagement and collaboration define the identities of all participants and have the potential to shape a collective identity. Furthermore, it has been argued that political and historical identities (or roles) together comprise the collective identity. The political identity has been defined as the basic perceptions of alignment with one direction in the foreign policy. The historical identity has been regarded the source for the creation of differences on the basis of constructed narratives as well as the vision of relations with the West and one's own past. The possibility to revisit one's historical identity arguably raises the questions of sustainability of and need of amending foreign policy. The foreign policy direction would be sustainable only if a countries political and historical selves are consistent with each other. The foreign policy identity of a country from the perspective of the EU may translate into relations conceptualized as "of solidarity" or "of responsibility". The concept of solidarity is the will to support the diffusion of the norms and values in the efforts of building the political identity of the neighborhood countries. On the other hand, the concept of responsibility

rests on the conception of historical identity and entails moral obligations toward certain formerly communist countries due to relations in the immediate past.

The current paper has argued that shared identity is the intersection of political roles (or identities) of culturally engaging entities. New aspects of their new common identity are constructed with the use of narratives as well as verified on the basis of the norms and values deriving from their historical identities. The political identity translates into foreign policy direction of a country which is crucial for establishing deep partnerships. The political self of any country can be aligned only in direction of one foreign policy sector at a time and, as a result, international cultural relations face rivalry from the potential challengers. While bridging the two theories, the current paper has proposed the normative hypothesis that international cultural relations take place in a rivalrous context to attain or retain the political self of the country of interest. This hypothesis will provide a deeper insight of international cultural relations in the European context.

Following on the normative discussion, the current project has applied the proposed to case study of the cultural relation between the EU and Armenia. The case of Armenia has been selected because potentially interfering economic variable can be excluded from the calculation and, in the meantime, the partnership agreement with the EU in this case was advanced enough to allow a deep and extensive agenda of cooperation including in the areas of culture. Armenia and the EU signed the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in 2017 which does not entail association and, thus, does not include the free trade component. Arguably, the free trade component, or any economic aspect, would give liberalism an upper hand in the analysis of relations at the state-to-state level in particular. A limitation of this study is that the results are only representative of the case of Armenia. Moreover, we constrained the time-frame of this research to 2014-2020 and, thus, the results are only relevant for the Armenian reality of the period. However, the specific selection of the case put us at the height of engaging in detailed and intensive analysis.

The empirical analysis has shown that the EU's cultural engagement policy with non-state actors such as artist extends to its partner countries. Moreover, there was an evidence in data that the creative sector representatives from Armenia have expressed their interest to engage with the European counterpart as well as cultural consumers. This empirical finding has an implication for liberalism because factually in the partner countries also take part in collaborating in cultural sector and share their values. Moreover, the observation of interest to culturally engage is an invitation to revisit the coordination

problem, which is a supporting argument for the issue of capability-expectations gap. Finally, the role of the EU can be defined as legitimization of European culture and bringing the shared political identity into existence while taking the responsibility of servicing the policy of international cultural relations.

Indeed, the EU and Armenia have realized the possible mutual benefits of internation cultural relations. However, the cooperation faces certain challenges. The results of the current analysis have shown that some of them were possible to be solved within the current framework of agreements and the defined policy imperatives. On the other hand, the relationship also includes difficulties that are more complex in nature and politically sensitive. The challenges existing in cultural relations of Armenia and the EU have been classified within two categories. The use of typology to define the challenges assists the reader to focus on the core nature of the issues. The two categories of challenges are (1) sensitivity of political role, (2) and professional capacity development. The challenges in the category of the sensitivity of political role perhaps are the most difficult to resolve within the current policy framework. For instance, while Armenia and the EU managed to find opportunities and start cooperation in the cultural sector and beyond, Armenia at the same time has a special relationship with Russia which enables them to rise as a serious challenger. Secondly, the Armenian politics revolve around the issues of the Republic of Artsakh (also known as Nagorny Karabakh). These issue not only take extra resources but also shape the priorities of the cultural sector such as the issues of cultural heritage preservation. Thirdly, Armenia has a large diaspora worldwide and France being one of the biggest host countries among others in Europe. Notwithstanding the complexities, it has been possible to develop the partnership and our conclusive statement is that the EU-Armenia cultural relations have reached institutionalization in creative sector and need to be nurtured with the shared norms and values from historical identity for better resilience.

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