Introduction

Postcommunism is a concept that has been used over the last 15 years of transformation from former Communist states. The transformation consisted of rejecting the Communist power system provided by the former Soviet Union. The former Communist states were overall systems where the Communist party had penetrated the political, economic and social spheres of activities and to large extent undermined political, economic and social pluralism; the Communist societies were to high degree atomized societies. Due to the failed Communist era, the new postcommunist states were overall highly receptive to any new political and economic ideas. The western model of liberal democracy and market economy had such attraction that many postcommunist states seemed to be dedicated to the same political and economic goal. The asymmetrical relation between Western powers and the postcommunist states gave the former a strong leverage on the changes within these societies (Holmes 1997:13-21, Pei 1994:11-19, Rupnik 1999:57-60, Grabbe 2001:1014).

The recent records show that the former states in Central Europe have been more successful in their progress towards democratization compared to the former Soviet territory. This has led to changing borders within Europe between the expanding democratic norm-community and the marginalized less democratic states. This paper explores the content of western democracy promotion towards postcommunist states. By analyzing EU policies towards Slovakia and Belarus, this paper identifies a socioeconomic dimension in the democracy promotion process. This paper also explores under what circumstances such democracy promotion may succeed. It is argued that EU democracy promotion was successful towards Slovakia due to a firm EU commitment and a positive reaction from the Slovakian political elite and the masses. On the other hand, EU democracy promotion towards Belarus met no such reaction, leading to a failed EU policy. It is the similarities between these postcommunist states and the variation in democratization level that is of most interest in this study when analyzing the nature and role of EU democracy promotion.
Theoretical framework: conceptualizing democratization

Democratization is a political process towards democracy. There has been a long and on-going debate on how to conceptualize democracy. It is generally acknowledged that democracy is a fuzzy and multifaceted concept. This has led to a conceptual inflation in the research on democratization. There have been two conceptions of democracy of relevance for this paper. These are the electoral democracies and the liberal democracies. The minimalist perspective has defined democracy as an electoral democracy focusing on the institutionalization of politics through free and fair elections (Schumpeter 1942, Huntington 1991). The maximalist perspective, on the other hand, has stressed a democracy as a system of political institutions and procedures, but also of more rights and liberties that ensure participation and contestation (Beetham 1999:3, Munck & Verkuilen 2002:9). As argued by Diamond,

“The key distinction is whether the political process centers on elections or whether it encompasses a much broader and more continuous play of interest articulation, representation, and contestation. If we view the latter as an essential component of democracy, then there must be adequate freedoms surrounding that broader process as well…” (Diamond 2003:36).

The minimalist perspective and the maximalist perspective on democracy have both influenced the conceptualization of democratization. Democratization refers to the political process towards electoral and liberal democracy. This implies that democratization departures from nondemocratic regimes such as totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. The totalitarian regime imposes to an unlimited degree state objectives and goals on all sectors and citizens. The concentration of power to the few aims at subordinating every activity to the control of the regime. The authoritarian regime refers to limited pluralism, limited guiding ideology, constrained leadership and weak mobilization (Linz & Stepan 1996:38-39). The authoritarian type of regime allows for socioeconomic pluralism, without guiding ideology (but rather distinctive mentalities) or massmobilization. The authoritarian leadership also exercises power within a less defined norm-structure and with some level of internal organizational autonomy in political and administrative careers. The authoritarian regime has therefore no chances of total control (Linz & Stepan 1996:44-45, cf. Mason 1967).

Based on the understandings of the different types of democracy and dictatorship, democratization is a political process from dictatorship towards democracy. It may include the establishment of an electoral democracy as well as a liberal democracy and may be described in terms of phases. Democratization may start with liberalization. The phase of liberalization refers to the process of growing pluralism in a dictatorial state where the society is going through opening, relaxation and

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1 The research on dictatorship has more recently also identified other types of non-democratic regimes, although the research has been far more limited (Linz & Stepan 1996:42-54).
differentiation, which enhances societal pluralism in the socioeconomic and/or the political field. Socioeconomic liberalization might foster better opportunities to establish social organizations as nongovernmental organizations (NGO), to start up new businesses, to allow for free media or to open schools for new influences from abroad. Political liberalization, on the other hand, might include easement of the right to assemble, to have political debates, to allow for political competition and opposition forces, but also rights to organize demonstrations. Transitions, as a second phase, entail liberalization, but are wider in the sense that they include political change going from dictatorship to electoral democracy. The transition process centres around the event of an election as a competition for office based on the preferences by the population (Karvonen 1997:21). Finally, the consolidation phase includes a form of political community in which the institutional settings are surrounded by a high level of political rights and civil liberties. The consolidation process may begin with an institutionalization process in the development of effective and representative political institutions, legitimate regime performance, civil controlled military, executive, judiciary and legislature branches, rule of law, transparent public administration. However, the consolidation process also implies including the citizens into these new institutions and develops a prodemocratic culture with far extended civil liberties (Selbin 1993:12-27, cf. Huntington 1968, Linz & Stepan 1996, Diamond 1999).

**Conceptualizing democracy promotion**

The research on causes to democratization has primarily been domestic-oriented, dealing with states as closed systems. This has been obvious when summarizing the research done within the field of democratization since the 1950s (Silander 2005, Bunce 2000, Shin 1994). However, states and state politics are not independent of international relations and international politics. The contemporary research on democracy promotion has come from the research on international relations. The research on international relations has provided insights on democracy promotion to democratization by focusing on actors and actors’ interests. Democracy promotion refers to an active prodemocratic pressure towards domestic actors (Whitehead 2001, Huntington 1991, Pridham 1994). These actors may be global-, international-, state-, transnational- and sub-state actors. These different actors may have different interests to promote. One such interest may be to promote democracy (McFaul 2005:153, Hurrell 2005:142-143). The democracy norm sets out the political game both domestically as internationally. The democracy norm sets out how politics are conducted domestically; the rules, procedures and behavior within politics. The democracy norm also sets out the expectations of international behavior in international politics by proposing a collective identity and a standard of behavior of how things are done. The spread of democracy at home may spill over to other actors as well when the domestic norm is externalized from one actor to another (Whitehead 1986:10). It is a way of reproducing what is perceived as the good and the common, we against the other, or the friends against the enemies. Actors that share the democracy norm may become a more or less homogenous
group of actors and foster a democratic norm-community that sets them apart from the less like-minded actors (Schimmelfennig 2002).

The interest in democracy promotion may be related to economic interests (Jönsson et al 1992, Lundgren 1998, Pravda 2001, Herring 1994). First, by providing democracy elsewhere, there might be an improved situation for economic integration and vice versa; the possibilities to engage a new market, to invest and to find new economic partners may be reasons for such action. Democracies are more open and enduring economic partners and provide more stable societies for economic trade and investments. However, an overall socioeconomic progress in other states may also create economic stability and social progress that open possibility of cooperation, integration and democracy. It is at times possible to see how economic and political ideas in a market economy and democracy go hand in hand and how the spread of one type of ideas may spillover to the other (Pravda 2001:20, Herring 1994:92-95). This has the dominating perspective within the research on democratization and has been referred to as the modernization thesis (Lipset 1959). The modernization thesis has stated that socioeconomic modernization, of welfare, socioeconomic pluralism and individual choices, have been assumed to go along with democratization. It is a complex relation, although there seems to be a parallel trend of improvement or downfall in one having similar impact on the other. This has especially been the case in postcommunist states (Pravda 2001:19-22, cf. Bunce 1999, Fish 1998). As argued by Diamond when referring to state socialism,

“First, state socialism – meaning state ownership and control of the means of production – is intrinsically incompatible with democracy, which requires some distribution of power resources so that political competition can be real and the state can be held accountable. Second, as the past several decades have shown inescapably, state socialism does not produce sustained economic development, and statist economies lag behind. Thus, only market-oriented economies produce the conditions for legitimating democracy” (Diamond 1992:26).

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2 It has been suggested (Uhlin 1995:38-40) that democracy promotion may be understood in terms of Encouragement and Democratic ideas. The first object of the spread of democracy is the general encouragement to pursue political change. The object of encouragement stresses the possibility to see change of any political kind. The second object of the spread of democracy is the democratic ideas themselves. The democratic ideas refer to establishment and implementation of democracy. The democratic ideas may consist of ideas on how to cause the breakdown of the dictatorial state, ideas on how to provide for a democratic alternative in form and substance, and ideas on how to achieve democracy considering means to use and strategies to apply.
There are at least three methods for democracy promotion. These are political, economic and military methods (Pevehouse 2002:518-519, Uhlín 1995:37-43, Whitehead 2001:15-22). Political methods may include gathering of information on the targeted state on the democratic conditions, discussing the importance of democratic rights and liberties, giving advice on how such political change can be obtained, bargaining on the costs or consequences of such change and/or finding common stands and agreements. This may concern the support and advice to the regime in form of institutional assistance, agreed standards of human rights and democratic issues and to provide international forums for discussions on democracy and human rights. However, there is also a great need for assistance on how to develop a transparent administration, to uphold the protection of minority rights, building awareness of democratic rights and liberties and foster an independent civil society (Carothers 1999:125-128, 157-158, Carothers 2004:87-90, Hyde-Price 1994:226-227). The economic methods may be to challenge the targeted state with deprivation and impoverishment if not applying to democratic standards. It may also lead to the enforcement of economic sanctions in boycott (not importing goods) and embargo (not selling goods) (Pevehouse 2002:518-519). However, it may also consist of economic aid. It may include reforms in the technological and financial sector that are not necessarily connected to political aims. It may provide a growing socioeconomic standard that foster pluralism, growing socioeconomic and political awareness and an overall openness of the state towards the international context (Pinder 1994). Finally, the military methods are often implemented when the other methods have failed. Military methods include the political and military objective to change or protect structural conditions in the targeted state, by promoting democratization. Such democracy promotion may include establishing new democratic regimes or secure and consolidate the sitting government from antidemocratic forces (Pearson 1974:259-290, Di Palma 1990:188).

Democratization in Postcommunist Europe

The transformation from a communist and planned economic system towards a democracy and market economy met major obstacles. Overall, the postcommunist states met transition problems. These problems concerned how to reconstruct political life in accordance with democratic principles and how to deal with postcommunist structures and actors. There were also contextual problems surrounding the political life in economic depression and social inequalities as well as religious and ethnical challenges (Rupnik 1999:57-62, Batt 2003:5-6, Pei 1994:11-19, Huntington 1991:208-210). It was in 2006 (15 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union) possible to see how the postcommunist states had tackled these obstacles differently and developed different level of democratization. The former Soviet Republics were less democratized than the former satellite states of Central Europe. This categorization of developed and less developed postcommunist states may be illustrated by comparing Slovakia and Belarus. Both Slovakia and Belarus are postcommunist states. Besides rejecting the former communist regime, they are also new states. Slovakia and Belarus saw, in the early 1990s, secession from

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3 This was already a major concern and debated thoroughly in *Journal of Democracy*, October 2001, Vol. 12, No. 4. with the title “Tens years After the Soviet Breakup”.
Czechoslovakia and Soviet Union. They also faced the pressure from the west of democratization. Slovakia and Belarus became new states in an era where communism was severely questioned and the spirit of the time was western democracy and market economy. However, despite these similarities, these postcommunist states have faced different political paths.

**Slovakia**

Slovakia received its independence in January 1993 with the disintegration of Czechoslovakia. Meciar and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (MDS) dominated Slovakian politics and received support from the rural areas, trade unions and workers that were concerned about the Prague-inspired market-oriented economy. Meciar stressed state-subsidies for industry, social benefits for workers and slowing privatization as a mix of planned and market economy. However, his nationalistic approach and centralized view of economics indicated a fragile electoral democracy in Slovakia. The most troublesome factor in Slovakian political life was corruption, which grew with the close ties between the political elite and the economic elite. The overall blurred border between politics and economics created a society of clientelism, corruption and oppression of political and economic outsiders. The political climate also consisted of manipulation of the authority where Meciar and his supporters could place members in the legislative, executive and administrative positions. These efforts restricted the horizontal accountability within the system. The 1994 parliamentary election turned out to support Meciar. Meciar and his party won and formed a ruling coalition in alliance with the left-winged party Workers Association (ZRS) and the ultra-rights Slovak National Party (SNS). His popularity was due to his charismatic leadership and his propaganda that the newly achieved independence and transition required firm leadership. It was the policies of anti-reform, anti-minority rhetoric and overall populism and nationalism that gained voters support from peasants, unemployed and pensioners in mainly the rural areas. The internal policies of centralization and restrictions of democracy developed hand in hand with at times a xenophobic view of Europe where internal domestic problems often were blamed on Europe (Samson 2001:363-374).

The 1998 years election ended the era of Meciar; the governing coalition under his leadership lost against the center-right Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK) and its allies in the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL), the Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) and the Party of Understanding (SOP). Although, the government received 27% of the votes, the opposition, captured over 58% (Bútorova & Bútorova 1999:84, Bútorova et al 2003:52). The election turnout indicated a new start for the democratization process in Slovakia. From 1998 and forward the fragile electoral democracy of Slovakia was turning into a consolidated democracy (see Table 1). The new policies signalled an ideological message of pro-market, pro-democracy and pro-west. The democratic effects of the new government were many; investigations on corruption, protection of human and minority rights with legislation protecting the Roman community and political reforms for increased transparency of political life including wider freedom for the media, were a few significant steps taken (Bievert September 12, 2003). Other important changes were the government’s enactment of a suppressed law on direct presidential elections and
the implementation of presidential elections (Nations in transit 1999-2000:563). In 2000, amendments aimed at strengthening judicial independence, reforming public administration and protecting human rights by the establishment of an ombudsman. In 2000, the *Act on Political Parties*, outlawed anonymous economic donations to parties and improved the transparency of these finances by making the parties financial reports available for the public. The parliament also adopted two new laws on preventing corruption and created the Civil Service Bureau, which was to develop a code of ethics for state employees (Nations in transit 1999-2000:569-573, Freedom in the World 1998-1999:Slovakia Country Report). The re-election of the government in 2002 clearly set out the democratic changes in Slovakian politics. This was primarily symbolized by the invitations from NATO to begin accession negotiations as well as from the EU to join the Union (Haughton 2003:65-70, Lewis 2001:5-9). In sum, the democratization process is illustrated below, using the Freedom House Index.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slovakia</th>
<th>Political Rights</th>
<th>Civil Liberties</th>
<th>Trend</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991-1992</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Free</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992-1993</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-1994</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Partly Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1995</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1996</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Partly Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Partly Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: The democratization rate in Slovakia

*Belarus*

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5 The ratings process in the Survey is based on 10 political rights questions, divided into three categories and 15 civil liberties questions, divided into four categories. The total number of points on political rights and civil liberties make up the rights and liberties ratings on each state. Each point total corresponds to a 1-7 rating where 1 represents the highest degree of freedom and 7 the lowest within both areas of research. All evaluated states are then categorized into three groups at the ordinal level: Free, Partly Free or Not Free.


7 www.freedomhouse.org
The democratic progress in Belarus has been far more limited compared to Slovakia. The Act of Independence was passed on August 25th, 1991, although the declaration of full independence was postponed to December 1991 when the Soviet Union disintegrated. The Constitution of 1994 provided for presidential elections in 1994 and parliamentary elections in 1995. However, the newly reorganized Communist Party continued to stress strong ties to Russia, which resulted in new agreements forming the Common Independent States (CIS) in 1991. The undecided political path led to growing frustration among the citizens and was triggered by a dysfunctional political system. The easiest solution seemed to be the return to Communism. In the Presidential elections, both candidates in Prime Minister Vyacheslav Kebich and the head of the parliamentary committee on corruption, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, were both supportive of close Russian relations. The political atmosphere of nostalgia and the hesitation to the idea of nationalistic orientation opened for the pro-Russian and populist Lukashenka (Marples 1999:71, Kuzio 2001:478-479). Another important factor behind the strong support for Lukashenka was the chaotic economic situation in Belarus. Belarus had traditionally received subsidies, but as an independent state it now had to pay for oil and gas. The first attempts at privatization had also led to an unfair distribution of welfare and the traditional nomenclature in Belarus gained enormously (Törnquist-Plewa 2001:76-77).

The Presidency of Lukashenka of 1994 and forward gradually led the state into an authoritarian state. He built his support on a campaign against corruption and accused the older politicians of misusing their power. In 1995, the manipulated parliamentary election also resulted in an important victory for the Communist Party, receiving most seats based on a program stressing a socialist economy, public ownership of land and a reunion with Russia. During fall 1996, Lukashenka declared a referendum on major changes to the Constitution. The result of the referendum of November 1996 made Lukashenka tighten his authoritarian grip of Belarus by installing a new constitution, a two-chamber puppet parliament and by extending the presidential power from five to seven years. The Constitutional draft gave Lukashenka more or less dictatorial control of the government and the checks and balances disappeared. The parliament became “a piece of window dressing” endorsing everything said by the president (Garnett & Legvold 1999:4, Batory Foundation 2004:15).

In 1999, President Lukashenka began his new two-year extended term as president. President Lukashenka ordered all political parties, unions and NGO’s to reregister their activities with governmental agencies. The opposition forces claimed the decree to seek to register potential enemies of the state and to stop their existence. This was also one of the severe consequences of the decree; the regime refused to reregister many of the most critical and politically active parties and organizations, including specific newspapers. The Presidential elections of 2000 and 2004 were also preceded by tighter political control and Lukashenka was accused of death squads aimed at opposition’s politicians and independent media. The repression of media, development of secret police crackdowns on demonstrations, and the disappearance of important officials, showed that Lukashenka had no intention to

Belarus was in the world focus in spring 2006, due to the fraud presidential election. Lukashenka claimed in the latest election a landslide victory receiving 82.6% of the vote compared to 6% for the main opposition candidate Aleksander Milinkevich (Naughton March 20, 2006). Most observers dismissed the result (EU, OSCE, the U.S.) and Mr. Milinkevich stressed the election as an “unconstitutional seizure of power” (Naughton March 20, 2006). The outcome of the election was demonstrating oppositional groups at the Oktyabrskaya Square in the city center of Minsk (Blomgren 2006-03-08). The demonstration in Minsk happened over a few days gathering until helmeted riot police arrested a few hundred of them. The state-controlled media continued to report on the election stressing the political opponents to Lukashenka and the demonstrators as criminal revolutionaries and as major threats to the nation. The oppositional forces were also accused of being a puppet of the West, aiming at selling out Belarusian sovereignty and identity to western interests (Finn 2006-03-24).

In sum, the limited democratic progress in Belarus is illustrated below. Table 2 illustrates an early transition of the 1990s, although leading into a reverse transition in the mid 1990s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belarus</th>
<th>Political Rights</th>
<th>Civil Liberties</th>
<th>Trend</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991-1992</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Partly Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-1993</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Partly Free</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993-1994</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Partly Free</td>
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<td>1994-1995</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Partly Free</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995-1996</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Partly Free</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Not Free</td>
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<td>1997-1998</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Not Free</td>
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<td>1998-1999</td>
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<td>2003-2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>Not Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Not Free</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: The democratization rate in Belarus

**EU democracy promotion**

One important explanatory factor to the different political trajectories in Slovakia and Belarus may be found in the EU relations towards these postcommunist states. It is argued that EU has been more focused at promoting democracy towards

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8 www.freedomhouse.org
Slovakia compared to Belarus. It is also argued that such promotion has received a positive reaction within Slovakia, adjusting her policies accordingly. This has not been the case in Belarus.

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union led to a Western policy that openly argued for the continuation of democracy promotion. The assistance more or less mushroomed within the U.S. and Western Europe and was directed towards most regions in the world, perhaps with most focus on Europe (Carothers 1999:20-48, Diamond 1992:25). The roots of the EU democracy promotion were based on the UN and the Universal Declaration of 1948 and the development of the International Covenant of 1966. The preservation of democracy was stressed in Article 237 of the Treaty of Rome and further specified in the 1962 Birkelbach Report of the political committee of the European Parliament, which became EU policy. It was not, however, until the 1990s that the EU became an intentional democracy promoter (Lundgren 1998:68). In 1991, the EU Commission presented the document, Human Rights, Democracy and Development Cooperation Policy and argued that the end of the Cold War allowed for an improved democracy promotion in Europe. The Luxembourg European Council of 1991 accepted the proposal from the Commission and adopted a declaration on human rights that established a platform for democracy promotion (Lundgren 1998:69). In 1992, in a report to the Lisbon European Council, the Commission stressed three conditions for membership of the EU, which become the EU platform: a European identity, democracy and respect for human rights; these conditions were discussed, developed and officially stated in June 1993 at the Copenhagen European Council (Conclusions of the Presidency, European Council, 21-22 June, 1993). The most important notion of these criteria was the democratic criterion, although establishing a functioning market economy was seen as a parallel important process.

In 1995 a new democracy clause was agreed upon stressing the suspension of aid and trade provisions in states with democratic falls. It was stressed that the respect for human rights and democracy were “essential elements” in the relations with third states (Gillespie & Youngs 2002:4-6). This was a major step for the EU; democracy was no longer a criterion within the norm-community, but also in the external relations. The Commission Communication of 1995 (216) on the Inclusion of Respect for Democratic Principles and Human Rights in Agreements between the Community and Third Countries stated that,

“A commitment to respect, promote and protect human rights and democratic principles is a key element of the European Community’s relations with third countries” (1995, 216:1).

Another important Communication, from May 2001, The European Union’s Role in Promoting Human Rights and Democratisation in Third Countries, reaffirmed the Treaties and Charters developed over the years. It highlighted that the European Union was founded on the principles of democracy and human rights as fundamental freedoms and emphasized that such criteria were consolidated and how sanctions could be
used towards those that were not respecting these criteria (The European Commission, COM 2001, 252 final on May 8th, 2001).

**Slovakia**
The EU rapidly developed into a democracy promoter based on the notion of a norm-community. This was a parallel process to the growing interest among primarily Central European states to join the Union. The first program from the West towards postcommunist Europe, in a post-Cold War setting, was the *Poland & Hungary – Assistance for Economic Reconstruction program* (Phare program). The Phare-program was established in December 1989, providing financial assistance aimed at promoting economic modernization. The Phare program focused on Poland and Hungary, but was soon extended to other states including Slovakia (Laffan 1992:162-165, Preston 1997:195-197). From 1989-1999, such assistance was figured to 11 billion ECU. The Phare program aimed to support the transformation to market economies and in doing so, to also assist in establishing democracies. In 1992, the Commission decided to, after the proposal from the Parliament, to link the economic assistance to the promotion of democracy. The Phare Democracy Program economically assisted projects aimed to improve the parliamentary democracy, human rights, the rule of law, an independent media and a dynamic civil society of unions, associations and organizations (Baum 2000:28, Lundgren 1998:84). In 2000-2006, Phare was providing an additional 11 billion Euro. Overall, the Phare program has concentrated about 70-75% on socioeconomic structures and 25-30% on institution building (Avery & Cameron 1999:19).

The EU program towards Central Europe was intensified by Association Agreements in 1993, so called Europe Agreements, based on Article 238 of the *Treaty of Rome* and which included liberalization of trade and strengthened diplomatic relations. The *Europe Agreements* aimed to establish a free trade area between member states and non-member states, ranging up to a 10 years period. The *Europe Agreements* were ratified by all the member states and the Community and included cooperation in the political, economic, judicial and cultural field (Avery & Cameron 1999:21, Preston 1997:198-1999). At the summit in Luxembourg in December 1997, the European Council decided that the political and economic assistance would encompass a multilateral framework. The *Accession Partnership* included details on the obligations that had to be met by the candidate

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9 At first, the EU tried to deal with the interest by offering different agreements and partnerships, although it was soon forced to accept the idea of an up-coming enlargement. The hesitation and worries in the EU were due to the many postcommunist states that sought membership of the Union and due to the real or perceived threat that an enlargement would endanger the norm-community by including less developed member states. This danger referred to both the financial aspects as well as to the integrative aspects of such membership. However, the member states of the EU soon realized the many dangers inherent in an exclusion of postcommunist states.

10 As stated by the Commission, “Assistance from PHARE is provided to help the candidate countries to: 1) Implement the acquis communautaire and to prepare for participation in EU policies such as Economic and Social cohesion; 2) Fulfil the requirements of the first Copenhagen criterion: the ability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities” (Commission 2002, 3303-2-5).
states regarding the Copenhagen criteria of democracy and macroeconomic stabilization. It also set out the possibility of sanctions if a recipient state did not comply with the *Europe Agreements* (Commission 2002, 3303-2:2-3).

In 1997, the Commission was entrusted with the mission to evaluate the progress within the candidate state in relation to the Copenhagen criteria as a measurement of evaluating the preparation for membership. The Agenda 2000 was a single framework including the Commission opinions of each candidate state to meet the demand. The annual reports followed the guidance from the Council Conclusions in Luxembourg describing the situation in each candidate state and the EU within the framework of the *Europe Agreements*, analyzing the political conditions and economic conditions, including the judicial and administrative capacity (Maresceau 2003:32-34, Smith 2003:115-118). In July 1997, the Commission handed over *The Agenda 2000: For a Stronger and Wider Union* to the Council and Parliament (Avery & Cameron 1999:44-100). The opinions by the Commission set out how the Commission ranked the candidate states based on the criteria. Limited progress in the commitments contained in the Europe Agreement and towards the consolidation of the Copenhagen criteria would open for appropriate steps with regard to support granted (Maresceau 2003:37, Bievert September 12, 2003).

*The Agenda 2000 – Commission Opinion on Slovakia’s Application for Membership of the European Union* (Doc/97/2015th July, 1997) set out the Opinion as an examination of the Slovak application for membership and the EU Commission declared that the political developments in Slovakia were insufficient to become a member state. Slovakia was measured on its progress on institutional stability and functionality, the rule of law, respect for human rights and minorities. The evaluation focused on the political situation of June 1997 under the subtitle *Democracy and the Rule of Law and Human Rights and the Protection of Minorities*. As concluded by the Commission on Slovakia,

“Slovakia’s situation presents a number of problems in respect of the criteria defined by the European Council in Copenhagen. The operation of Slovakia’s institutions is characterized by the fact that the government does not sufficiently respect the powers devolved by the constitution to other bodies and that it too often disregards the rights of the opposition. The constant tension between the government and the President of the Republic is one example of this....Substantial efforts need to be made to ensure fuller independence of the judicial system, so that it can function in satisfactory conditions. The fight against corruption needs to be pursued with greater effectiveness. Apart from this the treatment of the Hungarian minority, which still lacks the benefit of a law on use of minority languages, even though the Slovak authorities had undertaken to adopt one, as envisaged by the constitution, needs to be improved. The situation of the Roma similarly needs attention from the authorities. In the light of these elements, although the institutional framework defined by the Slovak constitution
responds to the needs of a parliamentary democracy where elections are free and fair, nevertheless the situation is unsatisfactory both in terms of the stability of the institutions and of the extent to which they are rooted in political life. Despite recommendations made by the European Unions in a number of demarches and declarations, there has been no noticeable improvement” (Commission Agenda 2000:vol.3).

The evaluation pointed out several flaws in the democratic progress and questioned the readiness of Slovakia to become a member state. The Commission noted harassment of the opposition, political manipulation of investigations of such wrong-doings, the overall disrespect for the rule of law, centralization of power, exclusion of opposition from oversight of governmental institutions, corruption and an on-going stigmatization and propaganda that pointed out the opposition forces as anti-Slovaks and enemies of the state (Krause 2003:59-68, Pridham 1999:1222-1223, Avery & Cameron 1999:45-47).

The evaluation of the Slovakian progress by the EU Commission excluded Slovakia from a first perceived enlargement and triggered political mobilization within Slovakia. A growing proportion of the population in Slovakia saw the EU as a positive point of reference and how the evaluation of 1997, excluding Slovakia from a future enlargement, led to the isolation of the state from Europe (Commission, CEEB, 1998, cf. Commission Eurobarometer 2004). As stated in the Central and Eastern Eurobarometer (CEEB),

“It appears that the rather negative evaluation of the country’s internal situation has led many Slovaks to look for an external point of reference for their hopes and ambitions” (Commission, CEEB, 1998).

The election in 1998 was surrounded by political debate and mobilization among civilians and NGOs. The perception among the population and within the EU was that the ruling elite had politically disturbed an EU membership and disregarded democratic weaknesses in the Slovak society (for example corruption and bad treatment of minorities). It was primarily the younger generation that wanted to see a new government in 1998. They were enforced by NGOs that wanted to secure a free and fair election by informing the population of the upcoming election as well as providing knowledge on the content of a free and fair election. Although, people disagreed on many domestic issues, there seemed to be an overall agreement that Slovakia had to democratically improve (Bútora & Bútorova 1999:84, Interview Bievert September 12, 2003). The outside support from the EU and other western actors also opened for growing political awareness within Slovakia, as many understood that the election would be under international scrutiny (Pridham 2002:210-211, Pridham 1999:1238, Commission Regular Reports on Slovakia 1998:13).
The positive reaction towards the EU and the democracy promotion was also seen within the opposition. The strong leadership of Meciar over the 1990s had been a major obstacle for opposing politicians. They had faced a massive problem in getting known among the public and to have a say in the political debate. However, in late 1990s, these politicians were well known among the population and most voters knew about their profile and their political agendas. The four major opposition parties, the center-right Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK) and its allies in the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL), the Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) and the Party of Understanding (SOP), were allied in a coalition and pronounced one spokesperson, Mikuláš Dzurinda, as the opponent to Meciar (Bútorova & Bútorova 1999:91, Interview Biervert September 12, 2003, Nations in transit 1999-2000:561). The ideological message from the opposition to the younger voters had been pro-market, pro-democracy and pro-west. This led to a massive societal force for political change as the population showed greater interest in the election and as the opposition was able to set out their agenda and future policy for Slovakia (Bútorova et al 2003:53-54). The 1998 election became a window of opportunity in Slovakia. Years of transitional status, as a fragile democracy, provided growing support for a regime change. Compared to 1989, such change was now more specified; it was not any change from Communism, but rather changes towards greater democracy, market economy and EU membership.

One of the first measurements by the new ruling elite was a joint letter to the Commission stressing the willingness to rejoin Europe. Parliamentary amendments to the Constitution also enhanced the consolidation of democratic institutions and strengthened the rule of law. These amendments were steps closer to membership since they included the possibility to transfer sovereign rights to the EU and provide for the supremacy of EC law over Slovak legislation. Other domestic reforms focused on the rights and liberties of the minorities, by for instance ratifying the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages (Commission Regular Report on Slovakia 2001:14-25, Bútorova et al 2003:63-64). The elite also handled the problem of corruption by the implementation of the National Program for the Fight against Corruption (Commission Regular Report on Slovakia 2002:20-32).\textsuperscript{11} Under the new ruling elite, the Slovak Republic also reinforced the Western orientation of the foreign policy by working close with EU and NATO (Interview Biervert September 12, 2003).\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{11} The 2002 Report on Slovakia stressed the continuation of important political reforms. “Whereas the 1997 Opinion and the 1998 Regular Report concluded that Slovakia did not fulfil the political criteria, the 1999 Regular Report came, for the first time, to a positive evaluation in this respect. Since that time, the country has made considerable progress in further consolidating and deepening the stability of its institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities. This has been confirmed over the year. Slovakia continues to fulfil the Copenhagen criteria” (Commission Regular Report on Slovakia 2002:32).

\textsuperscript{12} The Parliament approved a security and defense strategy setting out further integration of Slovakia with the EU. Slovakia also showed a keen interest in the developments of Europe and participated in the development of the CFSP at the same time as aligning with many of the statements and declarations made by the EU on crisis and conflicts in Europe. This led to participation in international peacekeeping missions on the Balkans (Commission Regular Report on Slovakia 2002:116, Commission Regular Report on Slovakia 1999:53).
The new elite of post-1998 led Slovakia into full membership of the EU in May 2004. In 2000, Slovakia began accession talks and in December 2002, negotiations were concluded. The overall positive reaction to the EU also increased over the years. This was visible through an increasing percentage that had a positive opinion to the EU, saw Slovakia’s future within the EU and would use the referendum to vote yes for future membership (Commission 2002, Eurobarometer 2001). In spring 2003, Slovakia held referendum on future membership of the EU. The Slovaks voted in favor of EU membership with 92% supporting the idea. This was a strong indication on the new path taken by Slovakia after the change of regime of 1998. It was obvious how the EU had been of high-value for Slovakian politics (Interview Biervert September 12, 2003, Haugthon 2003:72-73).

Belarus
The EU also recognized the successor state with the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991. It was a concern to the Union that the disintegration of the Soviet Union would not lead to chaos and anarchy that could jeopardize the stability in Europe. It was also a concern to the West that the disintegration of the Soviet Union was not replaced by a new opposing superpower. This could become the case if the fragile and newly independent states, such as Belarus, were left on its own. The economic assistance to Belarus could help in bringing democracy to Belarus, while a developing market economy in Belarus could open for trade and investments. The EU perceived Belarus as a potential market for EU businesses. Based on this knowledge, the EU could very well expand its market eastward providing Belarus with western accessories. Belarus also provided important sources of minerals, such as oil and gas. These sources made the EU financial assist Belarus and other states in supporting the export towards EU member states (Smith 2002:232-235, Dumasy 2003:183-184).

The EU assistance towards Belarus and other Eastern European states (and Central Asia) were mainly been structured by the Technological Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (Tacis Program), targeting Belarus and 12 other states (including Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). The first eight-year program of 1991 to 1999, with a budget of 4.226 million Euro, was decided on at the European Council in Dublin and in Rome in 1990. The program provided economic support for technical developments that could enhance the transitions in the newly independent states. In order words, technical assistance was a stand-alone activity. The EU sought to financially assist these states in becoming market economies, but also sought to strengthen the economies and then especially in the sectors of gas and oil and improve nuclear safety, the environment and the private sector development. The EU re-evaluated the Tacis program in 1998 and decided to focus on political priorities in the promotion of democracy. A new Council Regulation adopted in January 2000 set out the new guidelines for 2000-2006 with a

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total budget of 3,138 million Euro (see Council regulation No 99/2000 of December 29, 1999: Article 6). The Tacis program clearly integrated a democratic and socioeconomic dimension in the assistance program. In the Council regulation, article 2, six areas were listed as priorities for cooperation: (1) Support for institutional, legal and administrative reforms, (2) Support to the private sector and assistance for economic development, (3) Support in addressing the social consequences of transition, (4) Development of infrastructure networks, (5) Promotion of environmental protection, and (6) the Development of the rural economy. The assistance with political goals was directed at reinforcing democracy and the rule of law and ensuring the observance of democratic principles and human rights. The assistance with socioeconomic goals included the private sector and economic development as well as the rural economy.\textsuperscript{14}

The Tacis program from 2000-2006 included the democratic criteria. This implied that commitment to democratic values would open for further assistance (Council Regulation 99/2000, Article 3). The annual budget of political assistance, as institution building, was about 450 million Euro. The key areas for this program were among other things to support institutional, legal and administrative reforms (see Council Regulation No. 99/2000 of December 29, 1999). The Tacis program stressed the necessity for the partner states to abandon the inherited legal and penal code from the Soviet system (Commission, External Relations Directorate General 2000:4). The Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 99/2000 of 29 December 1999) concerning the provision of assistance to the partner states in Eastern Europe, clearly stated that societal progress had to occur in a context of free and open democratic societies. As set out,

\begin{quote}
\textit{Such assistance will be fully effective only in the context of progress towards free and open democratic societies that respect human rights, minority rights and the rights of the indigenous people, and towards market-oriented economic systems} (paragraph 5).
\end{quote}

The political framework has come to be the Partnership & Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) that have been adopted by nine Eastern European and Central Asian states, setting out guidelines for ten years of bilateral cooperation between EU and the partner state. This agreement, from 1999 and forward, is a formalization of the partnership between the EU and the third state and in which the Tacis program functions as the main instrument. The establishment of PCA was aimed at intensifying the cooperation between the EU and Eastern European states as a way of assisting the transformations of these states, partly opening these states for EU businesses. The PCA would also facilitate for an overall improved political dialogue on the developments in the region (Paznyak 2003:5). The development of programs directed towards Eastern Europe was a result of the scheduled enlargement process of 2004.\textsuperscript{15} This led to a new dialogue between the EU and the partner states from

\textsuperscript{14}www.europa.eu.int/europeaid/projects/tacis/foreword_en.htm (2005-08-03)

\textsuperscript{15} (www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/belarus/intro/index.htm (2005-05-16)
Eastern Europe, and an interest within the EU to redirect some funding for the Eastern European states that borders the EU (European Union Regional Policy 2001:9). There has, however, been more focus on a few of these states compared to others. For example, the EU has developed two Common Strategies with Russia and Ukraine, which are political documents that draw up overall policy guidelines and ensure coordination of all projects. Almost half of the Tacis budget has been spent on Russia, while Ukraine has received about 20%, leaving the rest of Eastern European states to share 30% of the budget. This shows the greater interest of the EU for influencing Russia and Ukraine compared to Belarus.\footnote{See \url{www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/ceeca/publication/tacis_2.pdf} (2005-07-10)}

The prioritized method towards Belarus was the PCA as a 10-year bilateral negotiated agreement between the EU and Belarus. The EU and Belarus completed the negotiations for PCA in 1995 confirming that Belarus is an important European state. The agreement would include economic assistance (Dumasy 2003:179-180). However, the political progress in Belarus challenged the relation to the EU. The political development after the Presidential elections of 1994, with centralization of power, abolishment of the democratically elected parliament and repression of the opposition and the civil society, led to an unsigned PCA. The flawed referendum of 1996, reforming the 1994 constitution in a way that concentrated power to the presidency as well as replaced the elected parliament with a national assembly selected by the president, led to decisions among Parliaments of EU member states not to ratify the agreement. The EU did not recognize the new constitution and the Tacis program was immediately cancelled with few exceptions (Paznyak 2003:5). The Tacis program for 1996-1999 with a budget of 37 million Euro was suspended and in 1998, the EU cancelled a sub-program of Tacis (Krivosheev 2003:174, Davidonis 2001:25-26). The financial statistics over the allocation of Tacis resources from 1991 and forward indicates a declining funding from the EU with no allocation after 1996 and forward except for the limited assistance to the civil society.\footnote{See \url{www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/ceeca/index.htm} (2005-07-10)}

The EU declared that the cooperation with Belarus was non-constructive and that the obstructive attitude from Lukashenka towards the West undermined any support (Ramsay September 15, 2003, Luzenberger, September 12, 2003). In September 1997, the EU Council of Ministers stated,

"...the EC and their member States will conclude neither the interim agreement nor the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement, Bilateral ministerial contacts between the European Union and Belarus will, in principle, be established solely through the Presidency or the Troika, Implementation of Community and member states technical assistance programs will be halted, except

\footnote{www.europa.eu/int/comm/europeaid/tacis/financial_en.htm (2005-08-03)}
In 2001, PCA strategy papers were once again developed now covering 2002-2006, but with the exception of Belarus. Belarus was not interested in the EU, its policies or assistance and has rather perceived the EU, as the rest of the West, as a potential or real enemy of Belarus (Kuzio 2001:482). The promotion of democracy by the Union has been translated by the elite as a strategy of Western imposition aimed to undermine the sovereignty of Belarus. This has led to a more or less isolated Belarus in Europe (Ramsay September 15, 2003, Luzenberger, September 12, 2003).

As a consequence of the enlargement of 2004, including among other states Slovakia into EU membership, a new policy, the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), was launched aiming to build a bridge between the new expanded Union and the neighboring states. The ENP was proposed in a Communication from the Commission in 2003 (European Commission, COM (2003) 104). The ENP replaced the TACIS program towards Eastern European and Central Asian states, but included other states as well. The myriad of targeted states is approached by Actions Plans for each state. These plans will take into consideration the differentiation among the targeted states and their different needs of reforms (Dannreuther 2004). Based on the commitment to the values and interests of the Union, the ENP is a symbol of a strengthened effort from the EU to include non-memberstates of the EU in the European integration process. The Council Regulation (EC) NO 1638/2006 stresses the legal basis of ENP and highlights the fundamental values of such cooperation. These are democratic institutions and rule of law, respect for human rights, the principles of market economy and free trade and sustainable development and poverty reduction. Article 2 states the importance of assistance to provide democratization and socioeconomic development in poverty reduction, health and education. However, major efforts must be made within Belarus in order to be included in this program. Today, EU assistance is limited to target the population in the socioeconomic and democratic domains to ease their suffering during the self-isolated strategy proposed by the leading regime.

A Final Note
The democracy clause in the external policies and in all third state agreements is a way for the Union to promote its interests beyond EU territory. The EU has used different programs to promote the democracy norm. The EU has had positive

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20 The ties also worsened when president Lukashenka did not extend the accreditation of the international staff members of OSCE in Minsk (EU Statement on Belarus, Permanent Council No. 418, 31 October 2002). This was due to accusations from Lukashenka that the Election Monitoring Mission by the OSCE, in the Presidential election of 2001, consisted of opposition forces. The incident led to the EU banning President Lukashenka and other highly positioned members of the Belarusian government from entering EU territory. This decision was made by fourteen member states and lifted in late 2002 (Ramsay September 15, 2003, Luzenberger, September 12, 2004, Rozanov 1999:21-23).
impact on Slovakia. This was obvious in the political mobilization surrounding the
election of 1998, which was related to the rejection by the EU of Slovakia’s
membership application. The opposing elite and the people on the streets
demanded compliance from Slovakia to EU:s call for democratic reforms.
However, the EU has had negative impact on Belarus. The negative reaction in
Belarus was symbolized by the unsigned PCA, which led to weakened influence by
the EU and a gradual erosion of the relation to Belarus. The introduction of
political goals in the assistance supporting Belarus led to a harsher climate between
the two. The ruling elite developed anti-western attitude towards the EU, based on
the perception that EU democracy promotion aims at challenging the sovereignty
of Belarus. This article argues that the EU has developed a democracy promotion
strategy, including a socioeconomic dimension, towards postcommunist states. This
strategy has been successful when it has been received by positive reactions among
at least one fraction of the political elite and the population at large.

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