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# EU policy in Belarus : prospects for democratization.

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EU POLICY IN BELARUS: PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRATIZATION

By

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B.A., University of Louisville, 2010

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of the  
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August 2013



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A Thesis Approved on

August 5, 2013

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## ABSTRACT

### AN ANALYSIS OF EUROPEAN UNION DEMOCRACY-PROMOTION POLICIES IN BELARUS AND THE IMPACTS THEY HAVE EFFECTED ON DEMOCRATIC DEEPENING IN THIS AUTHORITARIAN REGIME

Jessie-Leigh O. Thomas

August 5, 2013

This thesis addresses the impact of an external actor's democracy promotion policies on domestic democratic development. More specifically, it is a case study of the European Union as an external actor, using Belarus as the domestic polity of focus. My research questions are: (1) What have been the policies of the EU intended to encourage democracy in Belarus? and (2) What have been the impacts of these policies on Belarus' level of democracy in comparison to the rest of Central and Eastern Europe? To respond to these questions, a definition and method of measuring democracy is proposed, and Belarus' level of democracy as it relates to that of neighboring countries is evaluated.

I theorize that external agents have a significant role in this process, largely through diffusion. The most important forms of diffusion highlighted in this thesis are linkage, leverage, neighbor, and that occurring via transnational advocacy networks. Conditionality, or the notion of an external actor offering a domestic polity a set of incentives and/or disincentives for modifying its standards, behaviors, practices, etc. is the method by which the EU most frequently attempts to affect democratization. For this

reason, EU democracy promotion policies based on conditionality are the focus of this paper.

I proceed by analyzing three specific, conditionality-based policy instruments the EU has utilized over the past decade to encourage democratization in Belarus. Each instrument's purported objectives, incentives and conditionality requirements are considered before its impacts are assessed according to the corresponding political developments in Belarus at that time. This serves as a relevant indicator of whether or not the policy was successful in meeting its objectives, and may provide further insights into the types of policies which appear to be successful in effecting democratic progress.

The results found that the policies the EU has implemented thus far have had varying degrees of success: the Eastern Neighborhood Policy, very strict in its conditionality requirements, had very little impact; the Eastern Partnership, a more multi-lateral, collaborative approach with more lenient requirements for participation produced slightly better results until 2010 when there was a violent political crackdown in Belarus; lastly, the Dialogue on Modernization, which places a greater emphasis on civil society, has made greater strides in supporting and legitimizing opposition groups in Belarus – motivating certain members of the Belarusian political elite to express their desire to participate, a positive sign. My findings also suggest that initial signs of progress do not necessarily signal substantive, long-lasting change will occur. Further research into the EU's ability to influence democratic change in Belarus is necessary.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The area of contemporary comparative politics has recently witnessed an increased interest in democratization studies. Sparked by revolutions in Latin America and Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the current global democratization movement has produced regime transformations at a previously unfathomable rate (Munck 1994 & Lawson 1993). Consequently, comparative researchers have gone to great lengths in their attempts to explain this phenomenon. From outlining the necessary prerequisites for democracy to country case studies of specific democratic transitions to developing generalizable theories of international democratization, scholars have been tackling the subject from all angles.

The purpose of this thesis is to address the impact of an external actor's democracy promotion policies on domestic democratic development. More specifically, I conduct a case study of the European Union (EU) as an external actor, using Belarus as the domestic polity of interest. I address the following research questions: (1) What have been the policies of the EU intended to encourage democracy in Belarus? and (2) What have been the impacts of these policies on Belarus' level of democracy?

King, Keohane, and Verba (1994, 46) assert "the best scientific way to organize facts is as observable implications of some theory or hypothesis." The data I have

collected is therefore rendered more useful when it is understood within the context of a certain theory. In this thesis, I will employ constructivist theory to frame the presentation of my observations and respond to my research questions.

Constructivist theory, as it relates to the field of international relations, is explained by Jeffrey Checkel as resting on two primary assumptions: “(1) the environment in which agents/states take action is social... and (2) this setting can provide agents/states with understandings of their interests” (Checkel 1998, 325). Of particular relevance to the arguments I make later is the concept that states *interact* with one another, according to the environment in which they find themselves. Constructivist theory also provides us an understanding of *norms* or standards of behavior (Checkel 1998, 326). These interstate exchanges and international norms, according to constructivist theory, greatly impact on a state’s perceived interests in different situations and therefore play a role in the actions and choices it makes.

Applying this theory to my research questions, I am primarily concerned with the interactions occurring between the European Union and Belarus. I will analyze their actions (that is, the policies implemented by the EU towards Belarus and the Belarusian response to those policies) based on constructivist theory, assuming that the decisions made by each actor are inspired by their environment, interactions with one another, and according to the norms or standards of behavior each actor maintains.

The methodology employed in this thesis is that of a case study, intended to examine the relationship between a two variables. The dependent variable under observation is the level of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe since the end of Communism as it relates to Belarus. Belarus, which has not undergone any significant

change in its level of democracy is the outlier of this group and this thesis is therefore concerned with considering the factors influencing (or failing to influence) its level of democracy. The independent variable which will be considered in this chapter is European Union democracy promotion policy.

As I elaborate in the third chapter, I have elected to situate my research in the timeframe from 2002 to the present, primarily because 2002 followed a particularly difficult year for democracy in Belarus. Based on democracy promotion theory, I hypothesize that the EU should be relatively effective in bringing about a positive move toward democratization in Belarus. Using inductive reasoning, I make observations based on data I have collected from official government documents and websites, academic journals, online periodicals, and international organizations to respond to my research question.

The results found that the policies the EU has implemented thus far have had varying degrees of success: the Eastern Neighborhood Policy, very strict in its conditionality requirements, had very little impact; the Eastern Partnership, a more multi-lateral, collaborative approach with more lenient requirements for participation produced slightly better results until 2010 when there was a violent political crackdown in Belarus; lastly, the Dialogue on Modernization, which places a greater emphasis on civil society, has made strides in supporting and legitimizing opposition groups in Belarus – motivating certain members of the Belarusian political elite to express their desire to participate, a very positive sign.

## Defining Democracy

Democracy at its most basic level means the rule or power of the people (Lawson 1993, 189). Beyond this definition though, scholarly opinion remains divided concerning the best operationalization of the term. Some academics opt for a procedural definition, meaning they focus on democracy as a method of government instead of attaching it to a set of social, economic or political values or objectives (Weiner 1987, 865). For some, the holding of elections suffices for a state to be considered a democracy. Others, however, include considerations of electoral competitiveness and inclusiveness in their definitions. One example of such a scholar is Joseph Schumpeter (1974, 269), who argues: “the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote.” Przeworski (1991), Powell (1982), and Schmitter & Karl (1991) are among those academics who mention *free, fair, & competitive* elections in their procedural conceptualizations of democracy.

This type of classification system lends itself to cross-national, empirical testing as the presence of basic representative institutions or the holding of elections are scientifically observable. The major critique of procedural conceptualizations though is that they may allow states holding any form of election to be considered a democracy – even those where political manipulation and suppression run rampant, and where in reality a state’s citizens do not exert any meaningful power over the selection of officials. This is why a second camp in democratization studies argues for a more expanded, substantive definition of democracy.

Substantive characterizations of democracy concentrate on the presence of certain civil and political freedoms and values within a state. For example, values of “liberty, equality, and fraternity” (Pennock 1979, Lawson 1993) and freedoms of the press, of expression, of association and rights to assemble, etc. (Dahl 1989, Huntington 1991) are taken into consideration in evaluating how democratic a state is considered. Substantive approaches focus less on the institutional arrangements required for democracy and more on the conditions and participation of the electorate in the voting and decision-making process (Schmitz 2004, 46). Substantive classifications underscore the *reality* of political conditions for a state’s citizens, as opposed to simply determining whether or not its institutions *appear* to function democratically. Such definitions are not without fault, though. Expanded definitions tend to vary with regard to the values and freedoms they take into account, and normative concepts such as values are, for obvious reasons, difficult to empirically measure.

In this thesis I will adopt a combined approach in determining what does or does not make a state democratic, as suggested by Jan Teorell (2010). I will focus on the following dimensions: whether or not a state holds free, fair and effective elections to the executive and/or parliamentary bodies of government, as well as long-standing observations of political and civil liberties (specifically, freedom of association, the right to peaceably assemble, and freedom of the press). With these characteristics in mind, it is now possible to proceed to the next issue of how best to measure them.

## Measuring Democracy

There are numerous ways scholars have attempted to measure and classify levels of democracy across countries. While some gather their own data based on their preferred sets of indicators and measurement techniques, many rely on long, time-series data indexes such as Freedom House<sup>1</sup> or Polity IV (Bogaards 2010, 476). Freedom House is an index which uses measures of a state's political rights and civil liberties to assign it a score on a scale of one to seven. According to Freedom House:

“Political rights ratings are based on an evaluation of...electoral process, political pluralism and participation, and functioning of government... Civil liberties ratings are based on an evaluation of freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights.” – Freedom In the World 2013, p. 32

Based on this index, a state is considered “free” if it receives a score of 1 to 2.5, “partly free” with a score of 3 to 5, and “not free” with a score of 5.5 to 7 (Bogaards 2010, 476).

Another widely used database on democratization is Polity IV<sup>2</sup>. The Polity IV research scheme measures: “a state's quality of executive recruitment, constraints on executive authority, and political competition. It also records changes in the institutionalized qualities of governing authority,” (Marshall 2011). It rates states' levels of democracy and autocracy independently using a scale of 0 to 10, and then provides a combined rating with a “polity score” ranging from -10 to +10 (Bogaards 2010, 477). The polities are then assigned labels, ranging from “coherent autocracies” at the lowest

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<sup>1</sup> Freedom House is an independent watchdog organization “dedicated to the expansion of freedom around the world” (Freedom in the World 2013, 6).

<sup>2</sup> Polity IV is the most recently updated version of the original Polity dataset, both of which were developed under the direction of Ted Gurr & Monty Marhsall (Marshall 2011).

point, to “incoherent polities” or “anocracies” in the middle, to “coherent democracies” at the highest level<sup>3</sup>.

Based on the definition of democracy described above, it follows that attention should be paid to both the Freedom House and Polity IV datasets. Freedom House scores pertain specifically to the substantive characteristics of a democracy while Polity IV tends to concern itself primarily with the procedural elements. Moreover, Teorell (2010) found systematic measurement errors in each dataset, with Freedom House tending to underestimate a country’s level of democracy and Polity IV frequently overestimating it (Teorell 2010, 33). Thus, taking both into consideration provides us with a way to effectively analyze a country by using a broad range of indicators and attempting to minimize the measurement errors observed in the statistics provided by both scales.

#### Belarus: A Non-Democracy

Using these scales, I can evaluate the recent level of democracy in Belarus in an attempt to understand why the EU has deemed it necessary to instigate democracy promotion efforts in this country. The Polity IV scale assigned Belarus a democracy score of “0” and an autocracy score of “7,” meaning its combined polity score was “ -7” for 2011 (Marshall & Cole 2011). Its numbers were identical for 2009 and 2010 (Marhsall & Jagers 2010). This score has earned it the classification of an institutionalized autocratic regime. While it rated very low (having no) political legitimacy, Belarus’ fragility index score indicates that it is a relative stable, durable regime (Marshall 2011). Polity IV data also classified Belarus’ executive recruitment as

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<sup>3</sup> Specifically, “coherent autocracies” have a score from -10 to -7; “incoherent polities” or “anocracies” -6 to +6; and “coherent democracies” a score from +7 to +10 (Bogaards 2010, 477).

being “designated” (largely due to the President’s overarching powers, ability to amend the constitution almost at whim and the weakness of democratic institutions); and the country’s political participation level as “restricted competition” (citing instances of government intimidation, voting fraud, and repression of the media and civil society) (Marhsall 2011).

Similarly, Freedom House data dating back to 1998 finds that at *no* point from that time to the present has Belarus been considered free, or even partly free. It has consistently scored a 6 or 6.5 on this scale, falling well within the classification of “not free” (which requires a score of 5.5 to 7). According to Freedom House, a country is classified as “not free” when: “basic political rights are absent, and basic civil liberties are widely and systematically denied” (Freedom House 2013). In the most recent analysis of Belarus, this watchdog organization pointed clearly to instances of voting fraud and irregularities in the September 2012 parliamentary elections as a sign that Belarus was far from free. It further elaborated instances of harassment and intimidation of online and independent media by government officials and agencies as well as describing Belarusian limitations on freedoms of association and the right to peaceably assemble (*ibid*).

<b>Democracy Indicators</b>						
	<b>2002</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
<b>Freedom House</b>	6	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5
<b>Polity IV</b>	-7	-7	-7	-7	-7	-7

Sources: Freedom in the World (2013) and Marshall (2011).



These indicators show that Belarus has and has had a history of weak democratic institutions, is wrought with corruption and fraud; and is a country in which civil and political liberties are vehemently repressed by an authoritarian government. As evidenced by the Polity IV data, Alyaksandr Lukashenka has managed to form a relatively durable authoritarian regime in his nearly twenty years as president of Belarus (Marhsall & Cole 2011). How can an external actor such as the EU hope to elicit a democratic transition in what the premier democratization studies classify a stable, institutionalized autocracy? Part of the answer to this question lies in the theoretical literature of international democratic diffusion.

#### Belarus: The Outlier

The case of Belarus has been chosen for its role as an outlier from many proposed theories about the experience of Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) undertaking democratic transitions. It has not responded to EU conditionality as have most of the post-Soviet states (which *may* be accounted for by the fact that it has retained the closest relationship with Russia out of any of the former Soviet republics) (Nice 2012, 5). In fact, Thomas Ambrosio (2006) refers to Belarus as an example of a pariah regime in Europe, which would “normally satisfy the formal criterion of procedural democracy but [is] deficient in those areas of substantive democracy relevant to international opinion, especially in the part of the world in which [it is] located” (Pridham 2001, quoted in Ambrosio 2006, 411). The survival of such regimes is interesting for the study of democratization because they raise questions about the generalizability of theories pertaining to external factors of democratic transitions.

## Structure of this Thesis

Having now defined the term democracy, presented the ways in which it is measured, and explained Belarus' unique position as an authoritarian outlier among its European neighbors, I will move on to a more in-depth discussion of democracy promotion theory. In particular, I contend that external agents have a significant role in this process, largely through diffusion. The most important forms of diffusion highlighted in this thesis are linkage, leverage, neighbor diffusion, and that which occurs via transnational advocacy networks. Conditionality, or the notion of an external actor offering a domestic polity a set of incentives and/or disincentives for modifying its standards, behaviors, practices, etc. is the method by which the EU most frequently attempts to use diffusion to affect democratization. For this reason, the focus of discussion is primarily on EU democracy promotion policies based on conditionality.

I proceed by analyzing three specific, conditionality-based policy instruments the EU has utilized over the past decade to encourage democratization in Belarus. Each instrument's purported objectives, incentives and conditionality requirements are considered before its impacts are assessed according to the corresponding political developments in Belarus at that time. This serves as a relevant indicator of whether or not the policy was successful in meeting its objectives, and may provide further insights into the types of policies which appear to be successful in effecting democratic progress.

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## CHAPTER 2

### THEORIES OF DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

Democracy promotion theory, much like constructivist theory, revolves around the interaction of different agents. In the case of democracy promotion, one can infer the presence of an external agent acting or influencing a domestic polity. The domestic polity is possessed of certain internal characteristics as well which determine how it accepts and relates to the actions taken by the external agent. The first step in analyzing the EU's capacity to influence democratization in Belarus will therefore be to consider the role of internal and external factors in democratic transitions.

Once the significant impact external actors purportedly have on domestic agents has been established, I will discuss democracy promotion as a process of diffusion. Diffusion, as shall be explained, occurs most notably on the regional level and on the level of international organizations. The diffusion of democratic norms can occur in a variety of ways; the method most widely used by the EU is that of conditionality (by which certain incentives, i.e. economic assistance, are exchanged for democratic reforms). While the Union offers authoritarian states such as Belarus many incentives to democratize, its conditionality requirements are sometimes met with hostility; antidemocratic rulers may look to other international actors with fewer requisites to have their needs met. How these options appeal to Belarus will be addressed in the subsequent parts of this thesis.

### External and Internal Factors

An ample amount of international relations literature attempts to justify democracy promotion strategies employed by democratic nations to foster democracy in other states. Two fairly distinct camps have emerged: those scholars arguing that internal or domestic circumstances decide a country's likeliness to democratize (the majority), and those who make the case that external actors play a more influential role<sup>4</sup>. The first camp, which enjoys the broadest amount of consensus among democracy promotion scholars (McFaul 2007, 47), contends that domestic ruling factions, economic development, and the strength of institutions are largely accountable for democratic transitions (Yilmaz 2009, 92). Those following this logic may argue, for example, that circumstances such as a state's perception of its national history influences that state's desire and willingness to democratize. In the case of Belarus, its national history has been closely tied to that of both Russia<sup>5</sup> and Europe; however Belarusian citizens' fierce sense of independence and its position as a nation between to super-powers is one of its most intriguing features. The strong belief of the Belarusian public that Belarus is a unique power devoid of outside influence (Lukianov 2006) has made it possible for President Lukashenka to protect his power and use this sense of nationalism and sovereignty as a

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<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting here that even scholars who put forth arguments that external factors play an influential role in democratic transitions acknowledge that the international influence is mediated through (and therefore affected by) domestic actors and conditions.

<sup>5</sup> Lukashenka has, since coming to office, promoted the retelling of Belarus' Soviet past over its European past, and has made Russian a national language in Belarus, largely with the intention of fostering pro-Russian sentiments in civil society which make him popular for maintaining close partnerships with Russia (Bekus 2008).

barrier against absorption into another supranational body (which may reduce his influence) (Zakaria 2003).

In addition, scholars focusing on internal factors frequently make the case that there is a higher percentage of democracies observed among wealthy nations as opposed to poor ones<sup>6</sup>, suggesting that higher national incomes are more likely to foster democracies in undemocratic states or to preserve democratic regimes in states where they already exist than lower ones (Przeworski et al. 2000). This does not appear to be the case for Belarus, which has a relatively high national income compared to other countries around the world. Another domestic socio-economic factor is argued to be income distribution: countries with low levels of income inequality are believed to harbor better conditions for democracy (Boix & Stokes 2008). Yet again, this does not explain Belarus' reluctance to democratize, as the country has a fairly equal income distribution with a World Bank (GINI) score of 27.2<sup>7</sup> in 2008. Finally, Colaresi and Thompson (2003, 388) have suggested that economic growth and development correlate positively to democratization because they increase levels of education, which in turn increases political participation<sup>8</sup>. Once again, Belarus' high literacy rate of 99.8% (Mundi Index 2009) does not explain its lack of democratization according to this theory. If these internal factors do not provide a rationale for the absence of democracy in Belarus, perhaps we should consider instead the role of external agents in democratic development.

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<sup>6</sup> In 2000, a wealthy nation was considered one with a Gross National Income per capita of \$4000 USD or more (Przeworski et al. 2000). Belarus' 2011 GINI was \$5,830 (World Bank GINI per capita, Atlas Method 2012).

<sup>7</sup> For comparison, the US has a score of 45, indicating that it possesses a greater income disparity between rich and poor than that of Belarus (World Bank 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Lipset, Kyoung-Ryong, & Torres (1993) argued a similar case for growth and the educated public demanding more political participation.

During a time when the state had a considerable amount of control over what took place inside their borders, the analysis of internal factors was likely more relevant than in the globalized situation most states (including Belarus) face today. Their borders have become more porous, with the Internet, satellites, and international NGOs making it difficult to control the flow of information into and out of their borders (Yilmaz 2009, 100). Violations of human rights or political violence taking place within a country have been made more visible to the rest of the world thanks to the information networks of human rights organizations and the ability of the average citizen to instantly transmit images and information across borders via cell phones and other telecommunications devices.

Nations have also become increasingly interdependent as a result of growing international trade flows, such as foreign direct investment, and are consequently more vulnerable to the demands of those international actors controlling capital movements and investment decisions (Yilmaz 2009, 101). They are forced to respond to growing formal and informal limits to their domestic policy choices resulting from denser institutional regulation and an ever-expanding number of agreements binding them to one another. This is why states are often viewed, not as single units operating according to predefined self-interest, but as members of an international community (Meyer et al. 1997, 152). It is accurate, therefore, to observe that “democratization... do[es] not occur in an international vacuum” (Colaesi & Thompson 2003, 382). A positive domestic environment undoubtedly plays a role in any successful democratic transition (Ambrosio 2006, 408); however this increased interdependency among nations leads one to seriously consider external actors as transformative agents of a state’s progress toward democracy.

External actors generally seek to promote democratization in a country when they perceive such actions will, in some way, benefit their interests, be they material or moral ones. Their perceptions of what constitutes the notion of “benefit” also varies. In the case of the European Union, democracy promotion rests primarily on two ideas. First, the EU ascribes to the “democratic peace” theory, under which democratic countries are believed to resolve their problems by peaceful means instead of resorting to war and violence (Elman 1997). Second, the EU recognizes that as a consequence of the growing economic interdependence among nations, countries have more to gain from the peaceful settlement of disputes than from violent conflict (Vysotskaya 2008, 2). The EU therefore elects to engage in democracy promotion in its surrounding areas because it believes that having democratic neighbors will ensure peace in its neighborhood; moreover, the Union has faith it can reasonably accomplish this objective based on the economic incentives it is able to offer partner countries.

When external agents promote democracy, they act as gravitational pulls on target states, attracting them to or, sometimes, pushing them out of their orbit depending on the incentives and restrictions they offer or require (Ambrosio 2006). Political elites and domestic populations are not merely passive objects of external influence; they are active agents of change who respond to and condition external actions (Pollard 1999). The influence of external agents on the process of democratic consolidation can therefore be understood as one which is mediated through domestic social, economic and political institutions (Steves 2001, 340). This is why I shall not only consider the actions undertaken by the EU intended to encourage democratization in Belarus, but will also take into account the reactions of the Belarusian administration. This interplay of



external agents and domestic mediators is what ultimately determines whether democracy succeeds or fails in a state (Schmitz 2004, 418).

Because of such domestic mediation, external actors are somewhat limited in the scope of domestic actors and circumstances they are able to influence. The European Union cannot control, for example, certain conditions initiated by countervailing international agents and their respective powers, incentives, etc. (Pridham 2007, 349). There are also a host of domestic factors over which the EU cannot have direct influence: for instance, the Union has little say in the ways a domestic government limits, filters, or spins information produced by the EU before it is dispersed to the general public. The EU may be able to provide incentives for freedom of the press, but it cannot *impose* this on the domestic polity. External agents like the EU are also limited by the capacity of the target state to implement reform measures. Other constraints, such as an institutionalized autocrat's willingness to undertake reforms, are also outside the EU's realm of direct control (Pridham 2007, 350). Despite these limitations though, the European Union has made democracy promotion in its region a paramount foreign policy objective (McFaul 2007). To understand how this process takes place, it is first useful to conceive of democracy promotion as one type of international diffusion.

### Diffusion

A general definition of diffusion explains it as the "spread of a practice within a social system, where the spread denotes flow or movement from a source to an adopter typically via communication, role modeling, and/or coercion" (Rogers 1995 in Wejnert 2005, 55). In terms of international relations, the term *diffusion* "refers to the various

interactions and inter-linkages between two structures, one being the international context and the other one a single country that is situated in that context” (Yilmaz 2009, 94).

One can also think of diffusion as “how linkages to external actors and events influence the relative power and the likely strategies and choices of relevant groups in struggles over political institutions and outcomes” (Gleditsch & Ward 2006, 918). Democracy promotion is therefore a type of diffusion in that external actors seek to spread the practice of democracy to targeted domestic polities via the inter-linkages existing (or fostered) between the two.

More specifically, political scientists have conceptualized of different manners in which democratic diffusion occurs. Laurence Whitehead (1991), for example, has theorized that the spread of democracy occurs via *convergence*. Convergence occurs when an authoritarian country joins a pre-existing community of democratic states without losing its national sovereignty (for example, when Spain, Portugal and Greece democratized and then integrated into the European Community) (Whitehead 1991 as explained in Yilmaz 2009, 94). Another framework for understanding democratic diffusion is Geoffrey Pridham’s concept of *system penetration* (Pridham 1991). This theory emphasizes the long-term external agents that infiltrate a domestic system, affecting the contextual conditions under which internal political processes occur. According to Pridham’s system penetration framework, even where there is no immediate external factor at the *actual* moment of a regime change or democratic reform, the long-term impact of external actors should still be taken into consideration when analyzing those events (Pridham 1991 cited in Yilmaz 2009, 94). As shall be elaborated in the following chapter, the European Union relies heavily on convergence and system

penetration to spread its democratic ideals to neighboring states. The extent to which the EU can be successful in this endeavor is determined by the level of linkage and leverage it enjoys with a target state.

### *Linkage*

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way (2005) assert that linkage and leverage are important conditions affecting an external agent's ability to influence democratic development in a country. Linkage is defined as the interrelationships and interdependencies existing between external and internal developments; in layman's terms, linkage refers to the density of ties between external and internal actors. These ties may be:

- (1) economic, including credit, investment and assistance
- (2) geopolitical, tying a state to Western governments and organizations
- (3) social, including tourism, migration, and Western-educated elites
- (4) communicative, meaning cross-border telecommunications, the Internet, and Western media penetration
- (5) civil society focused, covering ties to NGOs, churches, political parties, etc.

(Levitsky & Way 2005, 22-23)

Linkage, in any form or a combination of these forms, raises the cost of authoritarianism

- by:
- 1) heightening the salience in the West of authoritarian abuse
  - 2) increasing the probability of an international response
  - 3) creating domestic constituencies with a stake in adhering to democratic norms
  - 4) strengthening democratic forces in relation to autocrats

(Levitsky & Way 2005, 23)

Authoritarian states with low linkage can generally repress domestic opposition groups without paying a heavy international cost, while those with extensive linkage to the West receive close scrutiny of their domestic politics and are thus subject to intense international pressures to reform.

In the case of Belarus and the European Union, relatively low levels of linkage exist, as Belarusian society remains relatively isolated from Europe. Despite being a direct neighbor of three EU Member States, most Belarusians have never visited the EU. In the early to mid-2000s, it was estimated that as few as one in twenty Belarusians visited the EU (Potocki 2011, 51). According to a 2009 poll, 67% of Belarusians have never been in neighboring Lithuania or Poland, let alone more distant European countries (Lahviniec & Papko 2010, 258). The cause of this phenomenon, argue Belarusian scholars, lies in high visa prices and complicated visa procedures. One may also point to weak business contacts between the two entities, and the relative insignificance of academic exchanges (Lahviniec & Papko 2010, 259).

Beyond direct interaction with Europeans, there is also the matter of information flows between the EU and Belarus. Belarusians receive very little by way information about the EU as such and life in its Member States, even in those that have recently joined. Belarusian Internet usage has been frequently reported as quite low compared to neighboring countries, and what use does occur is strictly filtered by the government. Consequently, Western penetration and information flows from the West have been, and continue to be severely limited. Following the March 2006 presidential elections, though, the EU has made efforts to expand its connection to Belarusian society (for example,

increasing cross-border information flows via the Warsaw-based European Radio for Belarus and support for Belarus' first Belarusian-focused, independent satellite-TV channel) (Potocki 2011, 54). The audience for most media financed by the European Commission or by individual EU countries and the US—the Belarusian Service of Polish Radio, Radio Liberty, Radio Racyja, European Radio for Belarus, Belsat TV—does not exceed 5% of the adult population; and these media are often underfunded. The only exception to this rule is the Russian Service of Euronews, watched by 16% of Belarusians (Lahviniec & Papko 2010, 258).

The relative isolation of Belarus from the EU creates a situation in which Lukashenka's authoritarian regime maintains a significant amount of power, in part because it effectively prevents European influence (ideas and values) from permeating Belarusian society. At the same time, European society is possessed of little knowledge of the situation in Belarus (i.e. the political atrocities being committed), meaning Lukashenka's regime generally has the ability to act however it likes and infringe upon the human rights of its people without attracting much attention in the European media or public. Only the most widespread, heinous acts (such as the 2010 crackdown) or the highest level of political abuses (the 2012 parliamentary elections) appear to be addressed by the Union on a broad scale (for example, communications by the Council, Commission decisions, etc.). Low levels of linkage between the EU and Belarus are thus one explanation behind Belarus' reluctance to democratize; another reason may involve the amount of leverage Europe exerts (or does not exert) over Belarus.

### *Leverage*

Leverage refers to the authoritarian environment's vulnerability to external democratizing pressure (Levitsky & Way 2005, 21). Such pressure may take the form of political conditionality, punitive sanctions, diplomatic pressure, and military intervention. States thus feel the most vulnerable when their position of leverage is weak in comparison to other states (Levitsky & Way 2005, 21). A study by Michael Colaresi and William Thompson (2003) demonstrated that the greater the trade interdependence of a country, the more likely it is that the country will be exposed to pressures from the outside world. For businesses that depend on transnational economic activity, norm-violating government behavior risks triggering sudden shifts in investments or trade flows. Consequently, domestic sensitivity to a regime's image abroad is heightened, and international norms become domestic demands (Levitsky & Way 2005, 24).

Depending on the levels of linkage and leverage between two actors, diffusion may or may not occur. If enough points of connection are present between two states, and an external actor has an advantageous position over a potential democratizer, there is a high probability that an external agent can exact a meaningful influence over the decisions of a domestic regime. Such diffusion has been theorized as occurring primarily on a regional level ("neighbor diffusion") and also at a transnational level (i.e. supranational organizations and networks).

### *Neighbor Diffusion*

Because democratic diffusion analysis at the international level is an "aggregate mask[ing] large regional differences and variation," international processes influencing democratization are not likely to be found at a global level (Gleditsch & Ward 2011,

916). Instead, many international relations scholars argue that neighboring states have a greater impact on democratization; some use as evidence the fact that countries tend to democratize in clusters: for example, Southern Europe in the 1970s, Latin America in the 1980s, and the post-Soviet states in the 1990s (Wejnert 2005, 54). This clustering within regions suggests that domestic political climates are influenced by external circumstances, particularly those occurring within a state's immediate region (Wejnert 2005, 54).

One of the rationales behind the significant impact of neighbor/ regional diffusion on democratization prospects is one state's proximity to another is closely associated with the frequency and closeness of interactions and communications between those states (Wejnert 2005, 56)<sup>9</sup>. As interstate interactions and communications increase, so does the capacity of a potential democratizer to observe and learn from a neighboring democratic country. Equally important is the impact of regionalism, which refers to the "relationship between a state's internal political process and the values and norms that dominate its region" (Ambrosio 2006, 409). Authoritarian regimes situated in regions dominated by democratic governments are therefore likely to feel greater pressure to undergo democratic reforms due to fears of international isolation or being perceived by other states as illegitimate (Ambrosio 2006, 409-410).

A study by Kristian Gleditsch & Michael Ward (2006) found that a higher proportion of democratic neighbors significantly decreased the likelihood that an autocracy would endure, and increased the likelihood that democracies would be

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<sup>9</sup> Barbara Wejnert's study illustrated that in most regions (Central and Eastern Europe were included in the majority), exposure to media positively affected democratic growth. Only in the most reluctant of democratizers (in particular, the Middle East) did media exposure elicit a negative reaction (Wejnert 2005, 72).

sustained (Gleditsch & Ward 2006, 925)<sup>10</sup>. In particular, a transition in a neighboring democracy was shown to significantly decrease the likelihood that an autocracy would endure. Furthermore, they found that autocracies were significantly less likely to last: in a region with a high level of democratic states, when a neighboring state underwent a democratic transition, and/or when less conflict was present in that region (Gleditsch & Ward 2006, 925 and Teorell 2010).

Democratic diffusion within a state's neighborhood is also important because states make decisions of whether or not to democratize based on the perceived costs and benefits of reforms, a calculation which can be greatly enhanced by observing experiences of neighboring states. Initially reluctant leaders in autocracies may be more willing to initiate difficult reforms if democratic transitions made by other states suggest that the costs and consequences of reforms may not be as bad as they had feared. Thus, fears of transitioning to democracy should weaken as more reference countries become successful democracies (Gleditsch & Ward 2006, 920). Belarus' strong reaction against the Color Revolutions of nearby Ukraine and Georgia in the mid-2000s suggests that the converse of this argument is also valid. An authoritarian state may view the experiences of other similar states as undesirable and elect to preempt similar events from occurring in their state (for example, by blocking transnational networking of domestic NGOs in pre-electoral periods or by preventing opposition access to media outlets) (Silitski 2010, 62). It is the objective of a democracy promoting state to convince an authoritarian polity that the benefits of implementing democratic reforms will exceed the potential costs.

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<sup>10</sup> Jan Teorell's 2010 study analyzing variables almost identical to those of Gleditsch and Ward produced similar results.



Engagement in the successful democratic transitions of surrounding states may be a way of establishing one's reputation as a fair and/or generous partner in such pursuits.

### *Transnational Advocacy Networks*

Similar to the logic behind diffusion processes occurring within a state's immediate geographic region, diffusion may also take place between states that are proximate in their international and regional political activities. Several international relations scholars have, through a variety of research methods, found that regional, international, and/or supranational, democratic organizations possess a strong capacity for furthering democratization (Ambrosio 2006, Teorell 2010, Wejnert 2005, Gleditsch & Ward 2011, and Pevehouse 2005). Specifically which type of supranational body exerts the most influence on democracy promotion remains contested; it is therefore useful to employ Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink's more inclusive definition of transnational activity networks in conceptualizing these entities. Keck and Sikkink (1999, 91) conceive of transnational activity networks as "political spaces, in which differently situated actors negotiate – formally or informally – the social, cultural and political meanings of their joint enterprises." The notion of *advocacy*, included in their terminology, is also important in that it suggests the entity promotes and/ or defends a particular (generally, a normative) cause, practice, or set of values (Keck & Sikkink 1999, 92).

Transnational advocacy groups seek to influence policy outcomes as well as "the terms and nature of the debate" (Keck and Sikkink 1999, 91). These goals may be accomplished in a number of ways. For example, democracy promoters may challenge an

autocratic regime's status quo by using universally accepted and institutionalized sets of democratic principles to undermine that regime's international legitimacy (Schmitz 2004 and Keck & Sikkink 1999). The greater the difference between how a state governs itself (or the norms it practices) domestically and how the transnational network of which it is a member elects to govern itself, the more likely it is that the democratic body will expose the contradictions and use its powers to encourage the state to move toward democracy (Schmitz 2004, 409).

Jon Pevehouse (2005) has suggested three distinct causal mechanisms through which membership in a transnational advocacy network may further the level of democratization in a country:

- (1) pressure- through open condemnation and threats of sanctions or other punishments, such as membership refusal or suspension. For example, a regional organization may threaten the economy of an authoritarian regime and potentially help weaken an authoritarian regime's hold on power;
- (2) the acquiescence effect- suggesting that involvement in a regional body may enhance the support of the economic and political elite in adhering to democratic norms, thereby putting the authoritarian leader in a position of having to acquiesce to the desires of these influential groups;
- (3) legitimation- or the notion of throwing regional support behind an opposition group. It may also mean delegitimizing the incumbent leadership on a regional or international level, thereby calling into question that party's legitimacy on the domestic level.

(Pevehouse 2005, 17-27)

Empirical testing in recent years has given added weight to the theory of democratic diffusion through supranational organizations or networks. Pevehouse (2005) and Teorell (2010) found, based on statistical evidence, that the level of democracy of a regional organization (that is, how democratic are its members) is the most influential factor of how effective these bodies are at affecting democratization. An authoritarian state's membership in such bodies significantly increased a country's democracy score compared to membership in similar organizations where all members were authoritarian states. This would lead one to believe then that entities like the EU and the transnational advocacy networks of which it is a part it both precipitate a move toward democracy and enhance the chances for successful democratic consolidation (Teorell 2010). One of the most frequently used (and arguably, most effective) means of democracy promotion used today by the European Union is conditionality (Gledistch & Ward 2011).

### Conditionality

Conditionality is “an active policy that influences the cost-benefit analysis of an authoritarian regime, with the purpose of promoting democracy” (Ambrosio 2006, 410). Specifically, it involves the EU “imposing or threatening to impose sanctions or providing or promising to provide rewards in order promote or protect democracy” (Schmitter & Brouwer 1999 in Yilmaz 2009, 98). European political conditionality has, since the development of the Copenhagen criteria<sup>11</sup>, expanded in scope, so that it now covers:

The stability of democratic institutions, the rule of law and human and minority rights... the strengthening of state capacity, the independence of

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<sup>11</sup> The Copenhagen criteria were established in 1993 and outline the conditions which must be met to be considered for membership in the European Union (Pridham 2007 351).

judiciaries, the pursuit of anti-corruption measures and the elaboration of a series of particular human and minority rights... [as well as] economic, social and cultural rights...

(Dimitrova and Pridham 2004, 97)

The objectives of having these conditions met comprise a bulk of the EU's negotiating points when it enters into agreements and/or partnerships with undemocratic associates.

The Union offers authoritarian regimes incentives such as closer ties, economic assistance, etc. in exchange for steps taken toward democracy and/or human rights.

Alternatively, those regimes electing to continue suppressive measures against their citizens may be punished via trade sanctions and international isolation (Ambrosio 2006, 410). In such instances, the highest international authorities, such as the Council of Europe, OSCE, the EU and NATO can push a state to democratize by threatening to withhold recognition of its sovereignty (which is called into question if not recognized by other states) and/or its legitimacy (Agh 1999, 267). For example, public condemnation of a CEE regime by institutions such as the Council of Europe, the OSCE, or EU in general would threaten the recognition of that state's external legitimacy, potentially undermining that regime's internal legitimacy and popular support. (Steves 2001, 347).

Several scholars studying the potential effects of European conditionality have found that conditionality without a real prospect for the target country to become an EU Member State is largely ineffective (Schmitter & Brouwer 1999, Dimitrova & Pridham 2004, and Ethier 2003). This has been the case for the CEECs (where democratization efforts were largely successful as the probability of membership was high) as well as the Mediterranean and North African countries, where democracy promotion efforts, such as the Barcelona Process or the Union for the Mediterranean, have yielded no tangible

results since these countries have little real hope of accession to the Union (Dimitrova & Pridham 2004).

In fact, Hakan Yilmaz (2009) proposes a set of four meta-conditions which must arguably be met for EU conditionality to be effective:

- The correct balance of requirements and incentives: the target country must receive enough benefits to make the cost of adjusting to EU requirements worthwhile
- Consistent application: the EU cannot change conditionality requirements halfway through the process
- Uniform conditions: ALL candidate countries must meet the same requirements
- Prospect of membership: once conditions are met, EU Membership must be attainable

(Yilmaz 2009, 99)

Conditionality is important in the democracy promotion process in that it directly links the external pressures and agents to a state's (or, more specifically, an authoritarian ruler's) decision-making regarding reforms. The state is forced to include the price it will have to pay to external agents in its cost-benefit analysis of suppression versus liberalization (Yilmaz 2009). As the number of democracies in the world increases, the costs are likely increase over time (Gleditsch & Ward 2006, 921). Thus, as external penalties for *not* democratizing increase, the likelihood for authoritarian rulers to allow democratic reforms also increases (Ambrosio 2006, 410).

The European Union has enjoyed a relatively high amount of success employing its political conditionality method, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, with four

former Soviet states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland) successfully completing requirements for accession and joining the EU in 2004 (Sadurski 2004). It appears though that the EU's use of conditionality with regard to Belarus has been relatively unsuccessful, given the country's consistently poor democracy ratings over the past decade. One possible explanation for this lack of success is the presence of countervailing forces acting on Belarus, Russia in particular.

### Countervailing Forces: the Russian Bear

If we conceive of external agents as gravitational pulls on Belarus, it possible to imagine the EU as one planet seeking to pull Belarus into its sphere of influence, and Russia on the opposite side pulling Belarus away from Europe. Competing external interests in the country influence Belarus' receptiveness (or lack thereof) to European conditionality measures. Thus, to understand the shifting positions of Belarus with regard to the European Union, it is useful to consider Belarus' relationship with Russia. Belarus' historically close ties to Russia have helped insulate the autocratic government from Western (European) democratizing pressures. The Lukashenka regime's flagrant disregard for human rights and democratic principles led to Belarus' estrangement from the Western democratic community; however the country did not shoulder much burden as a consequence. Russian energy subsidies and economic assistance (estimated at 20 percent of the country's GDP) cushioned the impact of isolation for years (Levitsky & Way 2005, 32).

When considering the impact of Russia versus the EU on Belarus, it is also useful to address the amount of foreign direct investment both actors contribute to the

Belarusian economy as well as how much they provide Belarus in terms of aid and assistance packages. This is largely because Belarus' current economic policy requires constant financial support from the outside (Belarus In Focus 2013). While the data regarding Russian investments in Belarus is not likely to be completely accurate, certain estimations provide a vague idea of the situation.

For example, the Russian portion of gross FDI inflow to Belarus was estimated at 60.8 per cent of the total in 2011 (KMPG 2011). Also in 2011 Russia agreed to provide Belarus with an estimated US \$3 billion loan. In addition, Russia valued its assistance to Belarus at US \$6 billion in 2012 (over 35% of the national budget). Most of this assistance comes in the form of preferential pricing on oil, gas, and low-interest loans; however in June of 2012 Russia also signed a contract with Belarus for the construction of a nuclear power plant, opening up a line of credit estimated at US \$10 billion (Wierzbowska-Miazga 2013, 23).

Comparatively, the EU provides a competitive amount of trade with Belarus in comparison to Russia (the EU estimated at 40.9% in 2012 with Russia at 46.7%) (Firsava 2013). However, it offers Belarus significantly less foreign investment and aid to Belarus. For the period 2007 to 2011, a total of € 46.07 million was allocated to Belarus via the ENPI (Europa.eu 2011). For the period 2011 to 2013, the estimated amount of assistance to Belarusian civil society via the ENPI was around € 15.6 million (Europa.eu 2011). The total budget for the ENPI for 2012 to 2013 was estimated around EUR 38 million, a notable boost from the total budget from 2007 to 2011 (Europea.eu 2012).

Thus Belarus' economic relationship with Russia has been historically very close, and things do not appear to be changing anytime soon. Belarus agreed to form a Customs

Union with Russia and Kazakhstan in 2007, ratifying the document in 2010, weeks before its presidential elections (Nice 2012, 5). More recently, in May 2013, the three partners announced plans for the Eurasian Economic Union, envisaged to facilitate trade among the partners, to be launched in January 2015 (Belarus in Focus 2013). Moreover, Russia offers Belarus such economic incentives without requiring any changes to Lukashenka’s authoritarian regime. These economic benefits in addition to the sociocultural and historical factors and the fact that Russia does not push a democratic agenda while providing such attractive incentives, have kept Belarus well within the Russian realm of influence.

Yet it is important to understand the other side of this dynamic as well. Belarus is a country that values strongly its independence; this may be attributed in part to Lukashenka’s desire to retain sole control over the country. Thus, the Belarusian authorities are cautious of allowing Russia too much influence in their domestic economic situation. Belarus has demonstrated great reluctance to Russian desires of acquiring Belarusian enterprises and assets, thereby indicating its reluctance to integrate too fully with Russia (Nice 2012, 7). Opinion polls indicate that a significant portion of the population is against such integration (IISEPS).

Belarusian Attitudes toward Russia and the EU				
For or Against Integration with Russia	2002	2006	2010	2013
For	53.8%	44.9%	32.1%	51.4%
Against	26.3%	28.9%	44.5%	28.1%
Don’t know/ No opinion	19.9%	26.2%	23.4%	20.5%

Source: Independent Institute of Socioeconomic and Political Studies 2012

Lukashenka has also alluded to establishing economic and political links with countries such as Iran, Venezuela and China, in an effort to locate new sources of



investment and to underline the country's political and strategic independence from both its neighbors (Melyantsou 2012, 100 and Nice 2012, 9). These circumstances suggest that Belarus is being pulled strongly into the Russian orbit, and is considering other alternatives outside of its region as well; the alternatives it is considering though may portend a negative turn for democratization if Belarus looks only to similarly undemocratic nations with which to partner. The EU will have to provide a significant list of incentives in order to compete.

### Conclusion

This chapter has presented an overview of the extant literature on democracy promotion and international democratic diffusion. It began with a comparison of the internal and external actors influential in bringing about (or impeding) democratic transitions, followed by a discussion of democracy promotion as a type of diffusion process. This process is largely dependent upon the amount of linkage and leverage existing between two polities, and an adequate level of each must be attained in order for an external actor to meaningfully impact a domestic one. In the case of the EU and Belarus, the low level of linkage (of business contacts, diplomatic ties, information flows, etc.) and existence of an alternative, countervailing force acting against Europe's points of leverage with Belarus have created a less than ideal scenario for European democracy promotion in the country.

It was also argued that democratic diffusion occurs most frequently (and most successfully) at the neighbor state and/or the transnational network levels. While these entities may employ a variety of mechanisms to persuade a state to undertake democratic

reforms, the one most frequently (and most effectively) used by the European Union is conditionality. The EU has been relatively successful in its use of this strategy for incentivizing states to democratize: for example, in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

Belarus' reluctance to democratize casts it as an exception to many widely accepted theories of European democratization. While Belarus tends to find itself in a position similar to that of many these former autocratic regimes within its region, it has yet to undergo any significant amount of democratic reform. I have suggested a potential explanation (or partial explanation) for Belarus' outlier status as being the country's close relationship with Russia; however a more in-depth look at the specific European democracy promotion policies, the circumstances in which they were established, and the reactions of Belarus to them is necessary for achieving a more in-depth understanding of the matter.

From the evidence presented thus far, it is clear that democracy promotion theory alone does not account for the low level of democratization in Belarus. Internal factors (i.e. socio-economic conditions) cannot explain it; however external factors, such as Belarus' high level of trade interdependence with Europe and its close proximity to European states and frequent interactions with the EU as a democratic, supranational entity *may* provide insight into the country's potential for democratic change. Russia's influence on Belarus may be a possible partial reason for Belarus' current low levels of democracy; but the European Union is an equally powerful neighbor with the capacity to provide an impressive package of incentives to Belarus to democratize. These facts

would lead me to hypothesize that the European Union has the potential to impact the level of democracy in Belarus. In the next chapter, this will be further analyzed.

CHAPTER 3  
ANALYSIS OF CONDITIONALITY-STRUCTURED  
EU DEMOCRACY PROMOTION POLICIES IN BELARUS

I established in the previous chapter that the European Union acts as an external agent of democracy promotion, encouraging democratic transitions in its neighborhood by exercising its economic and political weight. It may elect to employ negative measures, like sanctions, or positive ones, like political conditionality in its endeavors. Conditionality, as has been explained, may be understood as the “linkage between European Union’s demands to a third country focused on reforms in a certain policy area, and incentives such as subsidies or access to EU funds” (Fedirko 2013, 3) and is the core mechanism of many EU agreements, including those concluded between EU candidate countries and post-soviet states. The purpose of this chapter will be to analyze the impact of specific, conditionality-based policies of the European Union on the level of democracy in Belarus.

To carry out this investigation, I will consider three major policies designed to promote democracy in Belarus: the European Neighborhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership, and the Dialogue on Modernization. The decision to focus on these specific measures lies in the fact that they are each a relevant example of how the EU uses conditionality requirements to structure its relations with third parties such as Belarus. For each, I will consider: the EU’s declared objectives, the incentives for Belarus to

participate in the policy, the disincentives for Belarusian participation, and the observed impact they had on the progress of democratization in Belarus. Firstly, though, I will further detail my methodological approach.

### Methodology

Having now presented a summary of the theories around which my arguments are based, it is time to focus on data analysis. The data presented in this chapter will constitute a case study whereby a case is defined as a “political, social, institutional, or individual entities or phenomena about which information is collected and inferences are made,” (Seawright and Collier 2004, 275). In accordance with the definition given by Seawright and Collier (2004, 276), my attention is focused on the detailed contextual knowledge of a specific case (that of Belarus) and how variables (notably, EU democracy promotion policies) interact within the context of this particular case.

Moreover, I conduct within-case analysis in that I concentrate my attention on internal evidence about patterns of causation connected with the overall levels of democracy achieved which may be *distinctively* associated with the democracy promotion policies of the EU (based on Seawright and Collier’s definition [2004, 312]). I am therefore making one observation on the dependent variable (democratization in Central and Eastern Europe since the end of Communism) and holding the regime, which has remained under Lukashenka’s control for the time period discussed, constant. The level of democracy in Belarus has also remained relatively constant, as the Freedom House and Polity IV data illustrate. My independent variable will be the types of democracy promotion policies devised by the EU. The additional evidence supported by

the data I have collected will help in the analysis of whether or not a particular type of relationship can be observed between the dependent and independent variables.

To render my analysis more concise, I have chosen to situate it within a certain timeframe. In this case, I have considered data beginning from 2002 to the present. The year 2002 was chosen as a starting point because it followed closely the contentious Belarusian presidential and parliamentary elections of 2001, which were deemed to be highly undemocratic by international democracy organizations such as Freedom House (Freedom House 2013). As was explained in the introductory chapter, a state's level of democracy is (arguably) a measurable variable; considering both Freedom House and Polity IV data is one way in which I have sought to increase the measurement validity of this thesis. These numbers, though, do not reflect the entire context of what constitutes democracy, as was explained in the substantive definitions of democracy. Factors such as freedom in the media and the fairness of elections are less quantifiable, yet essential to consider when evaluating Belarus' true level of democracy.

I will apply inductive reasoning to the information I have gathered in order to support the observations about the relation between EU policy and democracy levels in Central and Eastern Europe that I make throughout this chapter. The data I will present comes from a variety of political science databases, books, and journals; government document archives and official government websites; online periodicals; as well as polls and data produced by non-governmental organizations such as Freedom House.

As mentioned above, the purpose of this thesis is to consider how two variables (EU democracy promotion policies and levels of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe) are related. While the data presented herein does not suffice to make a causal

argument, I believe it is sufficient to allow for observations which might later be used in a more in-depth, comparative study to develop causal inferences about EU democracy promotion in post-Soviet states. Causal inferences, according to King, Keohane, and Verba (1994, 81-85), are useful for political scientists when a multitude of variables are influencing an outcome and the argument that the outcome resulted solely from the variable(s) being measured by the scientist is overly simplified. Certainly, there are a host of other agents which have played a role in Belarus' observed level of democracy compared to that of other Central and Eastern European countries over the course of the past decade; however that does not mean it is impossible to make certain observations about the impact of European Union democracy promotion efforts. Analyzing the changes (or lack thereof) in levels of impact from one EU policy to the next (i.e. the progression from little to no success with the ENP to limited success with the EaP to clear indicators of progress with the DoM) allow me to assess how these policies differ from one another, and to postulate which democracy promotion methods suggest higher chances of bringing about democratic progress.

### European Neighborhood Policy

The European Union introduced the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) with the Communication of the Commission entitled “Wider Europe-Neighbourhood – A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours” in March 2003 (Commission 2003). This was followed by a Strategy Paper in May 2004, which further detailed the mechanisms and functionality of the European Neighborhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) (Vysotskaya 2008, 2). The ENP framework was proposed for 16

countries, and provided the opportunity for those countries to engage in bilateral partnerships with the EU. These involved Action Plans that set an agenda of economic and political reform which, if successful, offered the possibility of being rewarded by European integration, though not at full member level (Prodi 2006).

The Union's stated objective in establishing this policy is "to provide a framework for the development of a new relationship" (Commission 2004, 5). Furthermore, it is interested in preventing the reformation of divisions in the European area (Vysotskaya 2008, 3), and "developing a zone of prosperity and a friendly neighbourhood... with whom the EU enjoys close, peaceful and cooperative relations" (Commission 2004, 4). By launching the ENP, the EU established a unified approach for "*promoting reform, sustainable development and trade*" (Commission 2003, 4) in its border states.

### *Incentives*

Under the auspices of the ENP, the EU offers partnering countries incentives in the way of economic cooperation and sectorial integration (Vysotskaya 2008, 4) by granting a promise to neighboring states that they may one day join the EU internal market:

"...all the neighboring countries should be offered the prospect of a stake in the EU's internal market and further integration and liberalization to promote the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital..."

(Commission 2003, 5)

The areas of cooperation specifically outlined in the Commission Communication of



2003 include the: promotion of human rights; further cultural cooperation and promotion of mutual understanding; extension of internal market and regulatory structures; preferential trading relations and market opening; integration into transport, energy and telecommunication network; perspectives for lawful migration and movement of persons, intensified cooperation to prevent and combat common security threats, cooperation in the area of security and justice as well as collaboration on an energy dialogue (Commission 2003, 10-14).

It is important to note the absence of one incentive which may be considered even more appealing than integration into the European economic market: the prospect of accession. It is explicitly stated in the Commission document that the ENP does “not, in the medium-term, include a perspective of membership or a role in the Union’s institutions. A response to the practical issues posed by proximity and neighborhood should be seen as separate from the question of EU accession” (Commission 2003, 5). The European Parliament (2003) has pointed out though that the ENP is in no way incompatible with aspirations to EU membership, citing Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union which declares that any European state respecting the principles of liberty, democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, may apply to become a member of the Union. Thus, the option of accession is not specifically excluded by the ENP, but no concrete targets or dates were therein stipulated, nor were any promises of membership made.

#### *Conditions: Disincentives*

The ENP lays out not only a list of incentives for partner countries, but also stipulates that countries must meet certain requirements in order to participate. In the

document setting the grounds for the European Neighborhood Policy Instrument, Article 1, Section 3 states: “The European Union is founded on the values of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law and seeks to promote commitment of these values in partner countries through dialogue and cooperation.” Article 28 sets out that “where a partner country fails to observe the principles referred to in Article 1, the Council... may take appropriate steps in respect of any Community assistance granted to the partner country under this Regulation” and “in such cases, 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” (Commission 2004, 1 & 14). Similar to accession arrangements, the Union here has outlined the conditions which must be met to participate in its ENP, what disqualifies a country from the Partnership, and when the EU will elect instead to support NGO’s and other non-state actors in a partner country.

At the time the EU was formulating its neighbourhood policy in 2003 and 2004, Belarusian President Lukashenka held a “grotesquely flawed” referendum in which he guaranteed his chance of being elected as president for life (Dura 2008, 1). The lack of democratic reforms in Belarus and the government’s violation of the most basic human rights meant that Belarus was excluded from the European Neighbourhood Policy and no Action Plan was settled (Dura 2008). Consequently, no specifics were mentioned regarding the reforms Belarus would have to make, or the extent to which they must uphold the rule of law and respect human rights. The EU therefore released a paper detailing specific requirements for Belarus’ participation in the ENP in 2006. The EU demanded that Belarus’ government:

- Respect the right of the people of Belarus to elect their leaders democratically – their right to hear all views and see all election candidates; the right of opposition candidates to campaign without harassment, prosecution or imprisonment; independent observation of the elections
- Respect the right of the people of Belarus to independent information, and to express themselves freely, i.e. by allowing journalists to work without harassment or prosecution, not shutting down newspapers or preventing their distribution.
- Respect the rights of non-governmental organizations by no longer hindering their legal existence, harassing and prosecuting members of NGOs, and allowing them to receive international assistance.
- Release all political prisoners – members of democratic opposition parties, members of NGOs and ordinary citizens arrested at peaceful demonstrations or meetings.

(Commission 2006)

Other rights demanded by the EU included those of workers, of national minorities, and the abolition of the death penalty, for example (Commission 2006).

The terms of conditionality have been clearly established. The European Union's demands must be met if Belarus hopes to take advantage of the incentives it offers:

“In return for concrete progress demonstrating shared values and effective implementation of political, economic and institutional reforms, including aligning legislation with the *acquis*, the EU's neighbourhood should benefit from the prospect of closer economic integration with the EU.”

(Commission 2003, p.5).

Speaking especially on the matter of Belarusian involvement in the Neighborhood Policy, the Commission has made it clear that the:

“Development of closer relations between the EU and Belarus will depend on Belarus' effective implementation of further reforms, its willingness to respect its international commitments and to adopt European standards of democracy and human rights.”

(European Commission 2003 in Vysotskaya 2008, 11)

### *Responses and Impacts*

Belarus' response to the ENP made clear that cooperation with EU on issues of mutual interest, in particular that of their common border, was viewed as equally beneficial for both parties: “Belarus has been a serious guarantor of regional stability in the fields... [of] illegal migration, drug trafficking, trans-border criminality, human trafficking. And here we offer a real cooperation to... the European Union,” (Martynov 2004). Belarusian officials have also issued statements indicating the country's willingness to cooperate with the EU while at the same time excluding the possibility that such cooperation could be conditioned by the Union:

“We are offering the EU and its member states cooperation and partnership. We are offering, and not asking for it. We are no rich country, but we have something to offer for a sincere and honest cooperation with the “European House.”

(Ambassador of the Republic of Belarus in Vysotskaya 2008, 12)

At the same time, though, Belarus also expressed its need for European financial assistance, especially aid on issues of illegal immigration: “...we won't be able to meet our commitments to the international community, because we have no funds,” Lukashenka said. “Fighting illegal migration costs tens of millions of [U.S.] dollars,” (quoted in Vysotskaya 2008, 14). For the EU, an increase of financing to Belarus as a result of common threats has presented the Union with a difficult decision. Any

rapprochement between the positions of the EU and Belarus would be in contradiction with the envisaged conditionality principle. On the one hand, the EU explicitly states that assistance to Belarus is dependent on the progress of democratization, economic reforms, and free and fair elections. On the other hand, cooperation with Belarus – e.g. on border controls – is in the interest of the EU itself (Vysotskaya 2008).

After the fraudulent presidential elections of March 2006, the freeze of assets and visa bans were extended more widely to include high-ranking government members and also President Lukashenka (Potocki 2011). At the end of 2006, the EU widened its sanctions to include the withdrawal its preferential trading agreement, the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) for trade with Belarus (Bosse 2012a). That same year, the EU emphasized its continued interest in improving bilateral relations with Belarus by publishing its unofficial action plan, “What the European Union could bring to Belarus,” whereby the EU set out a number of requirements for advances in human rights and the rule of law in Belarus (described above). The paper was addressed to the *people* of Belarus (an obvious attempt to snub the country’s leaders) (Dura 2008).

The EU also highlighted advantages Belarus might enjoy from cooperation with Europe, such as: easier travel, increased trade and investment, cooperation in a number of sectorial policies (environment, transport and energy), cultural and educational exchanges, etc. (Commission 2006). Furthermore, European officials explained to the Belarusian population that their country could not be included in the ENP or benefit from closer ties with the EU if their government did not carry out the necessary democratic reforms. The EU also pledged continued support for the broadcasting of independent TV and radio programs to Belarus and support for Belarusian students studying in the EU

(Commission 2006).

The non-paper indicated significant moral support for the Belarusian opposition, adding an element of external legitimacy to their stance against Lukashenka's regime. Despite the fact that opposition activists have promoted the document in rallies and marches, so far the non-paper seems to have passed largely unnoticed by the wider Belarusian population (Dura 2008). Lukashenka responded with a statement in strong opposition to the EU.

He suggested that the EU was attempting to infringe upon Belarusian sovereignty and that he would not allow it. He asserted that Belarus protected European countries from illegal migration, international crime, and drug trafficking, thereby implying that the EU had much to gain from Belarus and attempting to increase his sense of leverage in the relationship (Lukashenka 2006). Lukashenka did not appear to attach much real significance to the paper though, as attested by the local elections several weeks after its release, in January 2007, which fell short of democratic standards and where excessive repressive measures were taken against the opposition (Dura 2008). These actions led to a cooling in Belarus-EU relations. IISEPS polls from 2012 indicate that from 2006 onwards, the opinion of Belarusian society toward EU membership has been less than enthusiastic (IISEPS 2012).

<b>Belarusian Attitudes toward the EU and Russia</b>				
For or Against EU membership	2002	2005	2008	2011
For	60.9%	52.8%	26.7%	45.1%
Against	10.9%	44.4%	51.9%	30.5%
Don't know/No opinion	28.2%	2.8%	21.4%	34.4%

Source: Independent Institute of Socioeconomic and Political Studies 2012

### *Critiques*

As previously mentioned, many scholars have found membership prospects to be a major factor in determining the effectiveness of European conditionality (Dimitrova & Pridham 2004, Ethier 2003 and Yilmaz 2009). The ENP was effectively “accession conditionality without accession” (Wolczuk 2009, 188 quoted in Fedirko 2013, 3). Accordingly, a major critique of the ENP is that it does not offer neighboring countries the prospect of EU membership; it does not provide guarantees for tangible economic benefits stemming from membership. This reduces the economic stimulus for market reforms and democratization, as has been evident in neighboring Ukraine in addition to Belarus (Fedirko 2013, 3 and Lahviniec & Papko 2010, 253). The smaller the EU’s metaphorical carrot becomes, the less leverage it has to influence Belarus to begin democratic reforms. Furthermore, certain scholars and activists critique the ENP for its lack of benchmarking and making explicit the types of democratic reforms it expects partner countries to make (Fedirko 2013, 6). Without clearly defined expectations, it is unlikely that a country will achieve much success in furthering democratic goals.

An additional point of weakness (which Lahviniec and Papko (2010) suggest is the main one) in determining the efficiency of the EU’s policy vis-à-vis its undemocratic neighbors is the existence of geopolitical alternatives. The ENP is built upon a Eurocentric world-view. For those who crafted the ENP, the EU was obviously perceived as the most attractive economic and political entity in the region. Europeans, at least as reflected through suggested policies such as the ENP, have tended to assume that political elites in neighboring countries understand the EU to be the only player in town capable of

saving them from their problems, whether issues of unemployment or poverty or economic development challenges. But this is not always the case, particularly during a time of global economic crisis, and particularly when the EU has not proven itself to be especially adept at combatting this crisis. Certain Eastern European countries, such as Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, have tended to view Russia as a threat warranting suspicion; consequently, they have tended to favor partnerships with the West (i.e. NATO & the EU) as a way of balancing Russian influence in the region (Schimmelfennig 1998, 205). However other states, such as Moldova, Ukraine, and Belarus have historically chosen instead to partner with Russia, whose natural resources, political endorsements and economic power have propped them up since the fall of Communism (Schimmelfennig 2007, 134). No ruling elite in Belarus or Ukraine would agree to introduce EU-based reforms if countervailing forces (such as Russia, as previously discussed) offered economic and political gains without demanding political reforms in exchange (Lahviniec & Papko 2010, 253). Such criticisms and the overall lack of effectiveness of the ENP prompted the European Union to devise an alternative framework for cooperation with Belarus.

#### Eastern Partnership

The European Union's "new and improved" neighborhood framework, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) was launched in May 2009 at the Prague Summit, after a year of preparation. In March 2008, Poland and Sweden introduced a proposal for the Eastern Partnership, in the hopes of encouraging future governments to continue developing the ENP in bilateral and multilateral formats (particularly in the Eastern neighborhood). The targeted countries were Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine to the East, and Armenia,



Azerbaijan, and Georgia to the South (Council 2009). The proposal was quickly ratified by the EU partners, with the war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 giving additional impetus to the EU's internal discussions on Eastern and Neighborhood policies. In May 2009, Belarus was invited to join the multilateral track of the Eastern Partnership (EaP), and it has participated actively since then (European Union 2012, 7).

The main objective of the Eastern Partnership is to create the necessary conditions to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the European Union and interested partner countries for the purposes of stability and multilateral confidence building (Council 2009):

“The Eastern Partnership seeks to support political and socio-economic reforms in partner countries, facilitating approximation towards the European Union. This serves the shared commitment to stability, security and prosperity of the European Union, the partner countries and indeed the entire European continent.”  
(Council 2009)

One of the EU's longer-term goals is: “the establishment of a deep and comprehensive free trade area (DCFTA) with and among the partners that could lead to deeper integration with the EU's economy and could grow into a Neighbourhood Economic Community” (Council 2009, 5). The Commission, in its drafting of the original proposal also set forth aspirations regarding visa liberalization, more active cooperation in the field of energy security and sectorial reforms (Commission 2008). Four thematic platforms for cooperation have been defined in order to assist in the meeting of these goals: 1) Democracy, good governance and stability; 2) Economic integration and convergence with EU sectorial policies; 3) Energy security; and 4) Contacts between people (Council 2009, 9).

### *Incentives*

The Eastern Partnership offers to partner countries a number of ways to benefit from cooperation with the European Union. First, and significant for Belarus, is the issue of mobility. The Prague Declaration includes promises of visa liberalization as a long-term goal (on a case-by-case basis). While visa-free travel is not specified in this document as a long-term goal, the notion of liberalizing the EU's visa regime with partner countries could help approximate the countries' economies as well as their societies to EU standards in the diffusion process (Vegh 2012, 29-30). Second, it is worth noting that in this agreement the EU has expressed its desire to "operate on a basis of joint decisions of the European Union and the partner countries" and to "facilitate the development of common positions and joint activities" (Council 2009, 7). This is an important statement, particularly for countries such as Belarus because it indicates that the EU is not only operating on the basis of European demands, but is participating in a *dialogue* with partner countries and is willing to listen to *their* concerns as well.

Third, the Eastern Partnership seeks to enhance economic cooperation with partner countries via a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA). The DCFTA is more than a normal free trade agreement; it concerns not only the liberalization of trade in all areas by lifting customs barriers and trade quotas, but also the harmonization of the partner countries' trade-related legislation with EU standards and the *acquis communautaire* (Eastern Partnership Community 2013).

The real added value of the Eastern Partnership though is its multilateral framework, which seeks to promote a regional approach within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, something previously overlooked. What is significant for Belarus is that the multilateral dimension of this policy instrument provides an

opportunity for Belarus to participate in the program (Vegh 2012, 28). As explained in the discussion on the ENP, Belarus had, up to this point, been excluded from bilateral cooperation with the EU within the Neighborhood framework. The multilateral framework is further intended to foster links among partner countries themselves and serves as a forum for discussion on further developments of the Eastern Partnership (Council 2009). It might also prove to be a useful tool of confidence building in overcoming difficult relations among partner states in the region (Vegh 2012 20). The four thematic platforms of the Eastern Partnership are meant to offer stakeholders with flexible spaces of discussion, where experiences, best practices and lessons-learned can be shared, compared, and spread among those who need them to support their own efforts.

The multilateral track is also complemented by a civil dimension, the Eastern Partnership's Civil Society Forum (CSF). Recognizing the importance of socialization in the transformation process, the Commission (2008) called for the establishment of the CSF with the goal of bringing together NGOs, think-tanks, national and international civil society actors from the EU and partner countries to work on the approximation of societies and also to make more resources available for the region. Additionally, EURONEST is the parliamentary dimension of the EaP aimed at promoting dialogue and exchanges between members of parliament in the EU and EaP countries and at encouraging democratic reforms, the rule of law and good governance in all partner countries (Commission 2010). The European Parliament has denied the legitimacy of Belarus' Parliament due to unfair and repressive electoral practices (European Parliament 2011), which is why there has been pressure on the involvement of civil society

representatives in most Euro-Belarus frameworks. This parliamentary dimension thus serves as “the voice of Belarusian society” for the EU, in that it projects an opinion on country-specific issues, that its opinion is viewed by the EU as more legitimate than the official doctrine put forth by the Lukashenka regime, and it is capable of voicing this opinion on the international stage (Commission 2013).

*Conditions: Disincentives*

The Eastern Partnership is based on the existing conditionality restrictions governing bilateral relations of the EU and partner countries in the ENP (Council 2009). The values and practices underlined in the Partnership agreement reflect many of those found in the language of the Neighborhood Policy texts:

The participants of the Prague Summit agree that the Eastern Partnership will be based on commitments 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, as well as to, market economy, sustainable development and good governance.” (Council 2009, 6). The Eastern Partnership carries a “clear political message about the need to maintain and bolster the course towards reforms.

(Council 2009, 3)

Additionally, legislative and regulatory approximation are highlighted as crucial indicators of partner countries’ willingness to engage in reforms necessary to enhancing their relations with the EU. The multilateral framework in particular is intended to provide a forum for implementing such measures through dedicated sessions devoted to the presentation and explanation by the European Union of EU legislation and standards, as well as its comparisons to partner states’ national policy and legislative practices (Council 2009, 8).

Regarding certain aspects of economic conditionality, the European Union has made clear that open markets and economic integration are “essential to the sustainable economic development of the partner countries and to underpin political stabilization” (Commission 2009, 7). Furthermore, for a partner country to be allowed to negotiate its participation in the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, membership of the World Trade Organization is required; therefore Azerbaijan and Belarus, neither of which are WTO members, cannot start negotiations on DCFTA with the EU (Eastern Partnership Community 2013).

When it comes to Belarus’ participation in the project, it was initially stated that this country would be involved at a technical and experts level with the possibility for future enhancement (Marples 2009). After holding several high-level EU-Belarus meetings and issuing an invitation for president Lukashenka for the Prague summit in May 2009, the European Union offered a full partnership with Belarus *provided that* Belarus takes concrete and convincing steps towards democratization, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Until this requirement is met, Belarus will be restricted to the multilateral track of the EaP (Emphasis made by Marples [2009], substantiated by conclusions made by the Council of the European Union [2009]). Steps by the Belarusian authorities to address the country’s democratic governance shortcomings have remained limited; as a result, it has so far not been possible for the EU to engage in partnership negotiations. At the same time, contacts at the technical level on issues of mutual interest are still encouraged (Commission 2008).

### *Response and Impacts*

Belarus' representation at the opening summit of the EaP in Prague was the first time Belarus formally participated in a regular component of the European Neighborhood Policy (Lahniviec 2010). Belarus' response to the initiative indicated that it viewed the EaP as "another step to boost pragmatic co-operation with the countries in the European Union's immediate neighbourhood." The foreign ministry expressed its will to work "...in conjunction with the European Commission to mold the Eastern Partnership... along a number of mutually beneficial directions including trade, energy, transport, cross-border crime, environment, and agriculture" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus 2009).

Pursuant to the Eastern Partnership's entering into force, contacts between high-ranking Belarusian and European officials were revitalized and intensified. Talks were held among the "troika" of EU foreign ministers and Belarus representatives: EU High representative Javier Solana met with President Lukashenka in February 2009, and in June 2009 the Commissioner for Trade and European Neighborhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, travelled to Minsk (Bosse 2012). In 2009 the External Relations Council also agreed on the suspension of travel restrictions being applied to certain Belarusian officials. Simultaneously, the Council proposed a visa-facilitation and readmission agreement to Belarus and the initiating of an Action Plan agreement (in the Joint Interim Plan), actions indicating a new EU approach of functional cooperation with Belarus (Bosse 2012a).

Lukashenka voiced his appreciation of the positive steps taken by the EU in an interview with Euronews TV, in which he spoke positively of the warming of relations

between Belarus and the EU and claimed that he was open to dialogue on subjects of freedom of the press and election legislation (Lukshenka 2009). The first round of EU-Belarus talks on human rights began in mid-2009. The EU and Belarus also held joint technical talks on energy, the environment, agriculture, customs and transport, along with a discussion of norms and standards (Bosse 2012). These meetings, as well as the host of financial assistance packages promised to Belarus by the EU on matters of economic development and cross-border management, for example, prompted Belarus to adopt a more pro-European rhetoric from 2009 into 2010 (Lahviniec 2010).

The EU responded by taking significant steps to support the integration of Belarus into the Eastern Partnership. A Council resolution has asked the European Commission to prepare recommendations to establish negotiation guidelines for the relaxation and reversal of the visa ban. A kind of counterpart to the Neighborhood Action Plan, known as a Joint Interim Plan, was suggested in 2009, laying out specific priorities for reform in the country (EU Council 2009). Brussels declared that it would offer Belarus economic aid in the form of loans and grants, and would also develop political relations by signing and implementing a Joint Interim Plan (the equivalent of an Action Plan from the European Neighbourhood Policy), provided that the December 2010 elections were held democratically (Ananicz 2011). The eruption of violence after the 2010 presidential elections and the human rights abuses committed by the Belarusian government forced HR/VP Catherine Ashton to call for a halt in discussions of the Joint Interim Plan in 2011 (Ashton 2011). The Plan was not abolished, nor was it expressly placed back on the EU's agenda.

The violence and flagrant disregard for democracy and human rights

demonstrated by Lukashenka's actions during and after the presidential elections of 2010 indicated a dramatic turning point in EU-Belarus relations. The EU once again instituted visa bans against offending Belarusian officials, and shifted its focus to engagement with civil society and opposition groups, as opposed to the Belarusian government (Ashton 2011). In June 2011, the Commission offered Belarus to start negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission agreements to the benefit of the population at large (thereby keeping with the EU's emphasis on strengthening its relations with civil society) (Commission 2012). The Belarusian authorities did not respond to the offer. In the absence of a response, the 23 March 2012 Foreign Affairs Council in its conclusions welcomed the intention of EU Member States to unilaterally make optimal use of the existing flexibilities offered by the Visa Code, in particular the possibilities to waive and reduce visa fees for certain categories of Belarusian citizens or in individual cases (Commission 2012).

Although the extent of Belarus's participation in the bilateral track of the Eastern Partnership continues to depend on internal developments in Belarus, the EU set aside additional Eastern Partnership funding for Belarus for 2012-2013, amounting to an additional €15.19 million (on top of the already programmed €41.50 million), for Comprehensive Institutional Building and Pilot Regional Development Programs (Commission 2013). Bilateral relations are targeted at supporting cooperation in sectors of mutual interest (environment, energy efficiency, food security, etc) and put emphasis on encouraging civil society's participation. The EaP funds are conditional though, and allow for the reallocation of those funds if, at the time of implementing the NIP, there has not been enough progress in the country to justify the inclusion of Belarus in the bilateral



track of the EaP (Commission 2013).

The Civil Society Forum created under the scope of the EaP has been proved a crucial step in reinforcing the EU's commitment to engage with Belarusian civil society. Giselle Bosse (2012a) reports that Belarusian experts have seen fairly significant effects as a result of the CSF, largely in helping Belarusian NGOs organize themselves again after the 2010 crackdown, and opposition groups' participation in dialogues to adopt common positions. One of the greatest weaknesses of opposition groups in 2010 was the fact that they were so divided; the potential for the CSF to serve as a platform for bridging gaps in political stances is of critical value to strengthening plurality in the Belarusian political sphere (Bosse 2012a).

It is worth mentioning though that the exclusion of the Belarusian government from frameworks such as the CSF have occasionally resulted in negative repercussions for those engaging in them; for example, at the end of 2009 a group of opposition youth activists were abducted by unidentified (government) individuals and detained for a time, and in 2010 a female student was censured by the Belarusian State University because of her unauthorized participation in the Civil Society Forum (FRIDE 2012). The government's attempts to stifle participation in these bodies has not been successful, as 220 civil society organizations participated in this framework in 2012 (Commission 2013).

#### Dialogue on Modernization

The Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle on 29 March 2012 at an event in Brussels launched a European Dialogue on

Modernization with Belarusian society (Dyner 2012). The Dialogue is a way for Europe to further its relations with Belarus since its draft Joint Interim Plan was put on hold as a result of the political situation in the country (Füle 2013). To date, the Dialogue on Modernization (DoM) is the only institutionalized framework between the EU and Belarus carrying a bilateral dimension (Commission 2013).

Within the European dialogue the EU and its Member States discuss with representatives of the Belarusian opposition and civil society the necessary reforms for the modernization of Belarus and the potential development of Belarusian relations with the EU. The DoM was designed to tackle four major themes: 1) political dialogue and political reforms; 2) legal reform and internal affairs; 3) economic and social reforms, and 4) trade and regulatory reforms (Commission 2012). The overarching objective of the project is of course to develop comprehensive solutions for the modernization of Belarus (Dyner 2012). Another purpose of the program is to support civil society, independent media, and students expelled from universities for political activities. These actions are intended to prevent the isolation of Belarus and its citizens in the international arena as a result of the policies of the authorities in Minsk (Dyner 2012). Another goal of the project is to transfer to Belarusians practical knowledge about the transition experiences of EU Member States (Commission 2012).

### *Incentives*

One enticing aspect of the dialogue is its emphasis on working with the Belarusian public and civil society. An active involvement of Belarusians in defining the objectives and procedures of the Dialogue on Modernization provides Belarusians a sense

of ownership of the initiative. It also ensures that the process is not a unilateral one where the EU determines which domestic issues are to be prioritized; the notion of a real dialogue between the two partners allows Belarusians to express their own vision of current challenges and urgent domestic concerns that need to be addressed (Melyantsou 2012).

Furthermore, the emphasis placed on modernizing the Belarusian economy is one that resonates both with the Belarusian public and the state. From 2009 to 2011 Belarus suffered a severe economic crisis, resulting in government fears of not being able to provide its citizens with enough social benefits to satisfy them (Melyantsou 2012). Belarus has been forced to apply for loans from international bodies such as the International Monetary Fund and the Eurasian Economic Community (Dyner 2012). The number of people in Belarus who recognize the need for economic reform totaled 67 percent in 2012 (IIPSEPS 2012), indicating that the public at large would support reform measures. The country is in a weak economic position and knows it needs to make changes; the prospect for European aid in making certain sectors more competitive through modernization efforts is therefore very appealing.

#### *Conditions: Disincentives*

The European Dialogue for Modernization, while allowing for bilateral relations between the EU and Belarus, is not an attempt to unfreeze relations between the EU and Lukashenka's government. Under the Dialogue, the participation of certain government agencies in the Dialogue activities is permitted, though only in a non-formal, unofficial and ad-hoc nature (Commission 2012). The primary condition for resuming any broad

high-level cooperation with Belarus within the context of the DoM, according to the European Union, is the release of political prisoners and their full rehabilitation (Yahorau & Zuokova 2012). At the launch of the Dialogue in Brussels in March 2012, Belarusian civil society and opposition groups were heavily represented; a majority of government officials who may have been invited to the launch were unable to participate due to their names being on the EU's visa black list (Füle 2012).

### *Response and Impacts*

Since the Dialogue's creation, expert working groups have been formed in each of the four major themes established in the DoM; these groups have defined the thematic priorities of modernization reforms and have developed plans for future work related to their preparation (primarily in the form of conferences and seminars) (Coordination Committee of the National Platform 2013). Several joint meetings of the expert groups, political parties, Belarusian civil society organizations, and European diplomats have been held in Belarus and meetings on DoM themes have been held in a number of the EU member states (Commission 2013). The Dialogue has thus provided a welcome space for civil society discussion on issues pertinent to modernization efforts in Belarus (Yahorau & Zuikova 2012). The stronger voice and legitimacy it has given to Belarusian civil society undeniably increases its bargaining position with the Belarusian authorities: if the EU is only willing to speak with civil society members, then the Belarusian government will eventually have to engage with those members if it hopes to have its needs and objectives toward the EU met. This point was emphasized when members of

Lukashenka's government proposed the state's participation in the Dialogue in February 2013.

The Belarusian authorities sent the proposals to the Member States on the new format of the Dialogue on Modernization, which would be limited to interstate relations without the political opposition and civil society engagement (Commission 2013). This move suggests Lukashenka's regime does not like the added weight being bestowed upon civil society by the EU, and intends to minimize it by trying to take over the representation of Belarus in the DoM. It is important to note that these proposals by the Belarusian authorities have not been accompanied with any sort of demonstration of their good will to cooperate with the EU (Committee of the National Platform 2013). Authorities have still not released more than ten of the political prisoners whose liberty the EU has specifically requested, despite the fact that this step is necessary before any kind of negotiations process may begin (Commission 2013). The Belarusian representatives of civil society have expressed their hopes that the EU will *not* accept the proposals of the Belarusian authorities:

In our opinion, the creation of separate relationships of the EU with the state would de facto mean the exclusion of civil society from the real modernisation process. Since there is no freedom for the civil society activity in the country, it cannot function to influence the government decisions and monitor the government activities without a special dialogue format.

(Coordination Committee of the National Platform 2013)

The European Union thus far has not indicated any desire to take Belarusian authorities up on their offer of engagement and have largely ignored these proposals. They have opted instead to issue official statements highlighting the need for Belarus to release political prisoners and adhere to democratic principles and respect for human rights and the rule of law before further discussion can be made (Ashton 2012, Füle 2012). The fact

that the parliamentary elections in Belarus in fall 2012 were conducted under repressive conditions and were reportedly fraudulent indicates that the first few months of the Dialogue were not successful in bringing about meaningful steps toward democratization (Commission 2012). More time is needed to make any meaningful assessment, though.

### *Critiques*

A key concern of European and Belarusian policy-makers and scholars about the prospect for the effectiveness of the Dialogue on Modernization has been the state's lack of involvement in the process. While the Union is commendably upholding its principle that any bilateral relationship with Belarus will only take place if Belarus adheres to European demands of releasing political prisoners, the capacity of the Dialogue to bring about any substantial reforms may be called into question. The state is the chief implementer of any democratic reforms which may take place in the country (Melyantsou 2012). Without engaging the state in the elaboration of reform proposals, it is therefore unlikely that transformations in the economic and governmental sector will take place.

Additionally, the state tends to be the entity endowed with data and information pertaining to the current conditions of economic sectors, etc. Working solely with civil researchers who do not have access to hard numbers necessary for planning and evaluating reform projects is thus insufficient; this has been recognized to some extent in the Dialogue with the inclusion of government officials on an ad-hoc basis, however one might question their incentive to participate in a process which by and large attempts to exclude them (Melyantsou 2012). One could point to this ambiguous nature of the Belarusian government's involvement as another weakness of the Dialogue. On the one

hand, the Union expresses its interest in having government experts on expert teams; on the other, it insists that official Minsk cannot officially participate in the Dialogue as a third party (alongside Brussels and Belarusian civil society). This results in misunderstandings and lack of confidence at the intergovernmental level, which naturally creates obstacles to the advancement of the initiative (Melyantsou 2012).

### *Context of Countervailing Forces*

One possible explanation for Belarus' interest in engaging with the EU especially in 2009 is the deterioration of relations which occurred between Minsk and Moscow at that time. That relationship was mended though, when Lukashenka signed the declaration to create a Common Economic Space with Russia and Kazakhstan on December 8, 2010, less than two weeks prior to Belarus' presidential elections (Ananicz 2011). The easing of tensions between Russia and Belarus likely contributed to Lukashenka's idea that he could repress opposition forces and to put a brake on their growing influence and show the government apparatus that the system is stable. So he arranged the electoral fraud, the brutal crack down on the opposition. This course of events would arguably have been less likely if relations with Moscow had remained strained (Ananicz 2011).

Moreover, Belarus' confidence in the customs union with its eastern partners has been illustrated in its repeated ignoring of European demands to hold free and fair elections, and to respect human rights. Take, for instance, the case of the 2012 parliamentary elections which were determined by the OSCE to be fraudulent and to have taken place under repressive conditions (OSCE 2012). Thus, an essential question for the EU's future relations with Belarus will be how durable is the relationship between Minsk

and Moscow.

### *Other EU Democracy Promotion Actors*

Just as the EU's activities must be considered with regard to what other states or actors are trying to push Belarus in the other direction, it is also important to consider what other international organizations and non-governmental organizations are working to push Belarus in the same direction the EU hopes it will go: toward democracy. NGO's are entities sometimes better suited than government institutions at obtaining accurate information and determining priorities (EEAS 2013). The EU holds regular consultations with NGO networks like the Confederation for Cooperation of Relief and Development, the European Network of Foundations for Democracy Support, the European Network of Independent Political Foundations in Democracy Promotion and Development Cooperation, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office and the Human Rights and Democracy Network (EEAS 2013).

The European Commission offers financial support to groups such as the European Network of Political Foundations which publishes a quarterly review on the state of democratization around the world. This Foundation also organizes projects, such as one focused on democratization which took place in September 2011 when eight democracy activists from Belarus, Bolivia, Burma, Russia, South Sudan and Zimbabwe participated in two weeks of intensive practical and academic training in Prague focusing on subjects such as democratic governance, anti-corruption, civic society, and democracy policy (ENoP Quarterly 2012, 5). The Union also funds hundreds of national and



domestic NGO's targeted at promoting democracy in neighboring states via the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). This instrument tends to grant funding directly to NGO's rather than channel it through national authorities; it also tends to be allocated for short-term projects and NGO's are assumed to remain subordinate to the activities of the institutions (Stewart 2006, 18).

Another way democracy promoting NGO's obtain financing is via private organizations, national assemblies and bodies, and money from other countries with similar objectives, such as the U.S. Examples of European NGO's receiving funds from US organizations for democracy promotion purposes are: Experts without Borders, whereby Estonian government officials held training sessions in Belarus on government theory and practices, or the Polish-Czech-Slovak Solidarity Foundation which trains democracy activists and journalists in desktop publishing and provides equipment support, both of which received funding from the Washington-based National Endowment for Democracy (NED.org). Such activities supplement the EU's activities in Belarus, although they are not conditionality based and tend to provide support for civil society to promote regime change from within instead of attempts to influence it, as EU policy does, from outside.

### Conclusion

The European Union has used conditionality in many of its attempts to influence democratization in Belarus, largely through partnership agreements. This chapter covered the use of conditionality in three policies instrumental to EU-Belarus relations over the past decade: The European Neighborhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership and

the Dialogue on Modernization. The European Neighborhood Policy was an attempt by the EU to enhance cooperation with its Eastern neighbors along issues of common concern; for Belarus, this cooperation would only take place if the country agreed to adhere to certain requirements regarding the rule of law, respect for human rights, and democratic practices. Belarus, viewing its position as that of an equal partner to the EU, refused to accept such conditionality requirements and continued its political repression and human rights abuses (i.e. the 2006 elections). Consequently, Belarusian authorities were excluded from the Neighborhood partnership.

Understanding that the ENP was not serving as a useable framework for the EU-Belarus relationship, the Union developed the Eastern partnership in an attempt to open cooperation possibilities for Belarus. The multilateral track of the agreement allowed opportunities for Belarus to receive European aid for economic reforms and energy security measures as well as offered more attractive packages for visa facilitation and economic integration. While the early years of the partnership (2008 through the beginning of 2010) appeared promising for Euro-Belarusian relations, the violent crackdown in 2010 on opposition forces cast severe doubt about the effectiveness of the policy. The EU cut off a majority of its relations with the Belarusian state in 2011, and implemented severe bans and asset freezes on over 200 members of the Belarusian government.

This was a turning point for the EU's policy toward Belarus. In the policy proposals following the 2010 crackdown, a distinct emphasis on civil society can be noticed. This is particularly evident in the 2012 proposal of the Dialogue on Modernization, which sought to support civil society in the country and engage with civil

society and opposition forces on reform issues. Furthermore, this agreement carries with it more lenient conditionality requirements, specifying only that Belarus must release political prisoners for participation (as opposed to enacting democratic reforms, a much more costly venture). The Dialogue has been successful in providing civil society greater international legitimacy and participation in EU-Belarus relations. While the parliamentary elections held in 2012 proved to be less than democratic in nature, one could understand the Belarusian authorities' February 2013 request to participate in the Dialogue as an indicator that they see added value in its work.

Underneath all of the failures and successes of these measures has been Belarus' relationship with Russia: pushing Belarus to further engage with the EU when relations with Russia were strained, and giving it a sense of freedom to reject the EU's conditionality requirements when the relationship was strong. Such considerations underline the precarious nature of the EU-Belarus relationship, and reinforce the idea that Europe must develop a package of incentives great enough to outweigh those offered by the Kremlin if it hopes to find a way of consistently exerting influence in Belarus and bringing the country closer to a democratic transition. The contributions made by funding and assisting domestic NGO's in Belarus may be one way of providing Belarusian citizens the encouragement and support they need to succeed.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

#### Summary

This thesis has been centered around two primary research questions: (1) What have been the policies of the EU intended to encourage democracy in Belarus? and (2) What have been the impacts of these policies on Belarus' level of democracy? Using data from political science journals, government documents, periodicals, and polling data collected from international and non-governmental organizations, I am able to describe the specific policies of the EU and the observed impacts they had on levels on democracy in Belarus. In the introductory chapter, I determined to use a substantive definition of democracy which encompasses both the systemic and ideological components of the term. I then suggested that both the Polity IV and Freedom House scales be used to evaluate a state's level of democratization; based on these rankings, Belarus was illustrated to be a highly authoritarian regime. The European Union, a supporter of democratic peace theory, was therefore demonstrated to have a reasonable cause in promoting democracy in Belarus.

Belarus was discussed as an outlier with regard to more common patterns of regime change in post-Soviet states. The country's deep economic, historical and political ties to Russia set it apart from many neighboring states which have undergone democratic

transitions. Russia's willingness to support Lukashenka in international arenas and to prop up the Belarusian economy in exchange for a certain amount of control over it have limited the impact Belarus has felt from foreign sanctions and restrictions (Gnedina 2005, 43). In addition, as Marples (2006, quoted in Forbes 2009, 29) suggests, other contributing factors are also Lukashenka's "personal popularity, his strong control of the media and propensity for punishing the opposition." Another proposition is that Belarusians simply don't have a history of democracy, and that they willingly accept a social contract between the people and the president whereby the population accepts certain antidemocratic practices in exchange for economic security and stability in their daily lives (Jarabik & Silitski 2008, 102). Belarus remains an outlier in the history of post-communist democratization studies, although many different factors continue to influence its progress.

I began by considering the ways in which internal versus external actors might aid or abet democratic progress, using specific examples about Belarus to justify the case that external agents have a significant influence on a domestic polity's level of democracy. Democracy promotion occurs in several ways; those outlined in this thesis were: linkage (the density of ties between two states, of which Belarus and the EU have had relatively low levels), leverage (a state's vulnerability to outside pressure, which the economic downturn has increased for Belarus), neighbor (rationale whereby spatial proximity is purported to have a positive correlation with a state's chance at democratizing, relevant for the case of Belarus and the EU), and that of transnational advocacy networks (political spaces where different actors determine the social and political norms of international behavior, relevant for Belarus and the EU because the EU is can be

considered one of these networks). The EU carries out the process of democratic diffusion via policies based on conditionality, that is, the concept of offering incentives and/or disincentives (i.e. economic sanctions, travel bans, etc.) for a target state to conform its behavior to that desired by the EU.

Neighbor state and transnational advocacy networks were shown to be the most frequent and effective levels of democratic diffusion, and the EU falls into both categories with regard to Belarus. This would lead one to believe that Union is a well-suited agent of democracy promotion in Belarus; but this has not overwhelmingly been the case. While the European Union's use of conditionality clauses in its agreements with third parties proved effective in bringing about democratic transition in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in the early 2000's, the results were not the same for Belarus.

As was seen in chapter three, three of the EU's conditionality-based democracy promotion policies (the European Neighborhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership and the Dialogue on Modernization) produced varying outcomes regarding Belarus' level of democratization. The first two arrangements carried with them certain requirements pertaining to the rule of law, respect for human rights, and democratic practices for Belarus to participate. The ENP was strict regarding adherence to these measures and Belarus' refusal to respect the conditionality requirements resulted in a type of stalemate regarding democratic progress. The "new and improved" Eastern Partnership allowed Belarus to participate in its multilateral track without such strict adherence to these conditions while keeping the bilateral option off the table. There was limited hope for liberalization observed during this time period as Belarus made small concessions to the

EU in exchange for economic incentives; however the violent political crackdown in 2010 made it clear that the EaP was not the ideal solution either.

In the more recently developed Dialogue on Modernization, the EU adopts a much softer line of conditionality, requiring only the release and rehabilitation of political prisoners for participation. While that condition has proven too much for Belarus to concede, the Dialogue's emphasis on civil society and its ability already to attract some of the Belarusian political elite to participate are signs of improvement. It suggests that the EU's recent shift in policy orientation away from strict conditionality toward civil society and cooperation on non-political issues (i.e. the Dialogue on Modernization) appears to be a step in the right direction. Recent initiatives by the Belarusian government indicate the state's strong interest in participating in the Dialogue, a likely sign that the regime is feeling pressured by the EU and by domestic civil society actors.

As Melyantsou (2012, 64) suggests, the evolution of EU policy and actions toward Belarus imply a certain level of institutional learning on the part of the Union. A specific example can be seen after Lukashenka's violent crackdown on opposition parties in December 2010. European politicians clearly saw that their existing policies toward Belarus were inefficient because Lukashenka had broken the promises he made to the EU. The European Parliament held special committee meetings to determine how policy should change; the result was a return to sanctions, with the lenient condition that sanctions could be removed after the release of political prisoners (Melyantsou 2012, 64). Institutional learning and the European Union's improved access to information on the situation in Belarus via on-line journalists, bloggers, etc. means an increased opportunity for the EU to create effective policies. But because these policies carry with them certain

conditions which must be met by the Belarusian government, only time will tell if Lukashenka is willing to bend to the EU's conditions for participation to be possible.

### Limitations

A plethora of attempts have been made to single out a mono-causal explanation for why democratic transitions have occurred in some post-Soviet states but not in others, none of which have proved particularly fruitful (Gel'man 2008, 159). This thesis has not been intended to propose the defining causal factor behind Belarus' reluctance to democratize, but to contribute insight to the multiple levels of research surrounding this topic. As with any political analysis, the arguments postulated herein are subject to criticism.

One such critique that could be made is the selection of policies used for analysis. Admittedly, there are only three policies covered here, all of which are broad in nature and encompass a number of smaller policy actions, meaning that ample opportunity remains for a more in-depth analysis of which sub-policies encompassed under the ENP, for example, were most successful. It would also have been possible to consider policies less explicit about their intention to further democracy in Belarus, but which still can be argued to promote democracy at its most basic levels, such as education and civic engagement.

Furthermore, as was demonstrated above, the European Union is a body of states with their own competing national interests. Consequently, the "Russia-first" policy of Germany, France and Italy has frequently conflicted with the state interests of Eastern Member States such as Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania (Jarabik & Silitski 2008, 102). Shifting levels of power, capacity, and influence among EU states (such as one country



taking its turn to serve in the EU's rotating presidency) means that policy objectives and actions are also subject to change. A lack of policy coordination, and internal struggles in general, could be perhaps an internal explanation for why EU democracy promotion policies have been ineffectual in Belarus. An institutional perspective may be useful in future studies to fully explore this and other possibilities.

Additionally, EU Member States participate in a number of other international organizations and non-governmental organizations which are also aimed at promoting democracy in its neighborhood. Since these activities occur at different levels and in different quantities, it is difficult for researchers to determine which statistics accurately reflect an EU-wide analysis (for example, the precise financial contribution of the EU – including institutions, private firms, national assemblies and bodies, etc.). Along the same lines, it is equally challenging to distinguish which of these organizations is having more influence than the others. Considering the possibility of any causal links between the activities of one organization and the level of democracy in Belarus is an immensely trying task for political researchers. With no observed change in the country's level of democracy in over a decade, it is impossible to argue that any outside actor instigated democratic change in Belarus; the next step therefore is to consider why the democratic levels here have not changed when they have in other post-Soviet states.

One way to tackle this problem may be to construct a research design using a non-equivalent control group. A researcher could select other countries to include in the sample using a certain set of variables (i.e. the presence of a strong political elite, the level of restriction placed on the internet and media, national pride, etc.). Choosing appropriate countries, the researcher could then make observations about how a particular

treatment (such as EU democracy promotion policies) affected the level of democracy in those countries. This would open up the possibility for causal inferences to be made regarding the potential success of such policies.

Also, any study of Belarus is plagued by the overwhelming problem of acquiring valid statistics and data about the country. It has been argued by Belarusian scholars that the attitudes of the Belarusian citizenry are not always well reflected in the positions adopted by the Belarusian government (Lahniviec & Papko 2010). The arguments made in this thesis, such as Belarus' willingness to adhere to EU conditionality measures, must thus be understood as that of the Belarusian state and not that of the population at large. The opinion poll data presented in the previous chapter can only be conceived of as indicators of how the public *might* feel, since intimidation and a severe skepticism of Western NGO's (who are largely responsible for collecting such data) is part of everyday life in Belarus. Another factor is the freedom of information in Belarus, which is also severely limited and results in gaps in the data collected by monitoring groups that are sometimes not allowed into the country (such as with the OSCE in 2011) (Melyantsou 2012, Lahniviec & Papko 2010).

Finally, as I have acknowledged, another significant consideration which must be made in the evaluation of the EU's effectiveness in promoting democratic progress in Belarus is the strong presence of countervailing forces acting on Belarus simultaneously. Russia's influence has already been highlighted; however other countries are also active in the region. For example, China, Iran, Venezuela and several Arab countries of the Persian Gulf have been pointed to as emerging partners (Bohdan 2010, 100). The shift in partners may suggest emerging trends and interests in Belarusian foreign and domestic

policy. If one considers what the aforementioned countries have in common, it is easy to point to oil and natural resources as one commonality: what insight does this provide about where Belarus' interests lie, and where they seem to be heading? Such questions will necessarily be posed by future researchers.

### Avenues for Future Research

The purpose of this thesis has been to consider how effective the European Union's conditionality-driven democracy promotion policies have been. As has been argued, the EU's policies have not been highly effective. More research needs to be done in order to obtain a better grasp on how these policies could be made to have a greater impact on the level of democracy in Belarus. Studies could be done on a broad range of topics to support this objective.

First, there remains a great deal of opportunity for scholars to examine what constellation of factors has made Belarus the outlier it remains today. Certain arguments were presented in this paper; yet those political scientists viewing domestic conditions as the most important indicator of democracy promotion would make very different cases about why Belarus remains under authoritarian regime. While any argument is dependent upon the theory used, perhaps identifying concrete factors which created an environment hostile to democracy and a regime capable of keeping it out despite millions of dollars and years of political democracy promotion efforts would assist democratizing forces in taking more effective action. If one could point to a certain set of factors in Belarus which explain its long history of authoritarianism, perhaps those factors could help scholars' understanding of other long-standing authoritarian regimes as well.

Moreover, future researchers should seek to better understand the different circumstances existing in Belarus and other similar post-Soviet states so as to identify the areas in which democracy promoters should focus their attentions – or if democracy promotion in these states is even possible.

Political scientists studying the process of democratic diffusion across states should also consider the openness of a country to outside influence. Further analysis should be done on the amount of restrictions placed on the media as well as the impact those restrictions have on the potential influence of outside agents. In this way, a political scientist could study the situation of country openness across a broad range of authoritarian states and determine whether or not democracy promotion efforts from foreign actors have the potential to bring about any significant level of change. If anything, my results illustrated how difficult it has been for the EU to incite any significant democratic progress in Belarus.

In addition, it may be interesting to analyze the European Union's attempts at democracy promotion in a similar way to the actions taken by non-governmental organizations. A scholar could apply NGO literature discussing the most effective systemic features or actions of NGOs in undemocratic countries to the European Union's efforts. Considerations could include looking at what types of projects the EU tends to fund: short-term or long-term? Ones that correspond to the EU's own agenda, or ones reflecting the priorities of the local associates? Furthermore, more research could be done on the impacts of Lukashenka's crackdown on foreign NGO's operating in Belarus. How have restrictions, regulations, and taxation impacted the activities of foreign and domestic

democracy-focused NGOs? What has been the effect on democracy? Is this another way Lukashenka is maintaining his hold on power?

Future research on democratization in Belarus should also take into consideration the countries with which Lukashenka chooses to partner. Are there any discernible characteristics which prove to be true across all of these countries, or for the types of partnerships? For example: Are they all autocratic? Are they known for a certain foreign policy style? Are partnerships political or economic in nature, or both? Are the partnerships successful or wrought with conflict? If Belarus only enters into deals with other autocratic states, could a theory be derived linking this to the perpetuation of authoritarianism? How would such a theory compete against or complement theories arguing that democracies tend to enjoy better relations with other democracies while relations between autocracies tend to be wrought with conflict (Geva & Hanson 1999, 809)? Can ideas about democracy override or undercut political and economic relationships? Regime change is without doubt caused by a multitude of factors (Gel'man 2008, 159); the political scientist's responsibility is to discern the many dimensions behind it.

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## APPENDIX

BISS	Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies
CEEC	Central and Eastern European Country
CFSP	Common Foreign & Security Policy
CSF	Civil Society Forum
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
DoM	Dialogue on Modernization
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EEAS	European External Action Service
EED	European Endowment for Democracy
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
ENPI	European Neighborhood Policy Instrument
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSP	Generalized System of Preferences
IIPSEPS	Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KGB	Committee for State Security (of Belarus)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCSF	National Civil Society Forum
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PCA	Partnership and Co-operation Agreement
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

CURRICULUM VITAE

**Jessie-Leigh O’Leary Thomas**

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E-mail: jessie.leigh.thomas@gmail.com

**Professional Profile**

- Extensive experience in multi-cultural, multilingual international settings
- Adept at conducting political analyses, producing press summaries and reports, and carrying out research on a broad range of topics
- Familiarity with EU institutions, politics, procedures, and economic policies

**Education**

**Master of Arts in Political Science** August 2011 – Present

*University of Louisville, Louisville KY, USA*

- GPA: 3.78/4.00 (as of Summer 2013)

**Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies (The EU as a Global Actor)** June 2011

*College of Europe (Natolin), Warsaw, POLAND*

Thesis Title: Transatlantic Divergence in Attitudes and Approaches in the International Security Arena

- GPA: 14.1/20 (Equivalent to “A” according to World Education Service index)
- Graduated with Honors
- Seminars, Workshops, and Simulation Games: International Negotiations; Arms Control and International Conflicts; European Documentation, Library and Electronic Resources; Crisis Management in the EU Neighbourhood; Négociation d’un accord externe (la Turquie)

**Master of Arts in French** August 2010

Project Title: Adam Mickiewicz: National Hero-Poet or Failed General?

*University of Louisville, Louisville KY, USA*

- GPA: 3.65/4.00

**Bachelor of Arts in French and Humanities** May 2010

Project Title: Comparing French and American Student Activism

*University of Louisville, Louisville KY, USA*

- GPA: 3.72/4.00
- Study Abroad September 2008 – June 2009
  - Université Montpellier III – Paul Valéry, Montpellier, FRANCE

*Achievements and Awards*

- Graduated Magna Cum Laude
- Honors Scholar Graduate of 2010
- Dean’s List 2006 – 2010
- Governor’s Scholars Full Scholarship 2006 – 2010
- University of Louisville’s Academic Year Abroad Scholarship 2008 – 2009
- University of Louisville’s Modern Language Fund Awards 2007 – 2009
- University of Louisville’s World’s Scholars Program Scholarship 2008
- American Association of Teachers of French Outstanding Senior 2006

## **Experience**

### **University of Louisville**

Fall 2012 - Spring 2013 (August to May)

#### *Graduate Teaching Assistant*

- Assisted professors in administrative functions pertaining to course work. Conducted research on topics ranging from Latin American studies to the internet and politics. Gave lectures and generated evaluation material for an International Relations course.

### **Consulat Général de France** (Chicago, IL)

Spring 2012 (March to July)

#### *Press Intern*

- Collected relevant articles from our 13-state region and compiled them into a daily press review. Responsible for research tasks required by the Press Attaché (namely US Congressional elections, contacts with local institutions, NATO information, etc.). Composed articles on local French-related activities and events for the Consulate's website and newsletter. Collaborated with the Consul General for producing official statements and presentations. Organized visit of French diplomat to Chicago with local institutions. Attended conferences and official networking events both with the Consul and on his behalf. Assisted with preparations for the 2012 NATO Summit.

### **Kentucky State Senate** (Frankfort, KY)

Spring 2012 (January to March)

#### *Intern*

- Attended legislative committee meetings and Senate floor meetings. Recorded minutes and provided synopses and analyses for Senator Gerald Neal. Followed the progress of relevant bills through the legislative process. Also performed office duties, such as filing, constituent feedback and managing large electronic mailing lists.

### **Proof on Main/21c Hotels** (Louisville, KY)

Fall 2011-Spring 2012 (August to March)

#### *Hostess*

- Performed office tasks including reservations, event coordination, employee scheduling, customer service, and secretarial duties required by managers.

### **Belarus Working Group** (Warsaw, Poland)

Fall 2010-Spring 2011 (October to May)

#### *Event Coordinator/Program Compiler*

- Conducted preparatory research, such as visa requirements for study trips, etc. Managed scheduling of events for College of Europe students and faculty. Successfully oversaw the compilation and editing of the academic programme and grant applications.

### **Alliance Française de Louisville**

Fall 2009-Spring 2010 (October to May)

#### *Volunteer Fundraiser*

- Independently researched and composed a grant application to the National AF organization to gain the local Alliance Française funding for advertising. The chapter was awarded the full amount requested in the application.

### **University of Louisville REACH Program**

Fall 2009-Spring 2010 (August to May)

#### *Student Tutor*

- Tutored up to four courses, ranging from French to Political Science to an introductory computer skills course of which Microsoft Office suite received the greatest emphasis. Other key functions included record-keeping and self-prepared PowerPoint presentations for larger groups of students.

### **Le Conservatoire de Musique** (Montpellier, France)

Summer 2007 (June to August)

#### *Secretary*

- Carried out duties such as record management, updating databases, serving as front-desk receptionist, and responding to managers needs in a French-speaking environment.

## **Languages**

English	Native Speaker	(European Level C2)
French	Proficient User	(European Level C1)
Italian	Intermediate User	(European Level B1)
Russian	Beginner User	(European Level A2)