Strategic Calculation and International Socialization:  
Membership Incentives, Party Constellations, and Sustained Compliance in  
Central and Eastern Europe

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Revised draft submitted for IO special issue on  
“International Institutions and Socialization in Europe”

September 2004

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Word Count ca. 13,400
Abstract

The article uses a rationalist approach to explain the socialization of Central and Eastern Europe to liberal international human rights and democracy norms. According to this approach, socialization consists in a process of reinforcement, and its effectiveness depends on the balance between the international and domestic costs and benefits of compliance over an extended period of time. I claim that EU and NATO accession conditionality has been a necessary condition of sustained compliance in those countries of Central and Eastern Europe that violated liberal norms initially. The pathways and long-term outcomes of international socialization, however, vary with the constellations of major parties in the target states. Whereas conditionality has been effective with liberal and mixed party constellations, it has failed to produce sustained compliance in anti-liberal regimes. In the empirical part of the article, I substantiate these propositions with data on the development of liberal democracy in Central and Eastern Europe and case studies on Slovakia and Latvia.
Acknowledgments

For useful comments on earlier versions, I would like to thank the participants of the IDNET workshop seminars, especially Jeff Checkel, Matthew Evangelista, Judith Kelley, Thomas Risse, and Marianne van de Steeg. In addition, the anonymous reviewers and the editors of IO made excellent suggestions for improving and clarifying the argument. The research for this article was supported by a grant of the German Research Foundation (DFG), 2000-2002.
Introduction

After the end of the Cold War, European regional organizations proclaimed liberal democracy as the new standard of legitimacy for the states of the emerging pan-European international community. They defined the international socialization of the ex-communist Central and East European countries (CEECs) to this standard as a new core task for themselves and devised a diversified set of instruments – reaching from the provision of expertise to membership conditionality – to promote and support the democratic consolidation of the region.¹

Fifteen years later, however, it is obvious that the results have been highly divergent. Whereas one group of countries, mainly the central European and Baltic countries, quickly and smoothly adopted fundamental liberal norms of state organization and conduct, other CEECs – most notably Belarus and Serbia – have long defied “westernization”. Still others have displayed inconsistent patterns characterized by stop-and-go processes or fluctuation between progress and reversals. It is the aim of this article to explore the causal mechanism and conditions, which have produced the uneven outcomes and pathways of democratic international socialization in the CEECs.

My argument is based on a rationalist approach to international socialization. It conceives of socialization as a process of reinforcement and has three major components. First, whereas European regional organizations have used a variety of strategies and instruments, only the high material and political rewards of EU and NATO membership have triggered sustained domestic change in those CEECs that initially violated the liberal-

¹ See, e.g., the 1990 “Charter of Paris for a New Europe” of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) or the “Declaration on Central and Eastern Europe” by the Strasbourg summit of the European Community in December 1989.
democratic community norms. In contrast, normative suasion or social influence alone have not been effective. The accession conditionality of the EU and NATO consists in a positive strategy of reinforcement by reward. They offer the CEECs support and membership under the condition of conformance with the community norms and rules. If a country does not conform, they withhold the reward but do not engage in coercive enforcement.

Second, the main channel of international reinforcement in the CEECs is intergovernmental because societies are too weak vis-à-vis the states, and electorates are too volatile, to serve as effective agents of socialization. Under a policy of intergovernmental reinforcement by reward, the outcome depends on the political cost-benefit calculations of governments. The higher the domestic political costs of adaptation to international human rights and democratic norms, the less likely target governments will conform with them. Thus, the high and tangible rewards of EU and NATO membership are only effective in combination with low adaptation costs in the target countries.

Third, the long-term prospects of international socialization not only depend on the incumbent government but also on the calculations of their major competitors. As a consequence, the most important factor for successful international reinforcement is the constellation of parties. In countries in which all major parties are pro-western and reform-minded (liberal party constellation), international socialization has been smooth and has produced stable, consolidated democracies. In these countries, the political costs of adaptation were low, and elections have led to an alternation between reform-friendly forces. In contrast, in states dominated by nationalist, populist, and/or authoritarian political forces (anti-liberal constellation), international socialization failed. In these countries, the governments’ political costs of adaptation have been higher than the rewards of membership. Finally, countries with a mixed constellation, in which major parties are split between reform-oriented and nationalist-authoritarian parties, show a stop-and-go or up-and-down
pattern of norm conformance. Thanks to lock-in effects, however, which led the nationalist-authoritarian parties to adapt to the requirements of western integration, reinforcement by reward has eventually been successful. What is more, it is in the mixed-constellation countries that European organizations have had the most discernible effect on democratic consolidation.

In sum, the uneven outcomes and pathways of democratic international socialization in the CEECs can be explained by the mechanism of strategic calculation. The relevant conditions for sustained compliance have been the nature of international incentives and domestic political constellations. EU and NATO membership incentives have been effective in countries with liberal or mixed party constellations but not in authoritarian systems.

The causal links between reinforcement activities, internalization, and sustained compliance are not straightforward in these cases. In most countries with a liberal party constellation, the internalization of a liberal identity and liberal norms preceded sustained compliance, and norm conformance preceded the reinforcement activities of the regional organizations. For the mixed-constellation countries, however, the causal pathway seems to be exactly the reverse: membership conditionality resulted in compliance, and behavioral compliance might eventually give way to internalization. However, since membership conditionality has been in place throughout the entire period of examination, it is currently impossible to tell whether internalization has progressed to the point where norm-conforming behavior will be assured in the absence of external sanctions.

In the “theory” section, I develop a rationalist approach to international socialization based on strategic calculation. It describes the reinforcement mechanism and specifies the conditions under which it is expected to lead to effective international socialization. In the remainder of the paper, I explore the empirical plausibility of these conditions. Following a brief section on “data and methods”, I analyze the correlation between party constellations
and conformance patterns and conduct a process-tracing analysis of the international socialization of Slovakia and Latvia. The article concludes with a discussion of the prospects of internalization.

**Theory: Reinforcement, Party Constellations, and Socialization**

In this section, I specify the core mechanism and conditions of international socialization in Central and Eastern Europe. I claim that the generation of sustained compliance in the CEECs has been dependent on a socialization strategy of intergovernmental reinforcement by tangible membership rewards in combination with a liberal or mixed party constellation in the target countries.

*Mechanism: Socialization by Reinforcement*

I propose a rationalist approach to the study of international socialization based on strategic calculation (see Schimmelfennig 2000). It assumes a process characterized by exogenous, self-interested political preferences and instrumental action. Such an approach entails several conceptual and theoretical consequences.

1. The actors do not necessarily take the norms and rules of the international community for granted. They generally confront them as *external institutional facts* that work as a resource of support for norm-conforming behavior and as a constraint that imposes costs on norm-violating behavior. At any rate, their behavior in the socialization process is initially *motivated extrinsically* by self-defined political preferences. I assume these political preferences to be material and power-oriented. They consist in
security and welfare benefits as well as the desire to attain and maintain political power.

(2) Socialization works through reinforcement. International organizations reward norm-conforming and punish norm-violating behavior, and target states conform with the norms and rules in order to avoid punishment and gain rewards. The relevant rewards and punishments are those that affect the security and welfare of a state and increase the chance of political actors to come to and stay in power.

(3) The actors weigh up the costs and benefits of reinforcement and compliance in light of their own goals. Target states conform with international norms if it increases their political utility and on the condition that the costs of adaptation are smaller than the benefits of external rewards or the costs of external punishment.

(4) In addition, they manipulate the norms strategically to avoid or reduce the costs of socialization. They use and interpret international norms to justify their self-interested claims and frame their preferences and actions as norm-consistent. In other words, they act rhetorically (Schimmelfennig 2001; 2003: 194-225).

Socialization by reinforcement differs from the alternative mechanism of normative suasion with regard to actor motivation, process, and outcome (Risse 2000: 1-9). Actors calculate the consequences of norm conformance rather than reflecting upon its appropriateness; they engage in bargaining and rhetorical action rather than arguing and consensus-oriented; and they adapt their behavior rather than changing their views, interests, or identities. In the end, socialization by reinforcement does not exclude “sustained compliance based on the internalization of new norms and rules” (Checkel, this issue). However, behavioral change

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Note that I do not use “reinforcement” as a “mechanical”, non-rational mechanism as described, e.g., by Elster (1989: 82-88).
will typically precede internalization, and behavioral conformance will persist for an extended period of time without internalization. There are two ways in which the switch from a logic of consequences to a logic of appropriateness may be conceived to occur at the end of a sustained and successful reinforcement process: routinization and rationalization. These correspond to the two types of internalization outlined by Jeffrey Checkel in the introduction (see also Johnston 2001). In the first case, the socializees come to follow the community norms and rules habitually without being persuaded and changing their desires; in the second, they adapt their desires to the reinforced behavior in order to reduce cognitive dissonance (Elster 1983; Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990: 291; Zürn, this issue). In both cases, specific rewards and punishments are not necessary any more to elicit norm-conforming behavior, although a stable “shadow of reinforcement” probably helps to sustain the belief that nothing is to be gained by reverting to a calculation of the costs and benefits of compliance.

Reinforcement mechanisms can be distinguished along three dimensions: first, reinforcement can be based on rewards or punishments; second, it can use tangible (material or political) or intangible (social or symbolic) rewards and punishments; finally, it can proceed through an intergovernmental or a transnational channel.

In intergovernmental reinforcement by tangible rewards, the socialization agency offers the governments of the target states positive incentives, which would improve their security, welfare or political power and autonomy. The target governments are promised rewards like aid or membership on the condition that they conform with the community norms and rules. If a target government rejects them or fails to comply, the socialization agency simply withholds these rewards but does not pressure the target state into norm-
conforming behavior. To be effective, this mechanism requires that the target government expect the promised rewards to be higher than the costs of adaptation.

In contrast, intergovernmental reinforcement by punishment consists in the coercive enforcement of international norms. The socialization agency threatens to punish the socializees in case of non-compliance (beyond merely withholding the rewards). To be effective, reinforcement by punishment requires that the costs of external punishment be higher for the target government than the costs of adaptation. Moreover, the rewards and punishments may be social rather than material (social influence). Such rewards are international recognition, public praise and invitations to intergovernmental meetings; the corresponding punishments consist in exclusion, shaming and shunning (Johnston 2001: 499-500).

Material and social, positive and negative reinforcement mechanisms can also be used indirectly, via the transnational channel. In transnational reinforcement, the socialization agency uses rewards and punishments to mobilize groups and corporate actors in the society of the target state to put pressure on their government to change its policy. Transnational reinforcement is effective if the costs of putting pressure on the government are lower for the societal actors than the expected community rewards and if they are strong enough to force the government to adapt to the community norms and rules.

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3 See the discussion of positive sanctions combined with “assurances” not to punish the target actor for noncompliance in Baldwin (1971: 25-27) and Davis (2000: 12).

4 Tangible and social rewards are sometimes hard to distinguish. For instance, membership in international organizations often enhance the status of states and gives them access to material resources at the same time, or social punishments by the international community might deter foreign investment and weaken the domestic power of governments in the future. Here I treat social rewards and punishments as those that are not directly linked to or combined with tangible ones by the same actor (socialization agency).
Conditions of Effective Socialization I: Membership Incentives

Which of these reinforcement strategies are used in the international socialization of Central and Eastern Europe? And which are most likely to be effective – that is, produce sustained compliance and, eventually, internalization in the target countries – in light of the theoretical assumptions of the rationalist approach and the empirical conditions of socialization in the region? I argue that, while European regional organizations have pursued all of these strategies in different combinations at various points in time (in addition to teaching and persuasion; see Checkel 2001; Gheciu, this issue), intergovernmental reinforcement using the tangible rewards of EU and NATO membership is likely to be most effective (cf. Kelley 2004; Kubicek 2003).

All European regional organizations have continuously used social influence both in its positive and its negative form. They monitor the development of democracy and human rights in the CEECs and regularly assess the state of democratic consolidation in official reports, intergovernmental meetings and debates of their parliamentary assemblies. By drawing attention to violations of human rights and democratic norms or by expressing their satisfaction with the consolidation of democracy, they distribute praise and disapproval by the international community. In addition, the graded integration process of most European organizations – the differentiated promotion of states to “special guests” (Council of Europe), “partners for peace” (NATO) or “associates” (EU), then to candidates for membership and, finally, to full members – provides a system of status markers and confers different degrees of international legitimacy upon the CEECs.

In contrast, reinforcement by tangible punishments and rewards has been limited to the two organizations capable of providing material incentives and disincentives in the areas of security and welfare: the EU and NATO. Whereas reinforcement by tangible punishments
the use of coercion to stop the violation of community norms and enforce change – has been the exception and generally limited to situations of massive “ethnic cleansing” (above all in Bosnia-Hercegovina and Kosovo), both organizations have consistently used reinforcement by tangible rewards to promote human rights and democracy in the CEECs. Both organizations have set the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law, respect for human rights, and minority protection as political conditions for membership and the benefits that come with it: military protection by NATO, full access to the EU’s internal market and economic subsidies, and full participation in the decision-making of the most powerful organizations of the region. In both organizations, fulfillment of the political conditions has been a necessary and the most important condition for being admitted to accession negotiations. However, states that failed to meet the political conditions have not been coerced to introduce political reforms, nor have they received special assistance or support. They have simply been left behind in the “regatta” to membership with an open invitation to join once the political conditions are in place.

In light of the theoretical assumptions of the rationalist approach, and leaving aside the exceptional use of coercive punishment by European organizations, I suggest that only intergovernmental reinforcement by tangible rewards has had an effective impact in favor of norm-conforming domestic change in those postcommunist CEECs that initially violated liberal norms and that, among those rewards, the incentives of EU and NATO membership have been most effective in promoting international socialization.

The predominance of intergovernmental reinforcement can be attributed to the state-centric domestic structures and the electoral volatility in the CEECs. As a broad rule, the

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5 On the enlargement decision-making processes in the EU and NATO, see e.g. Goldgeier 1999; Sedelmeier 2000; Schimmelfennig 2003.
domestic structure of the CEECs is characterized by the weakness of society vis-à-vis the state. This is obvious in the presidential systems of government that prevail in the former Soviet republics but also applies to the advanced parliamentary democracies of central Europe. Even here, political parties have been organized top-down, have no or weak roots in society and social organizations, and depend on the state for their resources. A powerful civil society has failed to emerge despite promising beginnings in the revolutions of 1989. Rather, levels of political participation have declined. This domestic structure gives both governments and parties ample space for discretionary decision-making and strongly limits the influence of societal actors on day-to-day policy-making. Thus, since societal strength is a necessary condition of transnational reinforcement, this mechanism is unlikely to be effective in the international socialization of Central and Eastern Europe.

To be sure, CEE governments are generally subject to the most powerful sanctioning mechanism of society: electoral confirmation and defeat. “Electoral democracies” have come into being early in the transition process and have persisted although many CEECs have failed to institutionalize consolidated “liberal democracies” (Diamond 1996: 23-25). Even the most illiberal Central and Eastern European governments have not prohibited independent opposition parties or abolished elections altogether; and even unfair elections can hold unpleasant surprises for the incumbents (see the Yugoslav elections in 2000; cf. Jasiewicz 1998: 166). However, if elections are to serve as an effective instrument of reinforcement, a majority of the electorate must consistently reward norm-conforming and punish norm-violating state actors and programs.

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It seems, however, that actual voting behavior is more strongly shaped by immediate concerns with personal security and welfare than by concerns about the government’s conformance with western norms. Most often, changes in government have been caused by societal dissatisfaction with the hardships of economic shock therapy, economic mismanagement by the incumbent government, and corruption scandals, and this dissatisfaction has turned against reform-friendly and reform-adverse governments alike (cf. Jasiewicz 1998: 186; Pravda 2001: 26-27). The ascendance of centrist political forces in the Romanian and Bulgarian elections of 1996/97, the Slovak elections of 1998, and the Croatian and Serbian elections of 2000 certainly strengthened the reform orientation of these countries but it was predominantly the economic situation that brought about the change. As the subsequent election outcomes (2000/01 in Bulgaria and Romania and 2003/04 in Croatia and Serbia) show, voters may again shift their allegiance away from the most western-oriented political forces if these fail to provide for effective governance and an improvement of the economic situation. Thus, I suggest that elections in Central and Eastern Europe be best treated as a “random factor” that sometimes happens to provide an opening for improved norm conformance but does not work consistently in favor of socialization.7

The primacy of tangible rewards follows from the assumption of material and power-oriented political preferences and from the nature of the community norms and rules. In general, adopting the liberal political norms of the European international community means a loss in autonomy and power for the target governments. They have to respect the outcome of free and fair elections, the competencies of courts and parliaments, the rights of the opposition and national minorities, and the freedom of the media. These political

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7 This qualification distinguishes my argument from the more positive assessment of transnational reinforcement by Vachudova (2001).
disincentives need to be balanced in kind by incentives such as military protection or economic assistance to improve the security and the welfare of the state – and the re-election prospects of the government. Moreover, only the highest international rewards – those associated with EU and NATO membership – can be expected to balance substantial domestic power costs.

Under a policy of intergovernmental reinforcement by reward, it is up to the target government to decide whether it accepts the costs of adaptation in exchange for the promised benefits. Whatever choice it makes, it will not be punished or coerced by the international organization. For two reasons, I suggest that these decisions will depend on the size of the domestic political costs rather than variation in international rewards. First, the EU and NATO have generally pursued an open and meritocratic policy of enlargement, that is, both organizations have invited all European countries to enter into accession negotiations on the same political preconditions. They have not discriminated against individual non-member countries because of their strategic, economic, or cultural characteristics. Second, the material incentives of EU and NATO membership are high for all CEECs. They have generally sought protection against a potential Russian threat and the ethnic wars in the region and they depend on the EU market and investments. Thus, if EU and NATO membership incentives are high and accessible to all CEECs, in principle, they can be treated as a constant. It further follows that any explanation of the divergence of reinforcement outcomes must be based on different domestic conditions and costs.

Conditions of Effective Socialization II: Party Constellations

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8 See Mattli (1999) for a similar argument on the incentives of non-member states to join regional integration schemes.
Under the condition of electoral volatility and random election effects, the long-term prospects for socialization will not only depend on the cost-benefit calculations of the government currently in power but of potential future governments as well. All major parties – that is, all parties that are able to form a government or will be dominant in any feasible coalition government – must therefore make the same basic cost-benefit assessment in favor of norm conformance. In other words, I claim that the effectiveness of international socialization will depend on the party constellations in the target countries.  

I distinguish three basic types: liberal, anti-liberal, and mixed. If all major parties base their legitimacy claims and programs on liberal reform and integration into the western organizations (liberal party constellation), the conditions of intergovernmental reinforcement by reward are favorable because the perceived costs of adaptation will be low and will not change after a change of government. If, however, the major parties base their legitimacy claims and programs on nationalism, communism, populism, and/or authoritarianism (anti-liberal party constellation), the political costs of adaptation to liberal norms will be high. As a consequence, the conditions for successful reinforcement will be unfavorable. In mixed party constellations with major liberal and anti-liberal parties, the conditions of successful reinforcement are moderately positive.

Like the other countries of the region, the CEECs with a liberal party constellation had to go through the economic trough of transformation. Although they pursued different strategies of economic reform (for instance, gradualism in the Czech Republic, shock therapy

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9 To be sure, this variable only qualifies as a proximate cause: The party constellation depends in turn on deeper factors such as ethnic cleavages, political culture, socioeconomic structures, or transition trajectories.

10 See McFaul (2002) for a similar three-way categorization of transition countries and explanation of transition outcomes based on the domestic balance of power between democratic parties and supporters of the ancien régime.
in Poland), the population has had to suffer from the hardships of economic adjustment sooner or later and used the ballot to oust the incumbent parties from government. Moreover, political scandals have taken their toll. Whereas some of these countries have shown a remarkable stability of governments and parties (such as the Czech Republic and Slovenia), in others, they have been highly fluctuating and short-lived (such as in Poland and the Baltic countries). What distinguishes these countries from the other CEECs, however, is a general orientation of the major parties toward liberal democracy and western integration. Thus, whenever a government was dismissed or voted out of office, its successors followed the same basic parameters of political change. This not only applies to the parties of the center and the moderate right but also to the reconstructed post-communist parties that came to power through democratic elections only a few years after the communist breakdown in Hungary, Lithuania, and Poland.

The expectation for this group of countries is a quick and smooth socialization process resulting in high and stable conformance with western democratic standards. This is because, given the political programs and predominant legitimation strategies of the major parties, the political benefits of western integration are high and the costs of adaptation are comparatively low. Under these domestic conditions, however, transformation countries are likely to engage in “anticipatory adaptation” (Haggard et al. 1993) in the first place, that is, they conform with liberal norms even in the absence of external reinforcement. Thus, whereas socialization is highly successful, the independent contribution of international institutions to this outcome is limited.

The community organizations can have two kinds of impact on countries with a liberal party constellation. First, they reinforce and stabilize existing norm conformance and create a virtuous circle. They reward initial reform steps with material assistance and a strengthening of institutional ties. These rewards strengthen the norm-conforming
government domestically, create incentives for further adaptation, and raise its stakes in integration: the costs of deviant behavior become increasingly high. Second, the community organizations may have an impact on compliance with particular rules, which are not generally shared by liberal parties. In Central and Eastern Europe, this has mainly been the case with minority protection. It is only in these cases that intergovernmental reinforcement is expected to be a necessary condition of compliance in CEECs with a liberal party constellation. Just as in norm-violating CEECs with less favorable party constellations, however, it is still EU and NATO membership incentives rather than less tangible rewards that bring about domestic change.

In the *mixed constellation*, there is no elite consensus on liberal democratic reform and western integration. Liberal parties or coalitions have been able to come to power in these systems but did not exclusively shape their post-communist development. Either superficially reconstructed communist parties initiated (but also slowed down and distorted) democratic transition from above (such as in Romania). In these cases, norm conformance should have been slow and weak in the beginning. Or reform-adverse nationalists and populists benefited from the failure of reform-oriented parties to provide for economic recovery or efficient governance. In that case, the level of conformance should have stagnated. In some of these countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Slovakia), governmental authority has shifted more than once between the two camps. In these cases, I expect the level of conformance to change in a stop-and-go or up-and-down pattern.

Over time, however, these countries are still likely to be socialized effectively, although not as quickly and smoothly as the ones with a liberal party constellation (cf. McFaul 2002: 241-242). When liberal parties are in government, the liberal domestic changes they institutionalize and the progress they make in western integration raise the stakes in democratic consolidation and increase the costs of any future reversal. Populist parties
therefore adapt their political goals in order to preserve the achieved benefits of integration. After the major nationalist-authoritarian parties of Croatia (HDZ), Romania (PDSR) and Slovakia (HZDS) had been voted out of government, Romania and Slovakia started accession negotiations with the EU, and Croatia became an EU associate and applied for membership. During the same time, these parties modified their programs and presented themselves as unequivocally pro-integration. When the PDSR and the HDZ were back in power in 2000 and 2003, they stayed the course of reform and integration. Thus, the lock-in effects of western integration create path-dependency across changes in government and may, eventually, change the party constellation from mixed to liberal.

Finally, in the last group of countries, governments base their legitimacy on anti-liberal (nationalist, populist, or communist) ideologies and/or rely on authoritarian practices for the preservation of power. Whereas governments may agree to cosmetic changes or tactical concessions to reap the political benefits of western rewards, adaptation to liberal norms would undermine the basis of their rule. In these CEECs, socialization has little impact; autocracy rather than democracy is consolidated. Under reinforcement by reward, these countries are excluded from the benefits of assistance and membership. In contrast to states with mixed and liberal constellations, the stakes in reform therefore do not grow in countries with anti-liberal regimes and lock-in effects are absent. As a result, the conformance gap between these countries and the rest of the CEECs widens. Only a domestic revolution (such as in Serbia in 2000) can reverse this trend.

In sum, and assuming a socialization process characterized by strategic calculation and reinforcement, the following set of hypothetical expectations results from the discussion of domestic and international conditions of international socialization in the transformation countries of Central and Eastern Europe:
(1) In norm-violating CEECs, only intergovernmental reinforcement offering the reward of EU and NATO membership can generate sustained compliance with liberal-democratic norms.

(2) The effects of EU and NATO membership incentives on sustained compliance with liberal-democratic norms will, however, depend on the party constellation of the target countries.

(a) In countries with a liberal party constellation, intergovernmental reinforcement by reward will not only be effective but also quick and smooth.

(b) In countries with a mixed party constellation, intergovernmental reinforcement by reward will also be effective but take and longer and proceed via stop-and-go or up-and-down processes.

(c) In countries with an anti-liberal party constellation, intergovernmental reinforcement by reward will not be effective. 

In other words, EU or NATO membership incentives and a liberal or mixed party constellation are both necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for effective intergovernmental reinforcement in norm-violating target countries.

Data and Methods

To explore the empirical plausibility of my theoretical analysis and hypotheses, I will proceed in two steps: correlation and process tracing. In the first step, I will examine the hypotheses for individual countries in a simple bivariate correlation (between party constellations and compliance with western liberal norms) based on graphical inspection. In order to capture as

11 See Table 1 on p. XXX for country-specific predictions based on these hypotheses.
much variation as possible and to detect patterns of outcomes, I analyze a large number of CEECs: all ten new NATO members as well as the largest European successor states of the Soviet Union (Belarus, Russia, Ukraine) and of Yugoslavia (Croatia and Serbia-Montenegro). To measure sustained compliance, I use the Freedom Index, the summary rating provided annually by Freedom House for civil liberties and political rights.\textsuperscript{12} According to Diamond (1996: 24), Freedom House ratings are “the best available empirical indicator[s] of ‘liberal democracy.’” The Freedom House ratings allow me to measure overall conformance with the liberal-democratic community norms and rules in a large number of countries over an extended period of time. Consistently good ratings for a longer time period are a useful indicator of the sustained compliance that is used here as a proxy for effective socialization. They do not, however, give us information on compliance (and, possibly, variation in compliance) with specific rules and demands of western organizations nor do they tell us whether or not compliance resulted from internalization. In addition, even though the correlation provides a general plausibility probe for the hypothesized covariation, it cannot conclusively establish that intergovernmental reinforcement is a necessary condition of sustained compliance\textsuperscript{13} nor does it tell us whether it was intergovernmental reinforcement that produced the observed behavior.

\textsuperscript{12} The Freedom Index combines the ratings for “civil liberties” and “political rights” and ranges from 1 (best) to 7 (worst). See <http://www.freedomhouse.org>. I cross-checked the Freedom House ratings with Polity scores. Generally, correlation between Polity and Freedom House data is high (Jaggers and Gurr 1995: 474) and the general patterns of scores for the CEECs largely coincide. (However, Ukraine is evaluated significantly better by Polity than by Freedom House; the opposite is true for the Baltic countries.) Moreover, there is less variation in Polity scores over time.

\textsuperscript{13} See Schimmelfennig forthcoming for a Qualitative Comparative Analysis, which shows that credible EU and/or NATO membership incentives are indeed a necessary condition of effective political conditionality.
For these reasons, I turn to process-tracing analysis in the third empirical section. It serves a positive and a negative purpose. The positive purpose is to show that the international socialization of Central and Eastern Europe and its outcomes can be plausibly reconstructed as a process of intergovernmental reinforcement by reward, the results of which vary with the political costs of adaptation for the target governments. The negative purpose is to demonstrate that the process and the outcomes cannot be explained either by social influence or by normative suasion. Since process analysis is too resource-intensive for a large number of cases, and its output cannot be condensed as much as that of correlation, I examine only two cases representing different party constellations: Latvia (liberal) and Slovakia (mixed). Both cases are useful to analyze the impact of accession conditionality and domestic costs of adaptation and to show the limits of alternative explanations. In order to obtain a detailed reconstruction of the process, I mainly use sources that provide day-to-day coverage of events: specialized news agencies and press reports.

Party Constellations and Conformance Patterns

In this section, I explore the hypothesized correlation between membership incentives, party constellations and conformance patterns. Table 1 shows a classification of CEECs according to the independent variable “party constellations“ and the expectations on socialization that follow from this classification. As indicated in the theory section, I identified “liberal parties” on the basis of their general programmatic orientation toward the western, liberal international community and its values and norms. I mainly consulted the country-specific expert literature to do so. Since liberal parties have in some cases violated, and non-liberal

14 Note that the classification of CEECs is based on the 1990-2000 evidence.
parties have conformed with, liberal norms, the relation between party orientation and compliance is not tautological.

EU and NATO offered the CEECs a general membership perspective in July 1993 (Copenhagen European Council) and January 1994 (Brussels NATO summit) but both organizations only began to select countries for accession talks in 1996 and 1997. Thus, if membership incentives were a necessary and sufficient condition of sustained compliance, we should observe a marked improvement in Freedom House ratings in or immediately after this period. However, according to the hypotheses, the effect of external rewards is mediated by party constellations. Thus, we should see prior norm conformance in the liberal countries and neither prior nor subsequent conformance in the anti-liberal countries. In contrast, membership incentives should matter most in the mixed-constellation countries.

Figure 1 shows the Freedom House ratings for CEECs with a liberal party constellation between 1988 and 2003. The figure has three noticeable features. First, there is a sharp rise in Freedom House ratings between 1988 and 1991. That is, the major improvements in democracy and human rights took place before the offer of EU and NATO membership and, indeed, before any European regional organization embarked upon specific support activities for democracy in Central and Eastern Europe.

Second, many CEECs with a liberal party constellation also reached a high, western level of conformance – the rating of 1.5 matches that of most western countries – before the
EU and NATO decided to admit CEECs. In 1993, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia had a rating of 1.5; Poland and Lithuania were rated only slightly worse (2). From 1995 onwards, these five countries have had a stable rating of 1.5 or better. Obviously, these are cases of domestically driven norm conformance or “self-socialization”. Moreover, high and sustained compliance in the absence of external incentives is also an indication of internalization. However, this internalization cannot be attributed to specific activities of international institutions. As expected, international organizations appear to have a had a stabilizing role at best.

Third, the two countries in this group, which needed until 1996/97 to attain a rating of 1.5, were Estonia and Latvia. The reason for this slightly worse performance were problems with the treatment and the rights of the large Russian-speaking minorities in both Baltic countries. The fact that the attainment of a high level of norm conformance coincided with the preparations of the EU and NATO for the first round of accession negotiations suggests a possible causal link between membership incentives and norm conformance. Moreover, it appears to confirm an independent role for international institutions when specific norms (such as minority protection) are contested among liberal parties (see case study on Latvia below).

< Figure 2 about here>

In contrast, CEECs with *anti-liberal party constellations* (Figure 2) have generally scored badly throughout the post-communist period.\(^{15}\) None of them has been rated a “free

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\(^{15}\) The line for Serbia-Montenegro ends in 1999. After the regime change of 2000, the country switched from “anti-liberal” to “mixed”. 
country even temporarily; conformance has been absent altogether or has remained at a low level. Following short periods of initial democratization immediately after the breakdown of communism, authoritarian or autocratic rule was consolidated (as indicated by stable ratings between 4 and 6 after 1999). As expected, EU and NATO accession conditionality did not have any discernible impact on democratization or democratic consolidation in these countries. Rather, conformance has deteriorated since the mid-1990s.

Figure 3 shows the development of norm conformance in the countries with a *mixed constellation* of major political forces. Again, I wish to emphasize three observations. First, as in the case of the liberal-constellation countries, big improvements in democracy and human rights took place between 1988 and 1991 and, thus, in the absence of specific socialization efforts by European regional organizations. In contrast with the liberal-constellation countries, however, these improvements did not attain high, western levels of norm compliance before membership incentives became effective.

Second, the performance of mixed-constellation countries follows individual patterns, mostly reflecting changes in government. The up-and-down pattern of norm conformance in Slovakia mirrors the alternation between the populist and authoritarian-style Mečiar governments (1993 and 1994-1998) and the reform coalitions of 1994 and since 1998. The ratings for Croatia worsened with the consolidation of the nationalist Tudjman regime at the beginning of the Yugoslav succession wars and improved markedly after his death and the switch to a liberal coalition in 2000. Romania shows a slow but overall successful, stop-and-go process of compliance. During the first, post-communist, Illiescu regime (1991-1996), compliance improved slowly but the ratings did not get better than 3.5. The reform coalition
(1996-2000) achieved a rating of 2. Only the Bulgarian case does not provide evidence for the conformance effect of mixed party constellations. According to Freedom House, the ratings were even better during the government of the Socialist Party than under the reformist UDF government between 1997 and 2001.

Finally, Figure 3 shows the expected long-term convergence towards high levels of norm conformance. Since 2001, the ratings for the four countries vary between 1.5 and 2, which mirrors the state of compliance in the liberal-constellation countries in 1995 and 1996. The clearest indicator for a lock-in effect of EU and NATO integration is Romania, where the rating of 2 was maintained after the return to power of the PDSR and Iliescu in 2000. A similar effect should be observable in the coming years for Croatia after the return of the HZS in 2003.

Generally, on graphical inspection, the results of the exploratory correlation analysis broadly corroborate the hypothetical expectations of the effects of party constellations on long-term norm conformance under a policy of intergovernmental reinforcement by reward. They are, however, too vague to demonstrate the impact of EU and NATO membership incentives and to exclude alternative mechanisms of socialization.

**Process-tracing Analysis: The International Socialization of Slovakia and Latvia**

I selected Slovakia under Mečiar and Latvia for the process-tracing analysis because they represent extreme cases in their category of countries and are best suited to demonstrate the causal relevance of intergovernmental reinforcement by rewards and domestic adaptation costs. Among the mixed-constellation countries, Slovakia has been the most likely case of effective socialization. It quickly established institutional ties with the western organizations
and has been a serious candidate for early membership; it has a vibrant and western-oriented civil society with relatively strong transnational ties. The case study will show, however, that the governmental power costs of adaptation prevented compliance during the Mečiar government in spite of these favorable conditions.

Latvia is special because it represents a country with a liberal party constellation and a record of sustained non-compliance in the area of minority rights. The case study shows that a liberal party constellation is neither a sufficient condition of automatic compliance nor of effective persuasion or social influence. It demonstrates that even in a socialization-friendly domestic environment, intergovernmental reinforcement by tangible rewards has been a necessary condition of overcoming norm violation. Thus, whereas the Slovak study serves to establish the causal relevance of domestic adaptation costs (under otherwise favorable international and transnational conditions), the Latvian study emphasizes the crucial impact of external incentives (under otherwise favorable domestic conditions).

Slovakia under Mečiar

In September 1994, Vladimír Mečiar and his party, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), won the parliamentary elections and formed a coalition with the Slovak National Party (SNS) and the Association of the Workers of Slovakia (ZRS). Immediately after the elections, the coalition embarked upon an authoritarian path. Above all, it sought to concentrate political power in the hands of the prime minister: it curbed the rights of the opposition in parliament and harassed its members; it defamed, ignored, and tried to force out of office President Michal Kováč; it ignored decisions by independent courts; and it brought public administration at all levels under the control of its followers. Moreover, it expanded governmental control of the audiovisual media, applied financial pressure on the private media and restricted the freedom of the press. Finally, it was hostile toward any autonomous
rights of the Hungarian minority that makes up around 12 percent of the population. In sum, the political style of the Mečiar government between 1994-1998 is well characterized as a “tyranny of the majority” (see Bútora and Bútorová 1999: 84; Schneider 1997).

Western policy. In reaction to the authoritarian turn in Slovak politics, western organizations used a variety of instruments. In line with a policy of reinforcement by reward, EU and NATO held out the carrot of membership but did not threaten to suspend existing agreements on EU association or NATO partnership. This policy was accompanied by an intensive shaming and shunning campaign against the Mečiar government.

Almost immediately after the 1994 elections, the EU began to criticize the political development in Slovakia (cf. Henderson 2002: 88-93; Krause 2003: 66-70; Malová and Rybář 2003: 104-107). After the session of the Slovak parliament in November 1994, in which the new majority replaced all major positions in parliament and the state media by their own followers, the EU issued a first démarche. Unmistakably pointing at its accession conditionality, the EU expressed “concern at some political developments since the election”, declared that a strengthening of relations with Brussels “involves not only benefits, but also obligations on Slovakia’s side and will depend on the sort of policies which the new Slovak government pursues”, and hoped that Slovakia would “thoroughly evaluate its own interests and will continue pursuing the course of democratic reforms”.16 In October 1995, the growing tension between the government and the President triggered two further, separate démarches by the EU and the United States. The EU demarche clearly reminded the Mečiar government of “the EU’s common democratic practices” and of the fact that “Slovakia is an

associated country in a pre-accession period and [...] the criteria of approval at the Copenhagen Summit are applicable to it.”

In 1996, the Slovak government received increasingly concrete signals that its chances of joining the EU or NATO had diminished sharply. The EU ambassador told a meeting near Bratislava that for Slovakia there still was “much work to be done and in this task there can be no delay.” He added that “it is only through its own efforts in the field of democracy, as in the economy, that Slovakia can hope to join the EU.” The U.S. ambassador issued a similar warning with regard to NATO. When the U.S. Congress appropriated funds for the preparation of NATO enlargement in 1996, Slovakia was not on the list of beneficiaries. Finally, in 1997, Slovakia was not invited either to open accession negotiations with the EU or to join NATO. Even after it had been decided that Slovakia would not be among the first-round candidates, the western organizations continued to assure Slovakia that it was eligible to become a member in principle. Representatives of EU organizations and member states offered Slovakia a last chance to demonstrate its commitment to European integration and liberal democracy by quickly introducing a few changes in parliament (Krause 2003: 68). However, the western organizations were increasingly calling for a change in government as a prerequisite of membership. For instance, in October 1997, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott told a delegation of Slovak opposition leaders that “NATO’s door is still open to Slovakia with the right democratic changes” (Goldman 1999: 166). These calls for a change through elections were paralleled by transnational advice and financial support to NGOs and opposition parties by western foundations, parties and

17 Agence Europe, 27 October 1995.

18 Quoted according to Goldman (1999: 155). See also Agence Europe, 25 October 1996.
In sum, the international conditions of effective reinforcement were extremely positive. Both the EU and NATO articulated their conditional promise of accession early, clearly, and consistently. However, domestic cost-benefit calculations frustrated the efforts of the regional organizations.

Target state response. In spite of the unambiguous western warnings and the high stakes of EU and NATO membership involved, western policy had no major or lasting impact on the compliance record of the Mečiar government. The most frequent discursive responses were denial and accusations of inconsistency: the Slovak government reproached the West for lacking information or misperceiving the situation in the country, for interfering with its domestic affairs and using double standards. Government representatives described the state of democracy in Slovakia as at least as good as in the other central European countries or emphasized the positive economic situation. Or they simply blamed the opposition or international media for the “distorted image” of Slovakia abroad. Thus, the Mečiar government did not openly contest or reject western norms but sought to manipulate them rhetorically to avoid their practical implications.

At the behavioral level, western criticism did little to change the authoritarian style of the government. Even the single most important success of western policy, the signing of the Basic Treaty between Slovakia and Hungary, committing Slovakia to the Council of Europe (CE) guidelines for the treatment of national minorities, was compromised and rendered ineffective by domestic measures. Signed by Slovakia at the Stability Pact conference in March 1995, the treaty met with fierce resistance of Mečiar’s nationalist coalition partners at

\[\text{\textsuperscript{19}}\text{See, for instance, Goldman (1999: 159-164); Schneider 1997: (33-34), RFE/RL Newsline, 13 February 1998.}\]
home. Slovakia finally ratified the treaty in March 1996 but only after the government had planned several laws to dilute the treaty provisions (see, e.g., Leff 1997: 250; Schneider 1997: 20-24). First, the Language Law prescribed the exclusive use of the Slovak language for all public and official acts. Second, a territorial reform redefined administrative districts so that the share of Hungarians would remain low enough to deny them self-government without violating international norms. Third, the government passed a “Law on the Protection of the Republic”, an amendment to the Penal Code, that was primarily but not exclusively directed against the Hungarian minority by threatening anyone allegedly undermining the state with criticism. Fourth, the Slovak government unilaterally added an appendix to the treaty rejecting the granting of collective minority rights and, finally, it flatly declined to pass a new language law according to the recommendations of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM).20

The failure of reinforcement by reward in the Slovak case can be attributed mainly to the preponderance of anti-liberal parties and domestic political concerns of power preservation. Both the right-wing nationalist SNS and the left-wing ZRS favored neutralism and close collaboration with Russia, were staunchly anti-western parties, and welcomed rather than deplored Slovakia’s exclusion from EU and NATO membership (Goldman 1999: 153, 157-158; Leff 1997: 243; Samson 1997: 9). The HZDS and Mečiar are more difficult to judge. The HZDS started out as a broad, ideologically diverse movement under the charismatic leadership of Vladimír Mečiar. Although successive secessions and splits, on the whole, made the party more authoritarian and nationalist in the course of time, it remained without a specific ideological foundation or orientation. The HZDS program is best described as populist; the party “predominantly represented the older, less educated, rural, and less

20 RFE/RL Newsline, 5 October 1997.
reform-minded part of the population” (Bútora and Bútorová 1999: 81). The party was neither anti-western nor anti-liberal nor anti-Hungarian in principle. Nor, however, was it intrinsically committed to western integration, liberal values and norms, or minority protection.

Mečiar’s attitude towards western integration and conditionality is best described as instrumental. He had allied himself to the SNS and the ZRS in order to return to government in 1994, and since the other parties in parliament refused to enter into a coalition with him, he needed to accommodate their nationalist and anti-western preferences to remain in power. The primacy of domestic power preservation led to a dualistic policy. Externally, Mečiar and his foreign ministers ceremonially upheld Slovakia’s bid to join the western organizations and rhetorically vowed to fulfill the prerequisites of membership eventually. In its program, the Mečiar government accorded EU and NATO membership the first priority among its foreign policy goals, and when the new prime minister met EP President Haensch in January 1995, he assured him “that Slovakia would respect all the obligations incumbent upon countries which are applicants for admission to the EU”, in particular with regard to the Hungarian minority and the privatization of the economy.21 This promise was constantly reiterated and culminated in a series of last-minute rhetorical moves to secure participation in EU accession negotiations in 1997.22 Internally, however, these promises were never implemented because Mečiar wanted to keep both his coalition partners and his authoritarian control of Slovak politics. Exposing the inconsistency of this dualistic policy, Slovak foreign


Minister Hamžík resigned in May 1997, arguing that “Slovakia’s vital international interests” were being subordinated to the domestic power struggle.\textsuperscript{23}

*Alternative Mechanisms.* Could we explain the lack of compliance by the Mečiar government otherwise? First, it is true that core conditions for the effectiveness of *social learning* or *social influence* (norm resonance and identification with the western aspiration group) were not particularly favorable. However, this applies mainly to Mečiar’s coalition partners, less to the HZDS or Mečiar himself who had embraced Slovak nationalism for instrumental reasons and wanted to lead Slovakia into the western organizations. Thus, the overriding concern with the preservation of domestic power is an indispensable element in explaining why both persuasive appeals and reward-based reinforcement had such a small impact. Even rhetorical entrapment did not work as an opening on the way to behavioral change and internalization (Risse and Sikkink 1999: 16).

Despite comparatively favorable conditions, *transnational reinforcement* did not prove effective either. First, support for democracy in Slovakia was as strong as in the more consolidated democracies of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland.\textsuperscript{24} In addition, Slovak society was highly concerned about the deterioration of the human rights situation in their country. Of all the EU candidate countries, Slovaks saw the political development of their country (between 1993 and 1997) most negatively (Stankovsky, Plasser and Ulram 1998: 78). Second, Slovakia has one of the most strongly developed (in terms of number of NGOs) and active civil societies in Central and Eastern Europe (cf. Kaldor and Vejvoda 1999: 16, 19). Third, Slovak opposition parties were linked transnationally with and supported by European party organizations. Nevertheless, transnational influences failed to change Slovak policy

\textsuperscript{23} RFE/RL Newsline, 27 May 1997.
\textsuperscript{24} See Stankovsky, Plasser and Ulram (1998: 80). Some figures were even better than in the Central European neighboring countries (ibid.: 81, 83).
while Mečiar was in power and were largely redundant in bringing about change in the parliamentary elections of 1998 (see Krause 2003: 78-81).

The case study of Slovakia during the Mečiar government of 1994-1998 confirms the postulated mechanisms and conditions of international socialization in Central and Eastern Europe. The process was primarily characterized by accession conditionality and by the self-serving manipulation of international norms (“rhetorical action”) on the part of the Slovak government. However, in spite of the highest external incentives the European international community can offer, the power costs of Slovakia’s nationalist-authoritarian government undermined their allure. And despite societal conditions that were highly favorable by regional standards, transnational reinforcement did not have a decisive impact either.

However, the Slovak case does not sufficiently discriminate between alternative socialization mechanisms. Conditions of successful reinforcement by reward were as bad as those of successful social influence or normative suasion; EU and NATO failed as much as the OSCE and the Council of Europe to produce compliance. I therefore analyze a second case – the promotion of minority rights in Latvia.

**Latvia**

Latvia is the Baltic state with the highest proportion of so-called “Russian-speakers”. When it became independent from the Soviet Union in 1991, citizenship of the new state was granted only to the citizens of the interwar Latvian Republic and their descendants. This left thirty percent of the population stateless and deprived of political rights. Moreover, the government set prohibitively high conditions for their naturalization and enacted discriminating laws on the use of the Latvian language, education, and economic rights.

*Western policy.* Since 1993, the promotion of minority rights in Latvia has been mainly entrusted to Max van der Stoel, the OSCE’s High Commissioner on National
Minorities (HCNM). In his frequent visits and subsequent recommendations to the Latvian government, van der Stoel used a mixture of expert advice, persuasion, and social influence to make Latvia comply with western demands on minority policy. He referred to Latvia’s prior commitments, its international legal obligations, its obligations as a democratic country seeking membership in the western organizations, and to the example of other member countries of the western community in order to induce Latvia to amend its laws.25

For instance, in his April 1993 letter to Foreign Minister Andrejevs, in which he urged Latvia to pass a citizenship law with a naturalization requirement of only five years of residence, van der Stoel justified his suggestions as being “inspired [...] by the various CSCE documents to which Latvia [...] has subscribed” and recommended that Latvia should “restrict itself to requirements for citizenship which [...] would not go beyond those used by most CSCE states.”26 When he responded to the draft citizenship law in December of the same year, he conveyed his “impression that, within the community of CSCE states, the solution of citizenship issues is seen as being closely connected with democratic principles” so that, as a consequence of the denial of political rights to a large part of the population, “the character of the democratic system in Latvia might even be put into question. In this connection I refer to the 1990 CSCE Copenhagen Document which states that the basis of the authority and legitimacy of all governments is the will of the people.”27

The CE, the EU, and NATO went beyond persuasion and shaming and linked compliance with membership. In December 1993, the CE stated clearly that Latvia would not be admitted as a member if it did not change the citizenship law according to the HCNM’s recommendations. In July 1997, in its Opinions on the applicant countries, the European

25 See Zaagman 1999 and the documents cited there.
Commission judged Latvia to fulfill the political criteria for admission in general but mirrored the concerns of the HCNM by demanding that “Latvia needs to take measures to accelerate naturalisation procedures to enable the Russian speaking non-citizens to become better integrated into Latvian society.” Finally, in the run-up to NATO’s Prague summit of 2002, NATO and U.S. representatives urged Latvia to abolish its language proficiency requirements for people standing in elections. “The NATO nations will be watching very carefully what you do this year in relation to the election laws so that they conform to standards throughout NATO countries and the wider international community,” Secretary-General Robertson said in February 2002 in a speech to Latvia’s parliament.28

*Target state response.* In general, the major demands of the HCNM and his efforts to generate compliance by combining teaching and shaming were not effective alone. Only when they were linked to Latvia’s accession to western organizations did the Latvian government and parliament reluctantly give in. This process repeated itself several times on different issues.

In response to the April 1993 letter of van der Stoel, Foreign Minister Andrejevs argued defensively and evasively. He pointed out that the Supreme Council had no legal mandate to change the body of Latvia’s citizenship so that a new law would have to await the election of a new parliament (the Saeima) in June 1993; and in response to the December 1993 letter, he explained that the Latvian government would wait for further recommendations by other international organizations before expressing his views on van der Stoel’s suggestions.29 The Latvian parliament initially ignored the HCNM’s suggestions altogether. Instead of granting citizenship to all persons with five years of residence in Latvia,

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29 See footnotes 23 and 24 above.
the draft law of November 1993 made naturalization dependent on an annual quota to be determined by government and parliament according to economic and demographic considerations. And although van der Stoel, in response to the quota system, had suggested that it be replaced by a gradual but legally determined naturalization system, the citizenship law of June 1994 modified the draft law only slightly. However, President Guntis Ulmanis who had been consulting intensively with representatives of the CE (which had made accession conditional on a change of the law) sent the law back to the Saeima for revision. He justified his veto with international repercussions that would spell the danger of Latvia’s isolation in Europe and damage its international reputation. 30 One month later, the Saeima passed a revised law, which envisaged widening windows of naturalization for different age cohorts until 2003. Although the time frame was longer than suggested by the HCNM, the law basically followed the principle of gradual naturalization and met with international approval. Having cleared this crucial hurdle, Latvia was admitted to the CE in early 1995 (see Jubulis 1996).

Yet the implementation of the citizenship law did not meet the expectations because only a minor proportion of those eligible used and successfully completed the naturalization procedures. In his letters of October 1996 and May 1997 to Foreign Minister Birkavs, van der Stoel therefore made several recommendations to overcome the “stagnation of the naturalization process”: the reduction of naturalization fees, the simplification of the tests required of new citizens, and, above all, the granting of citizenship to stateless children and the abolishment of the naturalization windows. The response was again evasive and defensive. Birkavs pointed to “political difficulties“ and an “ongoing discussion“, defended

30 Although the CE does not offer tangible rewards, it is generally seen as an antechamber to the EU and NATO.
Latvian practice as compatible with international law, and declared that a change in the law had to be decided by the Saeima, not the government.31

After the European Commission had published its Opinion on Latvia mirroring the HCNM’s demands, the Latvian government drew up a package of laws in line with the OSCE recommendations. At the same time, however, the Saeima’s working group drafted amendments that, according to van der Stoel, did not “comply in any way with my original Recommendations.”32 In May 1998, the lawmakers approved an amendment that would allow stateless children to become citizens only at the age of 16 and only if they could prove sufficient knowledge of the Latvian language.33 On 1 June, Foreign Minister Birkavs urged the parliament to comply with OSCE recommendations because Latvia would otherwise risk losing allies in Europe and the U.S.34 Later in June, the amendments as proposed by the government were approved by a center-left majority in the Saeima and hailed by both the U.S. administration and the EU as furthering Latvia’s integration into European and transatlantic structures.35

Still, the party of Prime Minister Krasts (LNNK) called for a referendum. Ahead of the referendum, western representatives stepped up their efforts to influence the electorate. Van der Stoel assured Latvians, on the one hand, that the amendments were “not dangerous”; on the other hand, he made it clear that the outcome of the referendum would have significant influence on Latvia’s international position; U.S. president Clinton stressed that the

33 RFE/RL Newsline, 21 May 1998.
34 RFE/RL Newsline, 2 June 1998.
amendments were essential for the country’s integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. In the domestic debate, President Ulmanis pleaded: “Let those who have decided to vote for a rejection [of the amendments] think as to whether they are giving Latvia positive impetus or whether their vote will isolate Latvia from the rest of the world.” On 3 October 1998, 53 percent of the voters approved the amendments.

A further case is the Latvian state language bill. In 1998, the Saeima drafted a law that was criticized by the OSCE and the CE because it not only required the use of the state language in the public sector but also obligated private bodies and enterprises to conduct their activities in Latvian. In April 1999, van der Stoel warned that passage of the bill in its current form might impair Riga’s chances of integration into the EU. One day later, he was joined by Prime Minister Kristopāns who stressed that the legislation must be compatible with Latvia’s international obligations. The Finnish EU presidency warned that the language law could damage Latvia’s chances of joining the EU but a large majority of the Saeima voted in favor nevertheless. At that point, the new president Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga refused to sign the law and asked the parliament to revise it to conform with EU legislation – a decision “warmly welcome” by van der Stoel. On 9 December 1999, the Saeima passed a revised law which was “essentially in conformity” with international norms according to the HCNM. A few days later, Latvia was invited to begin accession negotiations with the EU.

A final case concerns the language proficiency requirements for candidates in local and national elections. Copying the linkage established by van der Stoel, Peter Semneby, the head of the OSCE mission to Latvia, called for an abolition of these requirements which “might prove an obstacle to EU and NATO accession.” In December 2001, a few days before the OSCE Permanent Council discussed the closure of the OSCE mission in Latvia, which the Latvian government regarded as an important step toward EU and NATO membership, President Viķe-Freiberga announced an initiative to heed Semneby’s call. In December 2001, a few days before the OSCE Permanent Council discussed the closure of the OSCE mission in Latvia, which the Latvian government regarded as an important step toward EU and NATO membership, President Viķe-Freiberga announced an initiative to heed Semneby’s call. In December 2001, a few days before the OSCE Permanent Council discussed the closure of the OSCE mission in Latvia, which the Latvian government regarded as an important step toward EU and NATO membership, President Viķe-Freiberga announced an initiative to heed Semneby’s call. 41 In December 2001, a few days before the OSCE Permanent Council discussed the closure of the OSCE mission in Latvia, which the Latvian government regarded as an important step toward EU and NATO membership, President Viķe-Freiberga announced an initiative to heed Semneby’s call. 42 In May 2002, the Latvian parliament amended the election law to clear this last political hurdle before the EU’s and NATO’s upcoming enlargement decisions. According to Nils Muiznieks, the director of the Latvian Center for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies, these were the main incentives for legal change:

“It was in the guidelines for closing the OSCE mission [in Latvia], and Latvia just had a case [against the language law] brought before the UN [Human Rights Committee] and another case before the European Court of Human Rights. But the only thing that really pushed the Latvian government to move in this direction was the fact that a number of NATO countries, especially America, said, ‘You must change this law!’”

(quoted in Mite 2002)

In a parallel move to appease Latvian nationalists, the constitution was amended to strengthen the role of the Latvian language in parliament and local elected bodies.

Just as the Slovak case, the Latvian case can be explained by the interaction of external incentives and domestic costs. Whereas weak incentives and high domestic costs blocked compliance initially, reduced costs of adaptation together with EU and NATO


membership incentives produced norm-conforming behavior in the second half of the 1990s. Initially, the center-right governments that dominated Latvian politics in the 1990s perceived the naturalization of the large non-Latvian population as a grave political threat. In 1990 and 1991, a great majority of the “Russian-speakers” had voted against independence from the Soviet Union. Moreover, they favored parties on the left of the political spectrum. As a result, in a situation in which Russian troops were still stationed on Latvian territory and the Russian foreign policy doctrine put Latvia in its sphere of influence, the Latvian governments feared that large-scale naturalization would threaten Latvian independence and culture and strengthen the influence of Russia and the political left. Finally, the lack of a credible perspective of EU and NATO membership increased the sense of vulnerability. In the second half of the 1990s, however, the EU and NATO not only offered Latvia concrete prospects of accession. In addition, Russia withdraw its troops, the minority increasingly accepted Latvia as an independent state, and gradual naturalization did not upset the composition of the electorate in favor of the left (Knobel 2004).

The process-tracing analysis reveals the crucial importance of membership incentives by western organizations to turn around – usually at the last moment – the procrastinating behavior and evasive rhetorical action of a widely unconvinced Latvian body politic. Counterfactually speaking, it is safe to conclude that without these western incentives and deadlines, Latvian laws relating to the treatment of national minorities would not have been changed. At least, the timing of the changes could not be explained otherwise.

Alternative Mechanisms. The conditions of social influence and social learning were more favorable in Latvia than in the Slovak case. Whereas Latvian ethnic nationalism and anti-Russian sentiments represent “ingrained beliefs that are inconsistent with the persuader’s message” (Checkel 2001: 563), Latvia’s governments shared liberal norms in general and regarded the western organizations as authoritative organizations of the international
community to which they sought to belong (see Jubulis 1996: 69; Plakans 1997: 285; Smith et al. 1998: 108). Moreover, the initial efforts of the HCNM were of a deliberative and non-politicized kind.

Yet persuasion and social influence failed to change Latvian policy when domestic political costs were high, and even when domestic costs decreased, they did not trigger compliance unless they were explicitly linked to the membership decisions of western organizations. On the other hand, the lack of resonance for minority rights among the Latvian parties in government did not prevent behavioral compliance when the cost-benefit calculation was positive. Furthermore, the fact that conditionality had to be used time and again over the last decade to overcome the initial defiance of Latvian governments and lawmakers and to bring Latvian legislation in line with western demands shows that change has not resulted from persuasion and has not led to internalization or habitualization. Finally, the Latvian case shows that the positive effects of a liberal party constellation on sustained compliance cannot be fully explained as identity-driven behavior. If liberal socializees perceive adapting to individual community norms as costly, there is no compliance without reinforcement and net benefits.

In sum, the Latvian case study confirms that membership incentives and low domestic political costs are both necessary and jointly sufficient conditions of effective reinforcement and behavioral adaptation – even if the rule-breaking country has a liberal party constellation. With a view to discriminating between alternative socialization mechanisms, the case study clearly demonstrates that only intergovernmental reinforcement by rewards, the linking of the HCNM’s demands with membership in the western organizations, produced compliance – even though the conditions of social influence and learning were favorable and shaming and persuasion were dominant in the initial socialization process conducted by the HCNM.
Conclusion

The international socialization of Central and Eastern Europe is work in progress. At the beginning of the 1990s, European regional community organizations set out to induct the transition countries into their core liberal norms and rules. When and how have their efforts been successful?

In this article, I have made two core arguments. First, whereas European regional organizations have used a wide array of instruments and channels to promote their rules and norms, only intergovernmental reinforcement offering the high and tangible reward of EU and NATO membership had the potential to produce norm-conforming domestic change in norm-violating countries. Second, however, EU and NATO membership incentives only worked in favor of sustained compliance when the domestic costs of adaptation for the target governments were low. This has most clearly been the case in countries in which all major parties are liberal-democratic and oriented toward western integration (liberal party constellation). But membership incentives have also been effective, thanks to path-dependency, in CEECs with alternating liberal and nationalist-authoritarian governments, although the process has taken longer to succeed. Correspondingly, we observe high levels of norm conformance in CEECs with a liberal party constellation since the mid-1990s, and after 2000 in those with mixed party constellations. In contrast, the authoritarian systems of eastern Europe have not been positively affected by EU or NATO membership incentives at all.

The international socialization of Central and Eastern Europe thus provides evidence for socialization by reinforcement based on strategic calculation. Both the relevant processes and its divergent outcomes demonstrate the predominant role of conditional incentives by
international organizations and of cost-benefit calculations and rhetorical action by their targets. Compliance with community norms was set as a condition for reaping the political and material benefits of membership in the community organizations, and non-member governments weighed these benefits up against the domestic political costs that adaptation would involve.

Whereas there is rather conclusive and cumulative evidence from a number of recent multi-case comparative studies on the causal relevance and effectiveness of membership incentives and domestic constellations in the promotion of democracy and human rights in Central and Eastern Europe\textsuperscript{43}, the central question in the context of this special issue is whether there is also evidence for internalization. Has the switch from a logic of consequences to one of appropriateness occurred? And if so, have international institutions been the relevant promoters of internalization? The findings of this analysis suggest that both questions cannot be answered jointly in the affirmative.

On the one hand, the sustained compliance with liberal norms in most of the CEECs with a liberal party constellations is strongly indicative of internalization. These countries have attained high conformance levels ahead of EU or NATO accession conditionality and maintained them across numerous elections and changes in government. This finding suggests, however, that the contribution of international institutions to internalization has been small. At best, they have helped to reinforce and stabilize a pre-existing domestic consensus (which may have well formed by diffuse transnational influences during the Cold War). It is highly probable that these countries would have embarked and continued on the path of democratic consolidation in the absence of any promotion by international organizations, be it in the form of persuasion, social influence, or membership incentives.

\textsuperscript{43} See Kelley 2004; Kubicek 2003; Schimmelfennig forthcoming; Vachudova 2001.
On the other hand, the reinforcement-driven changes in many other Central and Eastern European candidates for EU and NATO membership provide strong evidence for the causal relevance of international institutions as promoters of norms and rules. The case of minority rights in Latvia shows that this kind of promotion was in some instances even necessary in countries with a liberal party constellation. However, international organizations were most important in the mixed-constellation countries. Membership incentives and progress in European and transatlantic integration led nationalist-authoritarian opposition parties to “rebrand” themselves as pro-western and to vow conformance with liberal norms. In these cases of clear external impact, however, the switch to internalization is not sufficiently evident yet. First of all, EU and NATO membership conditionality has been in place until the end of the period of examination (2003). Thus, it cannot be excluded that norm conformance was driven by external incentives rather than internalization. The Latvian case study suggests that, even in this otherwise well-consolidated democracy, compliance with western demands for minority rights has been purely instrumental to the very end. Likewise, it is too early to conclude that the nationalist-authoritarian parties of Romania, Slovakia or Croatia have transformed themselves reliably into liberal parties. Whereas we can safely infer from the evidence that intergovernmental reinforcement has produced major norm-conforming behavioral change in the region, we cannot know, at the time of writing, whether this change has been internalized as a result of cognitive dissonance or habitualization.

The true test comes after EU and NATO accession. Although both organizations will continue to monitor political developments in the new member states and also possess informal and formal instruments for sanctioning non-compliant behavior\(^4^4\), the strongest

\(^4^4\) The most formal instrument is Art. 7 of the Treaty on European Union. It empowers EU institutions to suspend the rights of a member state in case of a serious and persistent breach of the core community norms.
weapon will be not available any more. If norm conformance in the pre-accession period has indeed been based on strategic calculation alone, there should be a strong incentive for governments to disregard minority rights, and for the nationalist and populist parties to exploit discontent with liberal reform and European integration and to revert to authoritarian programs and practices. Only if they forgo this opportunity in the absence of external sanctions, will we have strong evidence of internalization. Only then will we know whether international socialization by reinforcement has been complete.
References


Knobel, Heiko 2004: Latvia, Manuscript, University of Mannheim.


### Table 1  
Party Constellations and Predicted Socialization Patterns (1990-2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Constellation</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Major Parties</th>
<th>Changes in Major Government Party</th>
<th>Predicted Socialization</th>
<th>Observed Conformance Pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>ODS/CSSD</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>quick and smooth socialization, high and stable conformance</td>
<td>quick, high and stable conformance ahead of membership conditionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>MSZP/MDF/FIDESZ</td>
<td>1990/94/98/2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>post-Solidarity parties/SLD</td>
<td>1989/93/97/2001</td>
<td>quick, high and stable conformance</td>
<td>high and stable conformance after membership conditionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>Latvia’s Way/DPS/TB-LNNK/New Era</td>
<td>1993/95/98/2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>BSP---ODS</td>
<td>1990/92/97/2001</td>
<td>slow and difficult socialization, medium and fluctuating levels of conformance</td>
<td>High conformance after slow and fluctuating process of improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>HZS---SDP-HSLS</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>PDSR---CDR</td>
<td>1996/2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>HZDS---SDK</td>
<td>1994/94/98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-liberal</td>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>Lukashenka regime</td>
<td>since 1994</td>
<td>no socialization, low and stable or deteriorating conformance</td>
<td>stabilization of low conformance after small initial improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Yeltsin/Putin presidential regime</td>
<td>since 1991</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Serbia-Montenegro</td>
<td>SPS/Milošević regime</td>
<td>until 2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>Kuchma regime</td>
<td>since 1994</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The information in this table is based on Ágh 1998b; Berglund, Hellén, and Aarebrot (1998); Blondel and Müller-Rommel (2001); and Ismayr (2002).
Figure 1
Liberal Party Constellations and Compliance

Freedom House scores


Czech Rep  Estonia  Hungary  Latvia  Lithuania  Poland  Slovenia
Figure 2
Anti-liberal Party Constellations and Compliance

Freedom House scores

Belarus —— Ukraine —— Serbia-M. —— Russia

Figure 3
Mixed Party Constellations and Compliance


Freedom House scores

Bulgaria
Romania
Slovakia
Croatia