

# **Shall We Talk? Democracy Promotion as a Part of Scholarly and Practitioner Dialogue**

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## **Abstract**

The big-bang of democracy promotion as a foreign policy initiative and as an academic discipline happened after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union. Despite the activities of states and organizations in virtually every corner of the world democracy has made little overall progress. After numerous volumes on democratization and democracy promotion and two-decade of practitioner experience, some scholars argue that promoters still lack consistent and well-defined policies and neglect the academic expertise.

Analysing conceptualizations of democracy and democracy promotion from the academic and practitioner perspectives helps to understand the validity of these arguments and trace a possible dialogue. A comparative analysis of democracy promotion activities of the EU and the US by drawing parallels to the academic concepts reveals that despite the general view that practitioners neglect academic recommendations, two approaches are rather similar in some cases showing particular traces of a dialogue. However, while conceptualizations may converge, the perspectives on the strategies may diverge, emphasizing the vital obstacles toward effective democracy promotion.

## **Introduction**

The third wave of democratization has created the democracy-hype with a large number of authoritarian states taking the route of transition to democracy. The democratization hype increased even more after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The former US president George H. W. Bush (1989) expressed his excitement about the establishment of a “whole and free” Europe, and the Czech president Vaclav Havel announced the return to Europe of countries long struggling under the communist regime. However, while nearly 100 countries have been labelled as transitional in the recent 20 years, only a handful of them steadily progresses towards a “well-functioning democracy or... still enjoy a positive dynamic of democratization” (Carothers 2002: 9). With the European Union (EU) economic and technical assistance, the Central and Eastern European countries, reached considerable success in their transformation from the communist regimes to newly established or even consolidating democracies. However, the Western Balkan and post-Soviet states did not follow a similar path and instead of democratizing, especially the latter, have stuck in a limbo in between democracy and autocracy. The return to Europe has not proceeded equally for everyone and not much progress has been noted in the other parts of the world. This is even more surprising, keeping in mind that not only “domestic” democratization has increased in the recent 20 years but also the “international” one, with democracy promotion gaining its stable position within foreign policies of powerful liberal democracies.

Since the early 1990s states and organizations have targeted virtually every corner of the world with democracy promotion activities of various kinds; however, after the “third wave of democratization” (Huntington 1991), liberal democracy has made little progress or has even broken down (Diamond 2008). Some might argue that we are currently witnessing the recession or the third reverse wave of democratization (Diamond 2009). At the same time as Robert Dahl (1998: 148) wrote, “never in human history had international forces—political, economic, and cultural—been so supportive of democratic ideas and institutions”. Policies of democracy promotion have lacked consistency and well-defined strategies in their actions leaving practitioners and academics wondering how democracy promotion would proceed (Cox et al 2000; Smith 2008; Youngs 2002). This paper presents a part of a doctoral research project that endeavours to understand the impact a certain democracy promotion policy can have on target countries. The research starts with the analysis of the notions of democracy and democracy

promotion that can be conducive to determining the impact of democracy promotion. Following the lament of some scholars that there is no dialogue between them and the practitioners, despite often consultations and workshops with the promoters (Carothers 1999), this paper analyses democracy from the academic and practitioner perspectives to trace convergence between the two. It discusses the targets and steps of democratization analysed and recommended by the academics and targets and steps of democratization actually present in democracy promotion policies. The primary focus of this paper is on the conceptualization of the main terms associated with democracy promotion and analysis of its targets. Thus, though the strategies of interaction with democracy promotion targets are briefly discussed in the section on promoters, those are not the primary focus of the paper.

By the examination of the literature on democracy and democracy promotion this paper shapes the academic understanding of democracy that can be conducive to further research on democracy promotion. Bearing in mind that democracy promotion is a concept essentially embedded in practitioner practice, the approach to democracy of the main actors involved in democracy promotion is presented through studying written primary sources and individual interviews. The main finding of this paper shows that the academic and practitioner understandings of democracy and democracy promotion do not greatly diverge, however, in some cases, due to reasons that are beyond the scope of this paper, the actual democracy promotion policies do not always follow the recommended track. These conclusions derive from the analyses of democracy promotion policies of the EU and the USA, which are chosen as the promoter cases based on their overall economic, political and ideational leverage and attractiveness of cooperation for the target countries. This paper proceeds as follows. The next section discusses the concepts of democracy and democratization, adopting ones that are most suitable for democracy promotion research. The following section analyses the origins of democracy promotion, followed by a section that classifies and categorises democracy promotion activities. The subsequent section presents the examination of democracy promotion efforts of the EU and the USA based on desk research and field research, which included interviews with the management of democracy promotion organizations in Armenia (the country case of the dissertation project).

## **Theoretically Defining Democracy while Thinking of Practice**

To study the phenomenon of democracy promotion it is important to start from a set definition of democracy to understand what is promoted to the target countries as one of the virtues of modern society. However, this is not an easy task because democracy is one of the most debated concepts theoretically and empirically. The elusiveness of the definition of democracy mainly derives from its changing nature based on international and domestic processes along with cultural and historical specificities of different societies. Thus, regardless of currently prevailing definition of democracy, its conceptualization is closely interconnected with the context in which it is conceptualized and should be addressed by a “constructivist approach” (Whitehead 2002: 7). When undertaking a research connected with the concept of democracy, the researcher should cautiously choose the appropriate definition with careful consideration of alternatives and justified reasoning behind the choice of the given definition. Definition of democracy adopted for a study of democracy promotion—a highly practitioner concept—should be not only theoretically but also empirically grounded, carefully encompassing the existent literature but at the same time not being overly ambitious empirically. This section provides an overview of the state of art on democracy, its conceptualization, types, and specifics in modern political science, later settling on the conceptualization most appropriate for democracy promotion research.

“Democracy has some indispensable components without which the concept would be vacuous” (Whitehead 2002: 20), however those components are not stagnate and can be differently arranged. One of such components is elections. Following Schumpeter (1949), many scholars have regarded democracy as a system where the “most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections” (Huntington 1991:7). This electoralist approach has found many followers (Fukuyama 1992; Kirkpatrick 1981; Schumpeter 1947; Vanhanen 1990). The minimalist conception of democracy has helped to avoid conceptual overstretching by “moving up the ladder of generality” and might have been appropriate decades ago encompassing larger number of cases. However, this narrow approach of equating democracy to elections is not compatible with current situation in the democratic scene. Since

the third wave of democratization a record number of countries adopted elections as authority-choosing procedure. Nevertheless, in just a small portion of these countries, elections are truly competitive, without massive fraud and voter intimidation and hardly correspond to the understanding of “good democracy” (Merkel 2002). This is particularly true about the majority of post-soviet countries that quickly established parliamentary and presidential elections, though restricting their competitiveness and participation. Other conceptions of democracy involved features corresponding to the established industrial democracy, which entails certain political, economic, and social features. The maximalist conception that is hardly applicable to a handful of real cases, “include[s] equality of social and economic relations and/or broad popular participation in decision-making at all levels of politics” (Collier and Levitsky 1996: 8).

The ongoing scholarly debate over the notion and value of democracy shows that a comprehensive conceptualization of democracy that would satisfy academics and practitioners is practically impossible. In addition, because conceptualization is an evolving activity that is closely correlated with the explanatory power of the theory (Kaplan 1964), the argument over the “correct definition” is redundant (Guttman 1994: 12). The suggestion is to “avoid the extremes of including too much or too little in a definition relative to their theoretical goals” (Munck and Verkuilen 2002: 9). While maximalist definitions of democracy are of little analytical use because they are too overburdened, the minimalist definitions bear the danger of including all actually divergent cases under one subtype (Munck and Verkuilen 2002). From a practitioner, democracy promoter, point of view adoption of a maximalist definition, which includes inter alia such attributes as freedom from war, provision of social rights, and transition to welfare state, might be unrealistic, especially when democracy promotion is implemented in a relatively poor country. On the other hand, there is hardly a rationale for the adoption of a minimalist, electoral definition, for a study on democracy promotion because it does not illustrate the democratic reality of the target country, as elections might be in place though still largely violated and even restrictive.

While the concept of liberal democracy or polyarchy (Dahl 1989) might be the most well-known and ideal-typical, democratization studies show that there are various types of “democracies with adjectives” (Collier and Levitsky 1996) in the real world. However, democracy promotion activities do not aim to develop hybrid regimes (Karl 1995), electoralist

democracies (Vanhanen 1997), procedural minimum of democracy (Mainwaring et al 1992; O'Donnell et al 1986), and certainly not competitive authoritarianism (Levitsky and Way 2002). Though efforts of democracy promoters may be inconsistent and sometimes contradictory, they aim to promote liberal democracy that includes effective participation, voting equality, inclusion of adults (Dahl 1998), and the provision of civil and political liberties. Thus, in Dahl terms they should aim to ensure competition and contestation. While electoralist regime can be the starting goal for a democratizing country, neither domestic nor international actors should be satisfied with the short-term result. Excessive praise from the promoter for mere organization of elections or absence of any social and especially material shaming for rigged elections have the potential of endangering future democratic process as the domestic actors may regard the current situation as the ultimate goal of democratization and their donors.

Therefore, the democracy promoters should set feasible goals to achieve in a democratizing country, without neither falling into the minimalist trap, not to hinder the democratization process, nor setting unrealistically high objectives of ensuring provision of social and economic welfare. Bearing that in mind, in this paper understands democracy as:

“a meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organized groups for all effective positions of government power; a highly inclusive level of political participation in selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular free and fair elections, and a level of civil and political liberties-freedom of expression, freedom of press, freedom to form and join organizations” (Diamond et al 1988: xvi).

This definition addresses the requirements of contestation and participation and avoids the minimalist exclusion of attributes or maximalist overstretch of the concept. While contestation includes right to form political parties and participate in elections avoiding intimidation mainly from the incumbents, participation ensures fairness of the voting process, access of candidates to public financing and media, freedom of expression, freedom of media, and equal provision of these civil and political rights (See Table 1). Though based on the classic understanding of liberal democracy, the outcome of democracy promotion should be the type of democracy promoted by a specific promoter; however which usually includes the components specified above.

**Table 1.** Components of Liberal Democracy.

Potential Goal of Promotion	Liberal Democracy						
Components	Contestation			Participation			
Subcomponents	Right to form political parties and civil organizations	Right to freely participate in elections	Right to vote	Fairness of the voting process	Access to public financing and media	Freedom of media and expression	Equal provision of civil and political rights

Source: Based on Munck and Verkuilen 2002: 13 and Dahl 1998.

If a research adopts a context-specific definition of democracy, then the definition of democratization should be closely related to the adopted understanding of democracy. In the case of research on democracy promotion, the understanding of the beginning and completion of democratization should closely correlate with the understanding of the promoted type of democracy. Thus, the practitioner understanding of democracy and democracy promotion should play even greater role than the academic one, when evaluating the process of democratization from the democracy promotion point of view. The practitioner understanding of democracy plays an important role because “democratization is best understood as a complex, long-term, dynamic and open-ended process [and] consists of a progress towards a more rule-based, more consensual and more participatory type of politics” (Whitehead 2002: 27) and the former can provide the necessary closure to the process. Thus, democratization is not determined by its outcome, which can be either successful and result in democracy or failed and result in some kind of autocracy or flawed democracy, but rather by a process, which is supposed to lead to a specific democratic outcome, clearly outlined in the democracy promotion policy and democratization initiatives of local actors or in the research design. While the process of democratization may also vary, as actors may play important roles to varying degrees, democratization process within democracy promotion can be predetermined by the adopted democracy promotion policy. As for the theoretical understanding of democratization, it can be regarded as under way when certain actions are taken on the way to reach the outcome mentioned in the adopted definition of

democracy. Thus, while there are certain approaches to democratization that are discussed below, those should be adapted to specific examples of democratization to provide a comprehensive understanding of the process.

Until recently, scholars of comparative politics believed that international factors and processes are of marginal, if any, importance to democratization. Advocates of the internal dimension of democratization have claimed that the process of regime change is encouraged and initiated exclusively by domestic actors, where such endogenous factors as the strength of national economy, the institutional design (Linz 1990), the openness of political culture (Diamond et al 2002), and the elite behaviour (Higley and Burton 1989) are the main catalysts of democratic change. These studies have either overlooked the significance of international factors or have simply denied any possibility of their influence on domestic change (Schraeder 2002). This narrow and exclusive approach of comparative politics has resulted in disagreement from various scholars who considered international factors to play a significant role in the process of regime change and subsequent democratization (Pridham et al 1994). In the beginning of the 1990s scholars of democratization supposed that external governments and institutions may have a determinative impact on democratization of a given country (Huntington 1991). Others have argued that in the coming decades the significance of international institutions may prove pivotal for domestic political change (Vachudova 2005). In a revisit of his well-known “requisites of democracy” article, Lipset (1994: 17, 16) concludes that domestic conditions “do shape the probabilities for democracy, but they do not determine their outcomes.” Democracy is an “international cause”. Democracy promotion has become the link between the international and domestic dimensions of democratization, and further research on democracy promotion will provide explanations on how these two dimensions interact.

Some scholars argue that there are four international dimensions of democratization: coercion, seen as military intervention; contagion, seen as intended or unintended emulation of the democratic regime of a neighbouring country; conditionality, seen as imposition of sanctions or rewards; and consent seen as activities by an external actor in the target country requiring the consent of the domestic government (Whitehead 1996). Within these international dimensions of democratization, there are three methods of democracy promotion (Whitehead 1996: 88)—incorporation, invasion and intimidation. However, because these three methods entail

imposition of democracy and inequality between the promoter and the target country, where the latter's consent is not required, these types of democracy promotion are excluded from this research. While contagion does not involve specific actions of external actors, coercion does not require the consent of the domestic actors. As shown below, conditionality is not a separate dimension but is a strategy used in the dimension of consent (democracy promotion). While international factors receive thorough examination in the literature (Whitehead 1996; Schraeder 2002; Carothers 1998; 2004), domestic factors are usually neglected.

## **Definitions and Classifications of Democracy Promotion**

Scholars of democracy promotion have repeatedly expressed concerns over the lack of an adequate theoretical framework wielding predictive value for democracy promotion studies (Burnell 2007, 2008). The literature mainly relates to the practitioner (Carothers 1999, 2004) and ex post (Burnell 2008b) view of democracy promotion, which is overwhelmingly a narrative of democracy promotion efforts of the USA (Carothers 1999) and the EU (Gillespie 2002; Youngs 2002), and the role of democracy promotion in their foreign policies. So far, only some practitioner tools for ex post evaluation of democracy promotion are available. They have been developed by different foundations and development agencies: United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) etc.; and heavily criticized by the academics (Crawford 2003a, 2003b). Carothers even claims that “democracy promoters treat political change in a pseudoscientific manner” (2004: 102), thus their democracy promotion does not have a theoretical background. At the same time scholars criticize democracy promoters arguing that they “rarely have much sense of history about what they do, either with regard to the countries in which they are working on or to the enterprise of using aid to promote democracy” (Carothers 1999: 19). Though this is potentially true, besides criticizing, academics should work on the development of a theoretical framework which can help in formulation of democracy promotion policies. This section of the chapter presents analysis of different types and levels of democracy promotion which are further used in theory development.

Despite large volumes of academic work on democracy promotion there are less than a handful of works suggesting definitions which can be used when researching the phenomenon. According to one of them democracy promotion is “overt and voluntary activities adopted, supported, and (directly or indirectly) implemented by (public or private) foreign actors explicitly designed to contribute to the political liberalization of autocratic regimes and the subsequent democratization of autocratic regimes in specific recipient countries” (Schmitter and Brouwer 1999: 12). The given definition does not include implicit actions of external actors, such as diplomatic and intelligence activities, health campaigns and alike, as well as it omits international factors, which do not require presence of a promoter. This definition provides a general understanding of what democracy promotion is and leads to its further classifications.

While some distinguish four levels of democracy promotion targets: individual citizens, civil society, political society, and state institutions (Schmitter and Brouwer 1999); others distinguish three sectors of democracy promotion: electoral process, state institutions, and civil society (Carothers 1999). Democracy promotion on the level of state institutions “supports institutions of public authorities not to improve their repressive capacity, but to reform those institutions” (Schmitter and Brouwer 1999: 21), by strengthening legislation, aiding rule of law, and developing local government (Carothers 1999). Democracy promotion at the level of political society is understood as “assistance to the specialized organizations and movements of political society”, usually involved in a competition for office (Schmitter and Brouwer 1999: 21) by political party building and electoral aid (Carothers 1999). At the civil society level, democracy promotion supposes assistance to “organizations that are at least partially voluntary and are relatively independent from the state” (Schmitter and Brouwer 1999: 19-20) by NGO building, civic education, media strengthening, and union building (Carothers 1999). At the level of individual citizens the objective of democracy promotion programs is “to transfer knowledge about democratic institutions and practices, socializing individuals to democratic values, and changing their behavior” (Schmitter and Brouwer, 1999: 19). Carothers includes individual citizens into the civil society sector. These groups largely overlap, thus they are combined into one group which entails goals and types of promotion from both groups (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Classifications of Democracy Promotion.

<b>Level</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Type of Democracy Promotion</b>
<b>State Institutions</b>	Democratic constitution	Constitutional assistance
	Independent judiciary and other law-oriented institutions	Rule-of-law aid
	Representative legislature	Legislative strengthening
	Responsive local government	Local government development
	Prodemocratic military	Civil-military relations
	Free and fair elections	Electoral aid
<b>Political Society</b>	Strong national political parties	Political party building
	Free and fair elections	Electoral aid
<b>Civil Society</b>	Active advocacy NGOs	NGO building
	Strong independent media	Media strengthening
	Free and fair elections	Elections observation
<b>Individual citizens</b>	Political educated citizenry	Voter education
		Professional and educational exchange

Source: based on Schmitter and Brouwer 1999: 44 and Carothers 1999: 88

This template (Table 2) makes clear the adherence of some democracy promoters to the idea that democracy should be promoted through bottom-up and top-down approaches, however though these approaches should be used simultaneously, strategies usually differ from a promoter to promoter. Encouragement of multiparty system with increasing both supply (state institutions) and demand (civil society) are equally important for successful democracy promotion (Carothers 1999). Thus, state institutions should be established through a democratic process, be stable and be able to perform their responsibilities without being pressured by the executive or the military. At the same time, vibrant and independent civil society should be able to represent the interests of the citizens and provide checks over the government. According to some promoters the democratization process proceeds along a “relatively set path” (Carothers 1999: 87): a nondemocratic regime faces popular demand for liberalization, opposition and civic

actors consolidate their power, multiparty elections are held, elected government is in power and democracy is further consolidated. Although, the sequence may be in place in many democratizing countries, the democratic quality of these events might be far from the imagined ideal. While the civil actors may multiply and elections held, the quantity of civil society actors does not guarantee the fulfilment of its obligations and elections are not necessarily free and fair. Thus, though this sequence can be taken into consideration by promoters, they, instead of congratulating themselves and their domestic counterparts on groundbreaking performance also need to pay attention whether these events carry genuinely democratic character.

Schmitter and Brouwer (1999) also emphasize the importance of differentiation between democracy promotion and democracy protection. In contrast to democracy promotion, democracy protection is “overt and voluntary activities adopted, supported, and (directly or indirectly) implemented by (public or private) foreign actors explicitly designed to contribute to the *consolidation of democracy in specific recipient countries*” (Schmitter and Brouwer, 1999: 14, italics added). Democracy protection does not intend to change the current political regime, especially if it is democratic, but acts to make it more effective and efficient. Likewise, organization of police training for enforcement of human rights and support for privatization of trade unions are activities directed at consolidation of democracy. While democracy promotion activities are likely to be more effective on the state and political society levels, democracy protection activities can be influential when targeted at the civil society and individual levels. However, some of the target levels in democracy promotion and democracy protection overlap, achieving more results in one case than in the other (Table 3). In addition, these boundaries are often blurred in the actual activities of promoters that do not strictly differentiate between the two.

**Table 3.** Democracy Assistance. Source Schmitter and Brouwer 1999: 44

		GOAL	
		Democracy Promotion	Democracy Protection
		<b>Democratization</b>	<b>Consolidation of Democracy</b>
<b>Target Level</b>	<b>Individual</b>	Civic education (esp. electoral)	Civic Education
	<b>Civil Society</b>	PVOs / NGOs / Interest Groups* / Media	PVOs / NGOs / Interest Groups* / Media
	<b>Political Society</b>	Political Parties / Interest Groups Acting as Political Organizations / Political Movements	Political Parties
	<b>State</b>	Constitution (Writing / Reform)	Judiciary / Legislature / Police / Military/ Decentralization

### **Democracy Promoters: A Constructive Dialogue or Touching Bases?**

While the literature on individual democracy promotion efforts of specific countries or organizations is plenty, limited comparative knowledge is available. Among the reasons for lack of comparative research has been the alleged incomparability of democracy promoters, given their structural differences as an individual state or an international governmental or non-governmental organization, and absence of an adequate and generally applicable theoretical framework. Magen et al (2009) undertake a praiseworthy effort of comparing the EU and US democracy promotion strategies, however the book “does not venture to evaluate their impact” (p. 20). Despite an array of international actors, the EU and USA are arguably the most

prominent democracy promoters in the contemporary world (Burnell 2008b). From the first glance these actors represent two absolutely different and incomparable structures. However, closer consideration shows that “they are two different species of the same political genus” (Fabbrini 2007: 3) of compound democracy, which is “based on territorial or state cleavages and necessarily function without a government” (Fabbrini 2007: 203) and where “decision-making capacity is constrained and limited through the sharing of its resources by distinct institutions” (Fabbrini 2005: 190). The usual perception of the EU is as “one of the most important, if not the most important, normative powers in the world” (Barroso 2007), while the USA is seen as a power that for the sake of democracy promotion can “send [its] soldiers, when [they] are needed” (Bush 2002). However, a recent publication, on the contrary to Kopstein’s (2006) “transatlantic divide”, claims that EU and US policies of democracy promotion are “remarkably comparable” (Risse 2009: 250).

Strategies of democracy promotion have recently received an amplified attention from scholars opening up the debate on the necessity to find an applicable theoretical framework. The framework of international socialization (Schimmelfennig et al 2006) after necessary adaptations seems to one of the most applicable, when aiming to identify the strategies and the possible impact of certain democracy promotion policy (Babayan 2009). International socialization is “a process in which states are induced to adopt the constitutive rules of an international community” (Schimmelfennig et al 2006: 2). It classifies the strategies as inclusive vs. exclusive and material reinforcement vs. social reinforcement or persuasion. In its turn the material reinforcement strategy is divided into reinforcement by reward, punishment and support. The inclusive strategy first grants states with membership then tries to socialize them from within, e.g. the Council of Europe, the OSCE, because the new members along with membership take on the obligation to adhere to the norms and principles of the socializer. The exclusive strategy socializes states before granting them membership, e.g. the EU and NATO, making the membership conditional on compliance with the promoted rules (Schimmelfennig 2002). The socializing agency can also opt for different channels of socialization, i.e. intergovernmental, targeting the governments directly, and transnational, targeting non-governmental actors (Schimmelfennig et al 2006; see Table 4). The specific impact of certain strategies still requires further research. Though these strategies are briefly mentioned in the analysis below, this paper is more interested in how these

democracy promoters see democracy, what they usual targets are, whether they follow a particular sequence of democratization. This section is based on the examination of promoters' official documentation, secondary academic sources, and interviews conducted by the author in Armenia, during the field research for the doctoral research project.

Table 4. Socialization strategies.

	<b>OSCE</b>	<b>Council of Europe</b>	<b>EU</b>	<b>NATO</b>
<b>Inclusiveness</b>	Inclusive	Intermediate	Exclusive	Exclusive
<b>Instrument</b>	Persuasion and social reinforcement		Material reinforcement by reward	
			Additional support	Additional punishment
<b>Channel</b>	Primarily intergovernmental, secondarily transnational			

Source: Schimmelfennig et al 2006: 40.

### The European Union: getting more mature?

“Democratization is by no means a new departure for the EU” (Ferrero-Waldner 2006: 2). Many even claim that the most important function of the EU is to serve as a democratic model (Petersen 1995, p. 62 in Olsen 2002, p. 137). The EU recognizes the importance of democracy promotion by stating in the Maastricht Treaty that “Community policy in this [development co-operation] area shall contribute to the general objective of developing and consolidating democracy and the rule of law and that of respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms” (Article 130 U, Section 2). This commitment to democracy is reiterated in the Agenda 2000 of the European Commission (EC) which states that “the Union must...promote values such as peace and security, democracy and human rights” (Commission 1997, p. 27). In addition, the Article 8A of the Lisbon Treaty states that “the functioning of the Union shall be founded on representative democracy”. Due to lack of military power and internal political structure, when exporting its democratic model, the EU supposedly acts as a normative power trying to have an ideational impact on its partner and target countries (Manners 2002). At the same time the EU

has the highest membership criteria, which were set during the European Council meeting in Copenhagen in 1993. These criteria include requirements for candidate countries, or the countries ever endeavouring to have closer cooperation with the EU, to embody institutions that guarantee democracy, rule of law, and respect and protection of minority rights.

Though part of the Copenhagen criteria is labelled as democratic, EU prefers to distance itself from such concepts as “democracy” and even more “liberty” (Magen and McFaul 2009). The subtlety of EU democracy promotion is traced when analysing its official documents and statements, where the phrase preferred to democracy but as a rule containing the same meaning is “good governance”. Wherever democracy is mentioned, it is always followed by a group of other concepts such as human rights, stability, and rule of law that can actually be included in the overall concept of democracy (e.g. ENP documents). Similarly EU democracy promotion, according to some scholars (Cremona 2004, Leonard 2005), include a whole variety of policies that aim to address social modernization, human equality and peaceful resolution of conflicts in addition to the commitment of emphasizing “the importance ... of the principles of parliamentary democracy and the rule of law” (European Community 1986). These conceptualizations and commitments put the EU understanding of democracy, which includes contestation, participation, and representation with further advancement to conflict resolution and social modernization, somewhere in between the minimalist and maximalist academic conceptualizations. In its democracy promotion, the EU aims to handle a range of issues, which however, are more likely to address democratic consolidation rather than foster democratic transition or promote democracy on its early stages. The important thing for the EU in these initiatives is to clearly divide one process from the other and to prepare the target level for further advancements.

The main instruments of EU democracy promotion in Central and Eastern European countries were the Copenhagen criteria and thousands of pages of the *acquis communautaire*. Through democracy promotion, the EU aimed to strengthen the international order by “spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law, and protecting human rights” (European Council 2003). Though, these democracy promotion priorities can be addressed on all target levels mentioned

above, EU democracy promotion through the enlargement policy was marked by an evident top-down approach, which preferred to tackle the state rather than society. Instead of focusing on civil society groups, elections, or political parties, the EU opted for strengthening the state capacity, through constant monitoring of the enlargement policy implementation. Thus, the whole EU accession process was characterized by the “preference of order over freedom” (Kopstein 2006:90). The enlargement policy has become the great success of EU foreign policy in general and democracy promotion in particular. The alluring membership incentive closely tied to conditionality of any material or social benefits played the most important role in the success of EU democracy promotion in Central and Eastern Europe. The EU follows the same scenario with current candidate countries, however the lack of membership incentive and a credible conditionality in relations with other target countries is likely to negatively affect the performance of its initiatives (Babayan 2009; Kelly 2006; Schimmelfennig et al 2006).

The EU developed numerous policies and instruments for promotion of democracy and human rights, targeting countries in different regions of the world: PHARE, TACIS, MEDA, Barcelona process, European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and others. Encouraged by the enlargement success, the EU created the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which, however, does not offer membership to target countries. The ENP greatly differs from other geographically limited EU policies because it includes countries from Africa, Eastern Europe and the Middle East. The ENP introduces certain political conditionality in its relations with the target countries stating that “where a partner country fails to observe the principles referred to in Article 1 [once again confirming the shared values principle], the Council ... may take appropriate steps in respect of any Community assistance granted to the partner country under this Regulation” (European Parliament and the Council 2006: Article 28:1). However, the conditionality and the threat of exclusion are partial as right after, the Parliament and the Council clarify that “Community assistance shall primarily be used to support non-state actors for measures aimed at promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms and supporting the democratization process in partner countries” (European Parliament and the Council 2006: Article 28:2). Whether this strategy is successful is a matter of another paper, however, also Youngs (2009) finds that at least in Mediterranean and East Asia, the EU started implementing a

bottom-up approach, increasing the budget for civil society support, mainly through human rights NGOs.

Despite its rhetoric and emphasis on the importance of civil society for democracy, the EU follows an exclusive approach of reinforcement by reward or otherwise conditionality using mainly intergovernmental and to a lesser extent transnational/civil society channels. Considering assistance to opposition parties and NGOs as “an interference into a country’s internal affairs” (Risse 2009: 251), the EU follows a statist and top-down approach to democracy promotion. Though the conditionality policy is not always consistent, and in the regions where the membership perspective is not applicable but domestic conditions are less conducive, it pursues strategy of persuasion and example, e.g. South Caucasus, Africa, the Middle East. The ENP follows the usual practice of the EU on norm promotion: it uses political conditionality with some incentives, putting a strong emphasis on the “shared values” notion. It is unlikely that current conditionality or incentives approach towards non-candidates might change, however, there is a chance that the EU might change or even better combine its targets. When answering my question on the interaction with academia that calls for projects addressing both state institutions and civil society for better results, the Democracy and Human Rights project manager in Armenia mentioned that the EU delegations plans such a project and it may be included in the upcoming Action Program. However, she proceeded with clarifying that “it is not about applying theory into practice, it is rather we got more mature” (Papian 2010).

### The United States of America: on a crusade for democracy

From the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the US external affairs have been marked by Woodrow Wilson’s (1917) conviction that “the world must be made safe for democracy”. After the presidency of Wilson, the USA has continued “to foster the infrastructure of democracy” (Reagan 1982) to “enlarge the community of democracies” and “advance America’s interests worldwide” (Clinton 1994) by means of foreign aid and sometimes military power. While the main mission of the USA during the Cold War was not democracy promotion per se but rather the containment of the Soviet Union (Cox et al 2000), democracy promotion neatly fit the “searching for purpose” task after the collapse of the grand rival (Dumbrell 2008: 90).

Democracy promotion under Clinton was marked by as a “grand vision” (Yang 2000 in Carothers 2000) of his administration. However, financial support to democracy promotion has tangibly increased from the Reagan years to the end of the Clinton administration (Carothers 2000). While Clinton administration pursued democracy promotion mainly through foreign aid and by building diplomatic relations, the succeeded Bush administration especially after 9/11 attacks opted for more hard approach of military interventions and for reinforcement by punishment whenever the target country did not show any readiness for democratic change. Always being a military and not only an economic power, the USA unlike the EU has never constrained itself to a normative power image.

However, this “crusade for democracy” (Scott-Smith and Mos 2009: 237) may have been hindered by a sloppy formulation of democracy promotion policies due to the the “lack of a clear definition of democracy and a comprehensive understanding of its basic elements” (Epstein et al 2007: 3). In addition, without a clear definition of democracy it is nearly impossible to determine the success of democracy promotion and consequently when the target does not require further assistance (Epstein et al 2007). Lack of a definition was also acknowledged by the US Congress in 2006, which stated its concern that “the State Department and USAID do not share a common definition of a democracy program” (S.Rept. 109-96/H.R. 3057). It went further in 2007 to “ensure a common understanding of democracy programs among United States Government agencies” through its Senate Appropriations Committee Report and defined democracy promotion as “programs that support good governance, human rights, independent media, and the rule of law, and otherwise strengthen the capacity of democratic political parties, NGOs, and citizens to support the development of democratic states, institutions and practices that are responsible and accountable to citizens” (S.Rept. 109-277/H.R. 5522). Based on this definition, democracy according to the USA can be conceptualized as the academic understanding of liberal democracy that requires contestation, participation, and respect for human rights.

The end of the Cold War was interpreted by the US policy makers as the cry of civil society for democratic development and freedom. The USA is inclined “to see a stable democracy as the product of a healthy and vibrant civil society” (Kopstein 2006: 89); with democracy being established as soon as the authoritarian leader is overthrown and elections are held. The overall institutional environment, however, does not seem to be so important (Kopstein

2006). However democracy is not only about elections, it is inter alia about independent media, political parties, checks on democratic government that must face the check of electable opposition and leaders that must hand over power peacefully (Epstein et al 2007). This understanding of democracy also correlates with Huntington's (1991) "two-turnover test" for democratic consolidation, which requires two peaceful changes of governing power through elections. Democracy promoting organizations that are funded by the US government concentrate heavily on elections, political parties, and civil society organizations, in most of the cases preferring not to work with state-related organizations, focusing on the opposition, especially in the case of media development as part of civil society. The USA has also largely invested in development of political and civil societies by supporting local NGOs and monitoring elections (Marinov 2004). Absence of the 'membership perspective', unlike in the case of the EU, and simultaneous cooperation with aspirant democracies and friendly tyrants makes the distinction of exclusive/inclusive approach dubious. In the case of the US the exclusive approach can be regarded as lack of diplomatic relations due to security or economic concerns, thus the USA's approach would most appropriately be classified as intermediate.

Established by an executive order in 1961, the USAID is the principal instrument of democracy promotion of the US government (Programs & Council 2008) with its distinct Democracy and Governance (DG) portfolio, which focuses on rule of law, elections and political processes, civil society, accountable governance, and independent media. Present activities of the USAID were launched after democratic transitions in Latin America and the former USSR in mid-1980s (Epstein et al 2007). Since then, the USAID has initiated democracy promotion in more than 120 countries, regardless whether those showed any signs of democratization or not and regardless whether external democratization efforts were welcome or not. Though the USAID develops the democracy promotion program, in most of the cases the implementation is carried out by an international or local partnering NGO, which has won the bid for the program. Being convinced that democracy should come from endogenous forces, the USAID also partners local political forces aspiring for democratic reforms (USAID 2005), which shows that the USAID often uses transnational channel of democracy promotion. At the same time most of the efforts through the transnational channel are not backed-up by the necessary governmental one. Though as former head of USAID Armenia DG acknowledged, the USAID has started planning

a project that will involve both state and civil society levels (Zarycky 2010), however the details of the project are still under elaboration.

## **Conclusion: Complementing while Neglected**

The strong democratic wave of the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century declined in the past decade (Diamond 2008). However, the number of democracy promotion activities launched by international actors has not declined but on the contrary increased, with the EU and NATO widening the geographic scope of their activities and the USA funding more programs. The increase of the financial and technical spending on democracy promotion programs that do not yet produce an increase in positive results have led to a general complaint from the academics: hastily designed programs are not supported by a well-defined understanding of democracy and democracy promotion. Ill-defined concepts could have resulted in misunderstanding with the target countries and decreased effectiveness of democracy promotion programs. This paper shows that these claims are partly true depending on the promoter and the time-frame. In addition, while the scholars often act as consultants to the high-rank officials of democracy promoters, the field management is often unaware of these consultations. Thus, the presence of dialogue depends on the level of democracy promoter's management. However, the possible observation is that while scholars, on the invitation of the practitioners, endeavour to complement their initial efforts, they are often neglected when it comes to the actual implementation of the projects.

Nevertheless, the practitioner understandings of democracy and democracy promotion are largely in line with the theoretical conceptualization. The EU in its activities has always pursued a parliamentary democracy; the USA supported the overall notion of liberal democracy, which largely corresponds to the adopted theoretic definition. However, while the EU's conceptualization was first documented in 1986 and later reiterated in its founding treaties, the US definition was documented only in 2007 to avoid misunderstanding between the State Department and the USAID. Whether the official status of the definition influences the effectiveness of a democracy promotion program is yet to be established.

Another lament of the academics has been the excess focus on the elections at the expenses of other essential elements of democracy and democratization. Similarly to the EU and the USA, which sometimes diverge in their targets giving preference to state and civil society development respectively, the scholars also seem to diverge in their conclusions. Kopstein (2006) argued that the EU mainly pursues a top-down approach, preferring to strengthen the governance capacity of the state, while the USA pursues a bottom-up approach, making the civil society the main stakeholder in the democratization process. On the contrary, Magen et al (2009) claimed that though there is more attention to one approach than the other, there is no sharp distinction between the two promoters. However, this divergence of opinions is not a result of different research strategies or data but rather of the research time-frame. Recently, the EU has started to involve civil society in its projects and the USA through the USAID plans inclusion of state actors in its programs. The broadening of the scope of the targets directly correlates with the calls of the scholars that promoters need to use both intergovernmental and transnational channels, preferably incorporating as many levels as possible. Practitioner approaches to democracy promotion start to converge, however it is unclear whether it happens because practitioners start listening to the academia or they simply learn from their own mistakes and are looking for new strategies. At least according to the interviewees, the second option seems more likely.

The problem with the effectiveness of democracy promotion might not be its conceptualization but its implementation, namely the strategies. A democracy promoter should not only decide whether to promote democracy and what type of democracy but also how to promote it. Thus, a promoter needs to develop a strategy compatible with a target country. On the other hand, there is a need for a generally applicable theoretical framework for not only defining democracy promotion but also anticipating the possible outcomes. The development of a country tailored strategy with specific applicable indicators of effectiveness seems to be the main problem of democracy promotion. Overambitious programs with indicators that travel from country to country (Zarycky 2010) with little local ownership and prior research on local realities decrease the potential effectiveness of democracy promotion. At the same time promoters may be constrained by their own structural conditions and organizational behaviour, making a generally-applicable advice on implementation virtually impossible. Consequently, more

research is needed on the strategies of democracy promotion under specific international and domestic conditions, so the practitioners not have a constructive dialogue with the academics but also successfully implement the results of the dialogue for increased effectiveness of their projects.

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