

Bogdana Depo

# Goliath versus Goliath

EU Democracy Promotion in the Eastern Neighbourhood  
and Russia's Alternative Agenda



Nomos

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## Introduction

Proclamation of the ultimate victory of liberal democracy, which was popular in the 1990s, has clearly become inappropriate today, especially if one looks at the Eastern Partnership countries<sup>1</sup>. Even though the EU is the largest promoter of democracy in the world, its objective of promoting the establishment of stable democracies in its Eastern European neighbourhood remains elusive. At a certain point, it seemed as though the EU would repeat its success story of promoting democratization in Central Europe and the Baltic States there; however, this is still not the case. The main question of this book is, therefore, to explain the reasons for lack of success with the EU's democratization agenda in the Eastern Partnership countries.

'Goliath versus Goliath' is an apt description of the EU's and Russia's countering attempts to promote their respective agendas in this, their shared neighbourhood. As the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov stated: *'This example illustrates an axiomatic fact – there are many development models – which rules out the monotony of existence within the uniform, Western frame of reference. Consequently, there has been a relative decrease in the influence of the so-called “historical West” that was used to seeing itself as the master of the human race’s destinies for almost five centuries. The competition on the shaping of the world order in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has toughened'* (Lavrov, 2016). Indeed, the response to the question of why the EU has failed to promote its democratization agenda lies less in the EU's approach than in Russia's alternative agenda in this region, which counteracted the EU's strategy and pursued its own interests through a mix of military instruments, economic imperialism and normative domination directed towards its former 'sphere of influence'.

The underlying assumption, which is analysed and tested in this book, is rooted in realism and the balance of power thesis. Regional powers – be they a promoter of democracy or autocracy – seek to protect their own strategic interests. The EU exerted its soft power, driven by self- or arguably, shared-interest in a democratic, stable, and predictable Eastern neighbourhood. In the last two decades, the Russian Federation has developed alter-

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1 Those countries include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

native security, economic and normative projects in the former post-Soviet space and in particular in the six countries concerned. The Russian Federation responded to the EU's democratization policy towards the Eastern neighbourhood by trying to stymie it. In this context, both the EU and Russia are considered to be realist actors.

What this book aims to demonstrate is that as the EU promotes liberal democracy in the Eastern Partnership countries, it is confronted with a more and more assertive agenda advanced by the Russian Federation. The book argues this point through a systematic comparative analysis in three different dimensions: normative, economic and security. This paradigm and the competitive dynamics between the two 'Goliaths' are examined in the research timeline, which starts in 1991 and ends in 2016. 1991 was the year the EU first introduced its instruments of democracy promotion in the so-called Newly Independent States (future Eastern Partnership countries). Meanwhile Russia, despite its weakness following the collapse of the Soviet Union, immediately started 'recollecting the lost territories' by advancing new projects of (re)-integration. Over the next two decades the EU and Russia would clash many times over their competing agendas in the region.

The rivalry between the two actors manifested itself in the considerable evolution of policy instruments developed by both the EU and Russia, discussed in detail in this book. Their confrontation began to peak in around 2013, when the EU offered enhanced Association Agreements to the Eastern Partnership countries, which would make their eventual democratization inevitable. That same year, the EU and Russia's alternative strategies literally clashed in Ukraine as a result of the pro-democracy and pro-EU 'Revolution of Dignity' and Russia's subsequent military incursion in Ukraine and its illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. It became apparent that Russia was and is ready to prevent EU-promoted democratization by any means available. At the same time, other Eastern Partnership countries were also subjected to similar instruments of pressure from Russia. Over the research timeline spanning 25 years the comparative analysis of the EU's and Russia's competitive agendas examines the evolution of policy instruments developed by both actors, and demonstrates how the EU's democracy promotion agenda is ultimately offset by Russia's alternative strategy.

## Abbreviations

AA	Association Agreement
CBC	Cross Border Cooperation
CEECs	Central Eastern Europe Countries
CFSP	Common Foreign Security Policy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EIDHR	European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
EUBAM	EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine
EUMM	European Union Monitoring Mission
EUSR	European Union Special Representative
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDP	Gross domestic product
GSP	General System of Preferences
GUAM	The GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development
HR/VP	High Representative/Vice President
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MFN	Most Favoured Nation Treatment
MGIMO	Moscow State Institute of International Relations
NIS	Newly Independent State
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
SME	Small Medium Enterprise
TACIS	Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States
TAIEX	Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument
VLAP	Visa Liberalization Action Plan





## CHAPTER 1: Democracy Promotion: the Evolution of the EU Foreign Policy Tool and of Research Avenues

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the research question. The core research question is: how to explain EU's lack of success with its democratization agenda in the Eastern neighbourhood?

This chapter sets the scene by analyzing what the EU considers as democracy promotion and how this policy has been discussed in the academic community, depending on the situation on the ground. Indeed, this first step of our analysis is key, because the semi-failure of the EU's action is not only a failure of its instruments, but a misconception by others of the world view the EU is defending.

The analysis starts with an overview of the evolution of the term 'democracy promotion' in the framework of different EU policies and approaches towards the EU's neighbourhood. This genealogy helps to better understand why and how democracy promotion developed as an EU foreign policy tool. In the second part of this chapter, the literature review, we elaborate on research avenues of EU's democracy promotion as well as historical events which shaped them. The final part of the chapter introduces the reader to a theoretical puzzle as well as to the methodology which is applied in this book.

### *1.1 The Definition and Evolution of EU Democracy Promotion*

This section introduces the reader to the definition of democracy promotion and looks into the evolution of this term over nearly three decades. As we are setting out to explain the EU's lack of success in democracy promotion, the first essential step is to explain how the EU defines what democracy promotion is in various contexts and how democracy promotion has evolved as an EU foreign policy tool over time.

### 1.1.1 Definition of Democracy Promotion

The term ‘democracy promotion’ as a foreign policy tool is a term with no precise definition. Only recently, the EU developed an unofficial definition of democracy promotion (Council of the EU, 2006). In an unofficial paper of the Council of the EU, it stated that democracy promotion was ‘*to encompass the full range of external relations and development cooperation activities which contribute to the development and consolidation of democracy in third countries*’; further in the text the document specifies that those activities were ‘*all measures designed to facilitate democratic development*’ (Council of the EU, 2006: 1, 3). However, neither this nor any other EU document has provided explanation of what democracy promotion is.

Nevertheless, in the past the EU has developed an implicit policy of democracy promotion. The first under-researched cases were Greece (1981), Spain and Portugal (1986) and the process of their accession to the EU. In these three cases, the main issue was to transform post-authoritarian capitalist countries into European Economic Community Member States.

In 1993, the EU understood that the accession of Central European countries (CEECs) would be a much more difficult task, namely transforming post-communism into liberal democracy, a centrally planned economy into liberal capitalism. Therefore, the EU for the first time agreed a definition during the Copenhagen Summit of 1993 and these ‘Copenhagen Criteria’<sup>2</sup> became the road-map to accession. This approach turned out to be effective because of the promise of becoming fully-fledge members of the EU club. After the 2004 enlargement, the situation became more problematic: how to define an EU democratization policy without the aim (and the tool) of integration.

The academic community stepped in by researching the practice of the EU with regard to third countries. Research into democracy promotion in the Eastern neighbourhood started in the 90s with a focus on the pre-accession process of the CEECs, the launch of the programmes in the Western Newly Independent State (Western NIS)<sup>3</sup>, and finally the ENP

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2 The Copenhagen criteria, also known as accession criteria, were laid down in 1993 European Council conclusions. These criteria defined the conditions that the European state should comply with in order to become EU Members. These are political, economic criteria and administrative capacity.

3 In the 90s, the term Newly Independent States (NIS) covered the post-Soviet countries, excluding Russia which was always mentioned separately in EU documents as well as the Baltic States which were covered by the EU pre-accession instrument. The 2003 ‘Wider Europe’ Communication suggests that the Western NIS were

(Buşcaneanu, 2005). Having become a cornerstone of EU foreign policy, democracy promotion became one of the main items on the academic research agenda (Youngs, 2002)<sup>4</sup>.

### 1.1.2 1990-2004: Democratization of the Western NIS

In 1990s, the EU started developing democratization as its foreign policy tool (Olsen, 2000; McFaul, 2004). In its 1995 *Communication on the Inclusion of the Democratic Principles and Human Rights*, the European Commission proposed including general references to human rights and democratic value in the preamble of international agreements with third countries (European Commission, 1995). Moreover, it stressed the importance of including an obligation to respect those democratic values and human rights by the third country in the body of the agreement. The Commission went even further by proposing that where this obligation was not obeyed by the third country, the agreement might be suspended (European Commission, 1995).

Three main instruments were developed through which it was intended that democratization of the Western NIS could be promoted. Firstly, the Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) launched in 1992, secondly, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) launched in 1994, and thirdly, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) concluded with partner countries between 1994 and 1999. TACIS was mandated to strengthen political stability and democracy by stimulating partnerships between the EU and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Nevertheless, it proved to have a limited effectiveness as an instrument of democracy promotion (Holden, 2009: 95). The evaluation by the Court of Auditors identified a number of implementation problems, drawing attention to deficiencies in manage-

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Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, whereas the three Caucasus countries were in the broader category of 'NIS'. It is only with the launch of the 2004 ENP that the six above-mentioned countries were defined as the Eastern neighbourhood. And since then, the 'new' NIS cover the Central Asia countries.

- 4 It is not the focus of our research, but we should not forget that the EU contemplated a similar policy of democratization in the Mediterranean in the 1990s as well with the Barcelona Process, which was partly copied on the Helsinki model. One major difference between the South Mediterranean area and Eastern Europe remains that Eastern Europe, as a part of Europe, is technically a potential candidate for EU's accession, while Morocco is not.

ment, excessive centralization, problems of transparency and lack of sufficient investment (Sodupe and Benito, 1998).

In 1994, the EU launched the EIDHR which became a new democracy promotion instrument in the third countries supporting civil society organizations. This instrument provided direct, but rather marginal support (Fergus and Massey, 2006). On the one hand this instrument was not underpinned by the EU's conditionality based on which the aid was disbursed (Börzel and Risse, 2004), but at the same time given the scale of the problems it was supposed to address, the EU's financial contribution was marginal. From 1991 to 2003, the EU disbursed EUR 2,723 million across *all* programmes aimed at Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus; whereas for Poland during the same period was allocated EUR 5,710 million (Raik, 2006b: 27). This data shows the modest financial engagement of the EU not only into democratizing the Western NIS, which demonstrates its low level of interest in these countries.

From 1994-1999, the EU concluded Partnership and Cooperation Agreements with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. These agreements contained an identical human right clause stressing the importance of *'the observance of the principles of democracy, the respect and promotion of human rights'* (for example: EU-Ukraine PCA, 1998: 11). During this time, the EU tried safeguarding compliance with this human rights clause. According to a 1995 Communication by the European Commission, if the partner countries did not comply with the clause, *'appropriate measures'* would be taken (European Commission, 1995). In contrast to what the European Commission suggested in its 1995 Communication, the PCAs did not envisage suspension in case of violation and the *'appropriate measures'* were never elaborated. The PCA's low-credibility threat was combined with minor economic and financial incentives (Shapovalova, 2008). This leads to the conclusion that the EU was paying lip-service to its objective of promoting democracy because it is a core part of EU's narrative, but it did not invest serious means to fulfil this objective.

With the aim of incentivize the partner countries to reform, the EU developed a conditionality principle within which the reform progress achieved by the partner countries would be rewarded by the EU. In the individual Action Plan<sup>5</sup> of the partner countries, the EU specified democracy

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5 The Action Plan is a political document laying out the strategic objectives of the cooperation between a given country and the EU with a duration of three years. It therefore breaks down the bigger political documents, *eg* the PCA or Association Agreement, into more tangible and achievable objectives.

promotion objectives by spelling out concrete reform priorities in each area. Based on the achievement of the country-specific democracy and human rights reform priorities, the EU pledged to monitor the progress of democracy promotion (Magen, 2006). Moreover, the EU also developed a reward system for democracy promotion efforts in form of the international recognition, financial assistance, access to trade, etc (Christiansen, Petito, and Tonra, 2000).

In summary, in the 1990s, the EU developed a number of instruments aiming at promoting democracy in Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Those were its first steps towards democratizing the Western NIS<sup>6</sup> through TACIS, EIDHR, and PCAs. Nevertheless, the EU's political attention was not focused on these countries. Rather, throughout the 90s, its political focus and democratization efforts remained directed at the CEECs (Christiansen, Petito, and Tonra, 2000).

### 1.1.3 Pre-accession Process – an Instrument of Democratization

Since the 1990s, with the fall of the Iron Curtain, democracy promotion has become one of the top priorities of the West both for EU Members, as well as a pre-condition for third countries willing to approximate with the EU (Reginald, 2006; Gower, 1999). In 1992, the Maastricht Treaty proposed to streamline foreign and security policy objectives, where the European Union and its Member States had committed '*to develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms*' (Maastricht Treaty, 1993: V, J1.2). A year later, in the Copenhagen criteria the Member States reaffirmed these objectives as *conditio sine qua non* for third countries, demanding from them to comply if they wished to apply for EU membership. Consequently, liberal democracy, which was at the core of the European Union, became a key precondition for the accession process (Schimmelfennig, Frank Sedelmeier, 2005: 29).

The 2004 enlargement, which became a synonym of effective democratization (Vaduchova, 2007: 105), incentivized vast academic research on democracy promotion (Pridham, 2002; Schimmelfennig, Frank Sedelmeier 2005; Ekiert, Kubik, and Vachudova, 2007). Having obtained strong backing from the EU, enlargement as a foreign policy tool proved to be one of the main factors in ensuring widespread support for democratization within the post-communist countries (Sadurski, 2004). Therefore, academics in-

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6 A list of abbreviations is found at the beginning of the book.

vestigated 'external' pressure as an element of effective democracy promotion in the CEECs (Sadurski, 2004). This pressure came from EU institutions and EU Member States demanding introduction and elaboration of democratic rules and procedures (Pridham, 2002).

In order to achieve democratization during the pre-accession process, the EU applied a combination of different leverage and linkage mechanisms, meaning conditionality. The EU became skilled in balancing EU aid and trade (Levitz and Pop-Eleches, 2010). Having gradually become known as '*a great unsung success story*' (Peel, 2006) and having discovered the magnetic force of the EU (Vaduchova, 2007: 105), the 2004 enlargement inspired EU decision-makers to elaborate new foreign policy tools aimed towards its neighbours – the European Neighbourhood Policy (Magen, 2006; Del Sarto and Schumacher, 2005).

#### 1.1.4 2004 Enlargement: an Attempt to Duplicate the Success with New Eastern Neighbours

Aiming to repeat the success of the 2004 enlargement with the democratization of the post-Soviet countries, the ENP was largely built on the pre-accession instruments (Comelli, 2004; Balfour and Rotta, 2005a; Epstein and Sedelmeier, 2008)<sup>7</sup>. Empirical data shows that the democratic transformation of the CEECs also facilitated the transition towards economic liberalization in these states, which were also post-communist and post-Soviet<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, EU leaders decided to recreate the same miracle with the other Eastern European countries (Ghanem, Zoli, and Dethier, 1999).

As preparation for the launch of the ENP, European Commission President Prodi said that the EU's neighbourhood would be '*sharing everything but institutions*' (Prodi, 2002), meaning that they would enjoy the same

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7 The technical explanation to this could be that after the 2004 enlargement the Enlargement General Directorate of the European Commission was left with almost no work (with the exception of follow-up pre-accession of Bulgaria and Romania). And the officials, who were previously working on pre-accession policy, applied pre-accession instruments to the ENP countries.

8 Three Baltic States, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, were also part of the Soviet Union, not the satellite-states as in case of the other post-communist countries. In the case of the Baltic States, the challenge was similar to the Eastern neighbourhood: not only did the EU have to help to transform the economy or assist with the transition to democracy, but also to build states with borders and a functioning rule of law.

support as the countries of 2004 enlargement had, however EU membership would not be granted. The expectation was that the new policy would repeat the success of the pre-accession process, which had proven that *'progressive spread of the rule of law and democracy has seen authoritarian regimes change into secure, stable and dynamic democracies'* – as it was mentioned in the European Security Strategy (Council, 2003: 1).

Eventually the EU developed a new upgraded policy, the ENP, aimed at *'spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law, and protecting human rights'* (Council, 2003: 10). In a 2003 Communication, 'Wider Europe – Neighbourhood', the European Commission notes that *'WNIS [Western NIS] and Russia<sup>9</sup> have a history of autocratic and non-democratic governance and poor records in protecting human rights and freedom of the individual'* (Commission, 2003: 11). Therefore, in the next document, namely in the 2004 ENP Strategic Paper of the European Commission, special attention was paid to strengthening democracy promotion efforts in the broad EU neighbourhood by stipulating that the *'EU wishes to see reinforced, credible and sustained commitment towards democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and progress towards the development of a market economy'* (European Commission, 2004: 11).

Having identified democracy promotion as an ENP key priority, the ENP instruments were readjusted from the pre-accession instruments (Comelli, 2004) following the *'blind copy of the pre-accession democracy and the rule of law promotion practices'* (Kochenov, 2008). Unlike the pre-accession countries, which were offered a membership prospective as a final goal of their rapprochement with the EU, the ENP partner countries were offered closer cooperation in return for their efforts of democratization (Balfour and Rotta, 2005b; Magen, 2006; Sadurski, 2004)<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, what the EU was expecting from the ENP countries was the implementation of reforms, which would bolster the rule of law, enhance democracy

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9 The 2003 Communication on Wider Europe covered Russia and three Western NIS. After the protests of Russia against being defined as EU's neighbourhood, but rather a strategic partner, Russia was excluded from the new policy – the ENP. And the same time, given the recent pro-democracy protests, the EU took a strategic decision to include the three Southern Caucasus countries, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia into the ENP.

10 One should not underestimate the fact that the democratization of the Eastern neighbourhood was also key for the stability of the region, as well as for the possible democratization of Russia (from the EU's point of view) and also beneficial for EU firms, which would benefit from new stable markets in the East.

and promote civil society, and reinforce trade ties. In exchange, the EU would gradually give access to the freedoms offered by the European market (Perchoc, 2015).

The 2005 Commission Communication on the ENP put the emphasis on the EU's interest in a safe and stable neighbourhood, which was traded for closer partnership with the EU, and in return the partner countries should demonstrate progress in democratization: *'the EU's interests [is] to have a zone of increasing prosperity, stability and security on its borders'* and in order to achieve this, *'the EU offers a new kind of relationship with the EU'*. (European Commission, 2005: 1) *'In turn, ENP partners accept precise commitments, which can be monitored, to strengthen the rule of law, democracy and the respect for human rights,..'* (European Commission, 2005: 1).

The 2006 Commission Communication, which evaluated the ENP, mentioned democracy-related elements only once, suggesting that the *'Action Plans provide for an active cooperation in the field of freedom, security and justice, promoting the rule of law'* (European Commission, 2006: 3). The 2007 Communication identified ENP priorities, which were far from the democracy promotion agenda, notably on trade and economic integration, mobility, or addressing regional conflicts, but it also stated that the EU would continue the *'promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law throughout the neighbourhood'* (European Commission, 2007: 7).

The 2008 Communication, which was evaluating the ENP implementation, noted a series of crises, which hampered the implementation of reforms, including democracy promotion (European Commission, 2008). With regard to the Eastern neighbourhood, those were the war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008, disruptions of gas supplies as a result of a conflict between Ukraine and Russia, and the global economic and financial crisis. As the result of these external factors, the Commission noted the slower pace of reform particularly in democratic reforms and human rights standards (European Commission, 2008: 1). Aiming to support the partners in challenging times, the Commission announced the development of the Eastern Partnership. This policy was called to *'consolidate their [the Eastern European neighbours] statehood and sovereignty, including through democratic reforms, and to their stated choice to intensify their relations with the EU'* (European Commission, 2008). Therefore, the Eastern Partnership was to become a new instrument supporting democracy promotion in the Eastern neighbours.



### 1.1.5 2009: Launching the Eastern Partnership

In 2008, the Polish and Swedish governments made proposals for a tailor-made regional dimension of the ENP in the East, which was an answer to the French-led *'Union for the Mediterranean'* launched in the South. As a result, in 2009, the Eastern Partnership initiative was launched as a joint initiative between the EU and EU's Eastern European neighbours, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The commitment to democracy promotion by the partners was restated at the multilateral and bilateral levels of cooperation. With regard to multilateral, these were to take the form of a bi-annual Summit.

The Summit Declaration, which inaugurated the Eastern Partnership, included a commitment by all partners *'to the principles of international law and to fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms'* (Prague Declaration, 2009: 5). Two years later, the next Declaration reconfirmed that the *'Eastern Partnership is based on a community of values and principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law'* (Warsaw Declaration, 2011: 1). The next Declaration reconfirmed that commitment and recalled *'that much remains to be done to tackle the persisting challenges posed to democracy'* (Vilnius Declaration, 2013). The most recent declaration reiterated this-mentioned commitment. At the same time the participants also indicated *'that strengthening democracy and enabling functioning market economies [...] open new prospects for cooperation, contributing also to trade, growth and competitiveness'* (Riga Declaration, 2015: 2, 3).

The latest declaration also drew attention to the importance of the key bilateral instrument – the Association Agreement, which was signed in 2014 between the EU and three countries, namely Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. The Declaration stresses that their implementation is *'a key means of achieving sustainable democracy and the deep modernisation'* (Riga Declaration, 2015: 4).

The bilateral instrument of cooperation between the EU and the aforementioned three countries – the Association Agreement – cited the term democracy several times in the preamble to the Agreements. Most of these provisions were the same for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. In the preamble to the EU-Ukraine Association it was stated:

COMMITTED to a close and lasting relationship that is based on common values, namely respect for democratic principles, the rule of law, good governance, human rights and fundamental freedoms, [...]

RECOGNIZING that the common values on which the European Union is built – namely democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and rule of law – are also essential elements of this Agreement (EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, 2014: 4).

Democracy promotion was a key objective behind the Eastern Partnership, which went as a thread through all the Eastern Partnership Declarations. At the same time, each new declaration aimed at reinforcing the message of strong commitment to democracy and rule of law. Nevertheless, given the fact that the desired democracy promotion efforts were not bearing the expected fruit in the Eastern neighbourhood (Boonstra and Shapovalova, 2010), the EU continued to search for new methods to promote democracy.

#### 1.1.6 2011 ENP Review

The Arab Spring, a wave of protests in Northern Africa against authoritarian regimes, gave a new impetus for the EU to redefine its commitment to democracy promotion. Having reflected upon these developments, the European Commission developed a Joint Communication ‘A new response to a changing neighbourhood’. This document brought attention to the need for democratic consolidation. It stressed that the new approach towards the neighbourhood was to be based on a ‘*shared commitment to the universal values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law*’ (European Commission, 2011). The Communication also introduced the term ‘*deep democracy*’, which according to the text includes:

- free and fair elections;
- freedom of association, expression and assembly and a free press and media;
- rule of law administered by an independent judiciary and the right to a fair trial;
- fighting corruption;
- security sector reform and the establishment of democratic control over armed and security forces (European Commission, 2011: 3).

Consequently, the ENP Review Communication was the first document to introduce criteria for democracy promotion. EU documents did not contain definitions of democracy promotion, nevertheless this evolution demonstrated that democracy promotion as a policy instrument was extensively developed by the EU. At the same time, the EU developed a broad political discourse and legal terminology around this term, for example by

referring to peace, stability, freedom, prosperity, good governance, and the rule of law (Grimm and Leininger, 2012).

#### 1.1.7 2015 ENP Review

In 2015, following an overwhelming refugee crisis and security challenges, the EU launched a new extensive revision of the ENP. For the first time the EU linked the necessity of democratization with its own security interests. In the 2015 Communication, it stated the following: *'The EU's own stability is built on democracy, human rights and the rule of law and economic openness and the new ENP will take stabilisation as its main political priority in this mandate'* (European Commission, 2015c: 2). Therefore, given that the EU prioritized stabilization of the neighbourhood and that democratization served as an instrument to attain this goal, some academics acknowledged a more realist approach towards the EU's policy (Gstöhl and Schunz, 2015; Lannon, 2016).

Following this revision, the EU started addressing the individual interests of the partner countries. Given that not every EaP partnership country was interested in deep approximation (i.e. Azerbaijan) and some were limited with other obligations (i.e. membership of the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union of Belarus and Armenia), the EU was forced to develop new individual approaches towards these countries. Therefore, the EU started developing an even more individual and differentiated approach which better reflected the (geo)-political reality of these countries.

Traditionally, the EU reconfirmed its commitment to the 'more for more' incentive-based approach. The same document specified that the success in supporting reforms in the fields of good governance, democracy, the rule of law and human rights would be achieved when there was a commitment by partners to such reforms (European Commission, 2015c: 5). Therefore, this document reconfirmed the EU's support in return for commitment to democratization.

The following conclusions can be drawn with regard to the evolution of the term and policy of democracy promotion in EU documents. Firstly, the EU started developing an informal understanding of democracy promotion in preparing the enlargement to Southern Europe in the 1980s. The EU later formalized it through the Copenhagen criteria, which defined the pre-accession vision for the CEECs. However, after 2004, for the first time in its history, the EU faced the challenge of democratizing third countries without integration. Consequently, it was forced to redesign its working

definitions and instruments to achieve its goals in the Eastern Neighbourhood. In order to bring more clarity to this evolution, the next part of this chapter looks into how the academic community has analyzed and researched the development of the EU's democracy promotion strategy.

## 1.2 Literature Review: Waves of Research of EU Democracy Promotion with regard to the Eastern Neighbourhood

Waves of academic research on democracy promotion emerged in response to major policy developments towards the neighbourhood. Research on democratization became topical, given the fall of the Soviet Union as well as breakthrough publication by Francis Fukuyama called *'The End of History'* and Samuel Huntington's *'The Third Wave: Democratization in Late Twentieth Century'*.

Nevertheless, in the 1990s, the Newly Independent States (NIS) were not the primary focus of researchers. During 1990s and up to the moment when the EU started discussing establishing new policies to address its new neighbours to the East, academic circles were focusing mainly on researching the pre-accession process. Substantial academic research on democracy promotion started in the 2000s. The main academic waves of research were built around the following events: the Coloured Revolutions to the EU's East, the launch of the ENP, and the Arab Spring to the South. The latest academic avenue of democracy promotion was reopened with the uprising in Ukraine, known as EuroMaidan or Revolution of Dignity.

### 1.2.1 2003-2005: 'Coloured Revolutions' and Internal Post-Soviet Transformations

From 2003 to 2005 the 'coloured revolutions' laid the ground for a fresh academic debate about EU democracy promotion. Mass civil protests in response to electoral fraud swept through Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan in 2005, and Belarus in 2006. In Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan these led to the eventual change of the ruling authorities, whereas the revolutions failed to meet the demands of protesters in Azerbaijan and Belarus. Nevertheless, even if the protests were successful in changing the ruling authorities by conducting new elections, the revolutions did not lead to the anticipated democratic transformation of the state system (Fairbanks, 2007; Lucan, Way, 2008; Mitchell, 2012). Consequently,

the successful coloured revolutions did not automatically lead to the practice of democracy in these (semi-) authoritarian states (Trejo, 2014).

The lost expectations led researchers to questioning the impact and results of the coloured revolutions on the democratization of the given countries. Some academics discussed *internal dynamics* by exploring how informal networks, which existed during the protest period, transferred into formal social capital active at social and political levels (Polese, 2009), how the rudiments of the autocratic regimes counteracted the activities of civil society and weakened genuine non-formal democracy promoting networks (Lane, 2009), and how the ruling elites in other post-Soviet countries started developing strategies aimed at preventing similar democratic revolutions (Finkel and Brudny, 2012; Korosteleva, 2012).

Other scholars looked at the *geopolitical level*: some focused on the interference of the West during and immediately after the coloured revolutions, others on the influence of Russia on the weak democracies in the post-Soviet space. Some discussed '*how sponsored democracy promotion and western-inspired 'soft power' politics have failed*' (Lane, 2008). Others again explored the impact of strongly or weakly established links between post-Soviet countries and the West (Lucan, Way, 2008; Levitsky and Way, 2005). With regard to Russia's influence, scholars explored how the Kremlin adopted strategies that combined a political, administrative and intellectual assault on the opposition as well as on the ideas of democracy promotion promoted by the West (Finkel and Brudny, 2012a). Consequently, special attention was paid to the parallel structures that were immediately established by Russia to promote economic cooperation with the states with unsuccessful democratic revolutions, i.e. Belarus and Kazakhstan, and economic sanctions for the ones pursuing democracy, i.e. Georgia and Ukraine (Silitski, 2010). Therefore, both groups – with and without successful coloured revolutions – faced strong external pressures.

Nevertheless, the division of the post-Soviet states into two groups, namely those pursuing democracy and the others fighting against it, was temporary, as both groups immediately experienced an authoritarian backlash (Hale, 2005; Silitski, 2010). Scholars discovered that even such major events as massive protests demanding the government to follow democratic principles as well as to organize democratic elections, did not lead to the regime-type endpoint – either democracy or autocracy – but were rather cyclic, meaning from autocracy toward greater democracy, then back toward more autocracy (Hale, 2006; Tucker, 2007; Bunce and Wolchik, 2010).