

# One Size Does Not Fit All: An Analysis of US and EU Democracy Promotion in the Western Balkans\*

## Bu İşin Standardı Yok: ABD ve AB'nin Batı Balkanlar'daki Demokrasinin Teşviki Politikalarının Bir Analizi

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### Abstract

*In the post-Cold War era, with democratic peace theory on the rise, efforts to promote democracy around the world have flourished. Western and Western democratic values-oriented states in particular have acted on the belief that democracy promotion would contribute to world peace. Yet this process is not as utopian as described; it is also highly contingent, with no single prescription for success nor common idea of what the end result should look like. This study elaborates the problematic aspects of democracy promotion by examining the case of US and EU democracy promotion in the Western Balkans. The problems uncovered in this analysis fall into three categories: 1) those stemming from the very nature of democracy promotion as an exercise, 2) those specific to the promoters of democracy and 3) those relating to the particular characteristics or circumstances of the target state or region. Based on the analysis, this study concludes that such problems will continue to arise so long as the promoters of democracy continue to approach the process monolithically, without sensitivity to, and synchronization with, the cultural and political realities on the ground in target states.*

**Key Words:** Democracy Promotion, Democratization, the United States (US), the European Union (EU), Western Balkans

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*Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde, demokratik barış teorisinin yükselişe geçişiyle birlikte tüm dünyada demokrasiyi teşvik çabaları hız kazanmıştır. Demokrasinin dünya barışına katkıda bulunacağı düşüncesiyle hareket eden Batılı ve Batılı demokratik değerleri benimsemiş devletlerin bu tasavvurları, ütopyacı olmamakla beraber kalıcı barış için ne tek bir reçete ne de sonuçlara dair ortak bir fikir birliği mevcuttur. Bu çalışmada, demokrasiyi teşvik siyasetinin sorunlu yönleri, Avrupa Birliği ve Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin Batı Balkanlardaki demokrasiyi teşvik siyasetinin karşılaştırmalı analizi üzerinden ortaya konulmaya çalışılmıştır. Makalede demokrasiyi teşvik siyasetinin sorunlu yönleri; demokrasiyi teşvik uygulamasının doğası kaynaklı, demokrasiyi teşvik süreçlerini yürüten dış aktörlere özgün, ve demokrasinin teşvikinin hedef ülke ve bölgelerin nitelikleri veya koşulları kaynaklı olmak üzere üç kategoride değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışmada, demokrasiyi teşvik eden dış aktörlerin, monolitik bakış açılarını devam ettirdikleri, sahadaki hassasiyetlere dikkat etmeksizin hareket ettikleri, demokrasiyi teşvik çabalarını senkronize etmedikleri ve sahadaki kültürel ve siyasi gerçekleri göz ardı ettikleri sürece problemlerin devam edeceği sonucuna varılmıştır.*

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**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Demokrasinin Teşviki, Demokratikleşme, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri (ABD), Avrupa Birliği (AB), Batı Balkanlar

## 1. Introduction

With democratic peace theory on the rise over the past 25 years, democracy promotion efforts around the world have also intensified. Despite this faith in the merits of democracy, questions continue to loom over the notion of its global promotion. On the one hand, even if these efforts increased the number of high-functioning democracies around the world, this is no guarantor of 'world peace'; on the other hand, there is also no consensus among democracy promoters over the priorities, expectations and concerns in target countries. The problems that emerge from these issues fall into three categories: 1) those that stem from dominant beliefs about democracy and democracy promotion, 2) those specific to the promoters and 3) those that relate to the particularities of the targeted state or region. The dominant Western perspective is one of democracy as a panacea for post-conflict reconstruction. Problems on the promoters' end stem from their monolithic understanding of democracy, inconsistencies in priorities and expectations, and institutional and strategic differences between them. Problems for target countries or regions stem from the particularities of their backgrounds of conflict, as well as their state apparatuses and other domestic factors, which respond unpredictably to promoters' one-size-fits-all policy efforts.

For the purposes of this article, the United States and the European Union are identified as main promoters of democracy globally. The US and EU are similar in their monolithic understanding of democracy, but differ in policy priorities, aims, strategies, affiliated organizations and projects. The case of the Western Balkans highlights how this monolithic model of democracy promotion can fall short in some post-conflict milieus and with some non-democratic state structures. The failures of the US and EU in the region after the dissolution of Yugoslavia demonstrate how the three categories of problems outlined above are linked, reinforcing the argument that democracy promotion requires a broad understanding of democratization that is sensitive both to promoters' motives and to targets' particularities.

## 2. Problems Arising from the Mottos of Democracy Promotion

The literature on democracy promotion has examined the influence of external actors on particular states at many levels. For example, Hobson and Kurki define it as the intervention of an external actor in a target state to install/assist in the establishment of democratic government.<sup>1</sup> Schmitter and Brouwer

1 Christopher Hobson-Milja Kurki, "Conclusion: Reflections on a New Approach in a New Era of Democracy Promotion," in Christopher Hobson-Milja Kurki (eds.), *Conceptual Politics of Democracy Promotion*, Routledge, London 2012, pp. 215-223.

describe it as the 'overt and voluntary activities adopted, supported, and (directly or indirectly) implemented by (public or private) foreign actors explicitly designed to contribute to the political liberalization of autocratic regimes.'<sup>2</sup> Here the interaction between external promoters and local elements is a challenge. Grimm and Leininger<sup>3</sup> organized these challenges under four headings: multiple and even conflicting objectives of international actors pursuing democracy promotion in the same target country, inefficient interaction between promoters and local actors, ineffective management of the military and civil capacities of promoters and locals, and repercussions within the target country that may require additional conflict resolution processes.

Another challenge is the monolithic of democracy, with which comes the oversimple notion that its promotion will serve as a post-conflict panacea. This conceptualization originated with ant-Soviet US propaganda during the Cold War; in other words, democracy promotion began as a tool of ideological warfare between two superpowers rather than of ideological consensus among the international community. The 'victory' of the US reinforced these liberal democratic ideals within the post-Cold War international system, wherein the fall of the Berlin Wall had become a symbol that democracy was the 'new standard of civilization'<sup>4</sup> or 'the world's new universal religion.'<sup>5</sup> Democracy has since been disseminated as the *sine qua non* of sustainable peace, human security, and development.<sup>6</sup>

Accordingly, the number of scholars studying the failures and achievements of democracy promotion has increased rapidly.<sup>7</sup> Most such work has championed the theory and practical application of democratic ideas and therefore contributed to its global dispersion. Such developments have resulted in a monolithic understanding of democracy. This view is shared by the US and the EU, who believe Western liberal democratic ideals should work in any post-conflict society.

- 2 Philippe C. Schmitter- Imco Brouwer, "Conceptualizing, researching and evaluating democracy promotion and protection," *European University Institute, Florence Working paper* SPS N. 99/9, 1999, <http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/id/995/> (accessed 27 January, 2015).
- 3 Sonja Grimm-Julia Leininger, "Not All Good Things Go Together: Conflicting Objectives in Democracy Promotion," *Democratization* vol:19 no:3, 2012, pp. 391-414.
- 4 Christopher Hobson, "Democracy as Civilization," *Global Society* vol: 22 no:1 , 2008, pp. 75-95.
- 5 Paul E. Corcoran, "The Limits of Democratic Theory," in G. Duncan (ed.), *Democratic Theory and Practice*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1983, pp. 13-25.
- 6 Michael McFaul, "Democracy Promotion as a World Value" *The Washington Quarterly*, vol: 28, no:1, Winter 2004-2005, pp. 147-163.
- 7 see e.g. O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Przeworski 1997; Diamond 2008; Burnell 2000; Yonungs 2002; Smith 1994; Teixeira 2008; David Chandler, "Promoting Democratic Norms? Social Constructivism and the "Subjective" Limits to Liberalism," *Democratization*, vol: 20, no: 2, 2013, pp. 215-239.

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### 3. A Democracy Promotion Retrospective: US vs. EU Understanding

The US has the oldest democracy-promotion tradition, going back to its late eighteenth-century constitution. In practice, early twentieth-century Wilsonian principles are considered the origin of the American commitment to democracy promotion. US military operations in the Caribbean and Central America during the 1920s and 1930s were also legitimized as democracy promotion.

US culture and political institutions are generally compatible with those of foreign countries that also have democratic institutions. Washington's bipolarizing alliance schemes during the Cold War illustrate this, with democracy being the major criterion for like-mindedness. John F. Kennedy asserted that democracy promotion was one of the major aims of US foreign policy, and that the US was dedicated to cultivating democracy throughout the developing world.<sup>8</sup> In 1983 Ronald Reagan established the National Endowment for Democracy to institutionalize these efforts.<sup>9</sup>

The end of the Cold War accelerated these democracy promotion efforts. Bill Clinton and George W. Bush stressed the importance of democracy promotion as a key element of US foreign policy.<sup>10</sup> According to Clinton, democracy promotion was a part of the American Grand Strategy in the form of 'democratic enlargement'.<sup>11</sup> 'Enlargement' constituted a relatively new strategy for containing 'other' regimes and cultivating a global zone within which the US could promote its national interests more easily. This post-Cold War bloc was founded on US-democratic principles.

The EU has its own authentic understanding of democracy as a core value that it strives to promote both within and outside its borders.<sup>12</sup> The Treaty of Lisbon formed the constitutional basis of the EU and proclaimed that action in the international arena shall be guided by the principles of democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and respect for human dignity.<sup>13</sup> Particularly during the 1990s,

- 8 Thomas Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad, the Learning Curve*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC 1999, p. 3.
- 9 Keith Brown, "Do We Know How Yet: Insider Perspectives on International Democracy Promotion in the Western Balkans," the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, TITLE VIII PROGRAM, 26 January 2009: 11, [http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceeer/2009\\_822-02g\\_Brown.pdf](http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceeer/2009_822-02g_Brown.pdf) (accessed 27 January 2015).
- 10 Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad*, op. cit., p. 5.
- 11 D. Brinkley, "Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine," *Foreign Policy* 106, 1997, pp. 110-127.
- 12 Hans J. Spanger-Jonas Wolff, "Why promote democratisation? Reflections on the instrumental value of Democracy," M. van Doorn and R. von Meijenfeldt (eds.) *Democracy: Europe's Core Value? On the European Profile in World-Wide Democracy Assistance*, Eburon, Delft 2007, pp. 33-49.
- 13 Lisbon Treaty Article 21, [http://www.lisbon-treaty.org/wcm/the-lisbon-treaty/treaty-on-european-union-and-comments/title-5-general-provisions-on-the-unions-external-action-and-specific-provisions/chapter-1-general-provisions-on-the-unions-external-action/101\\_article-21.html](http://www.lisbon-treaty.org/wcm/the-lisbon-treaty/treaty-on-european-union-and-comments/title-5-general-provisions-on-the-unions-external-action-and-specific-provisions/chapter-1-general-provisions-on-the-unions-external-action/101_article-21.html) (accessed 29 June 2013).

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the EU institutionalized its democracy promotion efforts via agreements and protocols that emphasized human rights as a universal principle. The Maastricht Treaty of 1992, which announced the Common Foreign and Security Policy, confirmed the EU's commitment to liberal democratic principles. In 1998, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the EU declared its intention to promote pluralistic democracy internationally, and to provide guarantees for the rule of law. The next step was the 2009 EU Agenda for Action on Democracy Support in EU External Relations.<sup>14</sup>

There are major similarities in EU and US democracy-promotion efforts. First, they share a mainstream liberal democratic approach to democracy promotion,<sup>15</sup> which envisions a constitutional restriction of governmental powers; the institutionalization of human rights; the rule of law and good governance; and the freedoms of expression, press and association. This approach aims to deeply root such rules and procedures in the political culture.<sup>16</sup> Second, security has a weighty meaning in their efforts. The US national security rationale views support of democracy as good for its own strategic interests, as well as for global stability.<sup>17</sup> The US invasion of Afghanistan, which began as part of its War on Terror, later became associated with the democratization agenda of George W. Bush. The 2002 National Security Strategy placed democracy promotion at the centre of the US national security doctrine. For the EU, the democratization of its neighbourhood is believed to alleviate serious security problems relating to issues of refugees, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.<sup>18</sup>

Yet there are also clear differences between the US and the EU. The US is a state with unitary national interests and concerns, while the EU is a supranational organization with diverse national interests and concerns. US expectations from democracy promotion are more politico-strategic, while EU expectations are more politico-economic. The EU uses democracy as political cement binding previously hostile European countries, along with economic

- 14 Council conclusions on Democracy Support in the EU's External Relations [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/1111250.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/1111250.pdf) (accessed on 24 June 2013).
- 15 Thomas Carothers "Democracy assistance: The question of strategy," *Democratization*, vol: 4 no:3 , 1997, pp. 121-122.
- 16 Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Democratic Peace-Warlike Democracies? A Social Constructivist Interpretation of the Liberal Argument," *European Journal of International Relations*, vol: 1, no: 4, 1995, pp.491-517.
- 17 USAID., Democracy, US Department of State, Diplomacy in Action, USAID: Policy Framework for Bilateral Foreign Aid. Implementing Transformational Diplomacy Through Development, 2006, Washington, DC. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/democ/> (accessed 4 February 2013).
- 18 Elmar Brok, "Introductory remarks: the European Union and democracy promotion," Proceedings of the Worldwide promotion of democracy: challenges, role and strategy of the European Union Conference, Brussels 5-6 June 2007: 14.

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incentives for these countries to construct a liberal common market. In 1975, the EU signed a series of Lome agreements with the former colonial territories of Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, representing a foray into external democracy promotion. The agreements enabled these former colonies to access the EU Common Market in exchange for allowing the EU to intervene in issues of human dignity as well as economic, social, and cultural rights.<sup>19</sup> These efforts aimed to link these former colonies to the West via market forces within the schema of democracy promotion.

The EU's motivations for democracy promotion do not complement that of the US; quite the contrary, the two systems often rival one another. In the post-Cold War era, the EU has earned international acclaim and legitimacy as an agent of democracy by rapidly establishing itself as an influential actor<sup>20</sup> and 'norm entrepreneur'.<sup>21</sup> There are also more practical disparities, including differences in the institutions, tools and strategies adopted by each.

#### 4.1. Comparing the Institutions

The US and the EU employ a wide array of organizations including government agencies, government-funded non-profit organizations, profit-oriented consultancy firms, and private foundations. These institutions should be explained at both the state and non-state level.

US democracy promotion has a multi-layered institutional structure composed of various governmental and non-governmental institutions, each of which takes a specialized role. The US Department of State is considered to be the lead agency for US democracy promotion activities. The US Agency for International Development (USAID), the Departments of Defense and Justice, and the Broadcasting Board of Governors then deal with the more practical aspects of diplomacy. USAID in particular sponsors projects ranging from electoral to civil-society development assistance. Its Office of Transition Initiatives combines humanitarian and development assistance with market-based democracy in target states.

These governmental institutions act more like decision makers, organizers and funders while non-governmental organizations and contracting firms, subcontractors and vendors execute most of the fieldwork. The National Endowment for Democracy and National Democratic Institute are two such NGOs, which particularly focus on citizen participation, transparency and

19 Tanja A. Börzel-Thomas Risse, "One Size Fits All! EU Policies for the Promotion of Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law," Paper prepared for the Workshop on Democracy Promotion, Center for Development, Democracy, and the Rule of Law, Stanford University October 4-5, 2004.

20 Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad*, op. cit., p. 22.

21 Michelle Pace, "Norm Shifting from EMP to ENP: The EU as a Norm Entrepreneur in the South?" *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* vol: 20, no: 4, 2007, pp. 659-674.

accountability.<sup>22</sup> These institutions are ranked in a pyramid hierarchy, wherein a large number of institutions is steered by a small number of officials from the Department of State and USAID. This means US democracy-promotion activities are dominated by US national interests.

The EU does not have a national interest-oriented schema; its efforts are directed by a more complex, less hierarchical arrangement. The European Commission and the European Council are the main EU bodies responsible for democracy promotion. The European Commission's Directorate-General for External Relations administers democratization activities while the European Council carries out democratization activities within the Common Foreign and Security Policy framework. The two organizations thus define the EU's democratization guidelines but have no direct control over member states' activities. This means the EU and member-state institutions do not act within a unitary framework. These institutions include political foundations and development agencies including the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the Swedish International Developmental Cooperation Agency, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, and the German Agency for Development Cooperation.<sup>23</sup>

Although the EU's efforts cover a greater variety of interests, the interests of member states-guided by the European Commission and European Council-dominate the agenda, not those of target states. The Lisbon Treaty strengthened the safeguards of the EU's understanding of democracy by creating firmer interlinkages between institutions. Indeed, despite the various institutional differences between the US and the EU, they have in common a monolithic Western understanding of democracy.

#### 4.2. Comparing the Tools

The tools used to promote this monolithic understanding of democracy vary. In the US, these fall into two major categories: diplomacy and foreign aid. Diplomatic measures are undertaken by the President, the Secretary of State and aid agencies like USAID and the Millennium Challenge Corporation, who operate via political dialogue, negotiations and unilateral declarations.<sup>24</sup> Foreign aid, which has been more actively used since the 1980s, is more about

22 National Endowment for Democracy, Resource Summary, p. 794, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/181143.pdf> (accessed 14 February 2013).

23 Jos van Wersch Jeroen de Zeeuw, "Mapping European Democracy Assistance," *Working Paper 36*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', The Hague 2005, p. 2.

24 Vera Van Hullen-Andreas Stahn. "Why semi-authoritarians [sic] regimes may be more troublesome than autocracies: US and EU strategies of democracy promotion in the Mediterranean and the Newly Independent States." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, August 30, 2007): 11 [http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p210518\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p210518_index.html) (accessed 23 March 2014).

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direct funding to both governmental and non-governmental actors to foster democratic transitions.<sup>25</sup>

The EU's main tool of democracy promotion is NGOs, which it utilizes in political processes including electoral monitoring and institution strengthening in target countries, particularly in the judiciary and law enforcement. These NGOs also focus on basic human rights issues.

A major aim of these tools, as Morlino and Magen<sup>26</sup> claim, is conditionality. Conditionality is about rule adaptation, i.e. pushing domestic elites towards internal reform. This carrot-and-stick approach of instrumental rationality and bargaining is taken by both the EU and US to reinforce Western liberal standards among target countries,<sup>27</sup> but is employed differently by each. The EU focuses on regulatory systems and employs conditionality as a tool of enlargement, motivating target elites and institutions to fulfil the Copenhagen Criteria of June 1993.<sup>28</sup> The first wave of Eastern enlargement (Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) was a successful case of conditionality. The US, on the other hand, uses conditionality in the form of economic sanctions and foreign aid via the World Bank and IMF.<sup>29</sup> This form of conditionality forces target countries to align their political, social and economic structures with those of their Western counterparts.

### 4.3. Comparing Strategies

Democracy promotion strategies are classified as top-down and bottom-up. The first category concentrates on elections, political parties and civil society groups, viewing democratization as a process of democrats winning over non-democrats. This formulation involves a relatively narrow conception of the democratization process, one that relies on some vague notions.<sup>30</sup> The

25 Carothers, "Aiding Democracy Abroad", op. cit., p. 59.

26 Amichai Magen-Leonardo Morlino, "Preface," in A. Magen and M. Leonardo (eds.), *International Actors, Democratization and the Rule of Law. Anchoring Democracy?* Routledge, London 2009, pp. xiii-xvi.

27 See: Timm Beichelt, "The Research Field of Democracy Promotion," *Living Reviews in Democracy* 3, 2012, <http://democracy.livingreviews.org/index.php/lrd/article/view/27/40> (accessed 29 April 2014).

28 Sonia Lucarelli, "Peace and Democracy: the Rediscovered Link. The EU, NATO and the European System of Liberal-Democratic Security Communities," Research project funded by the NATO Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Individual Research Fellowships - 2000-2002 Programme, <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/00-02/Lucarelli%27s.pdf> (accessed 13 February 2014).

29 Antoaneta Dimitrova-Geoffrey Pridham, "International actors and democracy promotion in Central and Eastern Europe: the Integration Model and Its Limits." *Democratisation* vol: 11, no: 5, 2004, pp. 91-112.

30 Albrecht Schnabel, "A Rough Journey: Nascent Democratization in the Middle East," in A. Saikal and Albrecht Schnabel (eds.) *Democratization in the Middle East: Experiences, Struggles, Challenges*, United Nation University Press, Tokyo and New York 2003, pp. 1-25.

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second category is broader, covering issues of equality and justice. Here democratization is envisioned as a slow struggle towards a high-functioning state and comprehensive societal improvement.<sup>31</sup> It emphasizes local decision-making, community participation and grassroots mobilization, while the first category mainly relies on interaction and bargaining with local decision makers.<sup>32</sup>

The EU utilizes bottom-up strategies via political dialogue and joint initiatives with local actors.<sup>33</sup> The US has shifted its approach since the end of the Cold War, while in the 1980s it had favoured a top-down strategy of 'controlled transition'.<sup>34</sup> The bottom-up approach is compatible with the monolithic conceptualization of democracy held by both the EU and US; the more Westernized local agencies become, the better.

#### 4.4. Comparing Priorities and Expectations

The US and the EU notably differ in their policy priorities and expectations of democracy promotion, which becomes an issue in the field when two or more actors target the same country. Here, differences emerge not only between the democracy promoters but also between the promoters and the target state or region. A good example of this can be observed in the Western Balkans. The following case study examines reasons for the unsatisfactory outcomes of EU and US democracy-promotion efforts in these countries.

### 5. An Overview of Democratic Development in the Western Balkans

A 2016 Freedom House report<sup>35</sup> indicated that, 25 years after the initiation of major conflicts, the Western Balkans still suffers from non-democratization. The report cites a lack of domestic political will as the reason democratic reforms have stalled. Accordingly, the states in this region continue to suffer from issues including a lack of free media, weak democratic governance, and lack of an independent judiciary. Between 2003 and 2016 all countries in the region demonstrated little progress towards democratization or even, as in the case of Kosovo, severe deterioration.

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- 31 Thomas Carothers, "Democracy Assistance: Political vs. Developmental?", *Journal of Democracy* vol: 20, no: 1, 2009, pp. 5-19.
- 32 Matthias Finger, "NGOs and Transformation: Beyond social movement theory," T. Princen and M. Finger (eds.), *Environmental NGOs in world politics: Linking the local and the global*, Routledge, London 1994, pp. 48-66.
- 33 Van Hullen-Stahn, op. cit., p. 8.
- 34 Richard Youngs, "Democracy Promotion: The Case of European Union Strategy," Centre for European Policy Studies, Working Document 167, 2001, p. 48.
- 35 Nations in Transit 2016: Europe and Eurasia Brace for Impact, Freedom House Report, [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH\\_NIT2016\\_Final\\_FWeb.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_NIT2016_Final_FWeb.pdf) accessed 27 September 2016.

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**Table 1.** 2003–2016 comparison of Western Balkan democratization (The ratings are on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest).<sup>36</sup>

	Freedom House Democracy Score-2003	Freedom House Democracy Score-2016
ALBANIA	4.17	4.14
BOSNIA	4.54	4.5
CROATIA	3.79	3.68
KOSOVO	3.88 (Part of FRY)	5.07
MONTENEGRO	3.88 (Part of FRY)	3.93
MACEDONIA	4.29	4.29
SERBIA	3.88 (Part of FRY)	3.75

There are several reasons for this inertia. One is the Cold-War legacy of corruption among the governing elites and in the state apparatus, aggravated by a ruined economy and high crime rates.<sup>37</sup> Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo also suffer from the absence of a consolidated state mechanism.<sup>38</sup> Another, even more serious, reason is continuing ethnic conflict around the region.<sup>39</sup> At the time of independence in the early 1990s, the former Yugoslav republics were more economically developed and had greater civil liberties protections than elsewhere in the post-communist and post-socialist world, but civil wars fuelled by ethnic conflict reversed this.<sup>40</sup>

As a result, the Western Balkan countries were unable to effectively satisfy demands for reform from the international community, or to cultivate a liberal democratic culture within which to establish state structures under the rule of law. This has also hindered civil society activities. In general terms, the example of the Western Balkans reveals that the capacity of democracy promoters to affect change depends on the socio-political structures within

- 36 Nations in Transit 2016: Europe and Eurasia Brace for Impact, Freedom House Report, [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH\\_NIT2016\\_Final\\_FWeb.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_NIT2016_Final_FWeb.pdf) accessed 27 September 2016.
- 37 Franziska Blomberg, "The 'Do-No-Harm' Debate in External Democracy Promotion," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* vol: 11, no:3, 2012, pp. 8-39.
- 38 Fragile State Index 2014, The Fund for Peace, Washington, DC: The Fund for Peace Publication, 2014, p. 35.
- 39 Johannes-Mikael Mäki, "EU Enlargement Politics: Explaining the Development of Political Conditionality of 'Full Cooperation with the ICTY' towards Western Balkans," *Politikamissao* vol: 45, no: 5, 2008, pp. 47-80.
- 40 Arolda Elbasani, "Europeanization Travels to the Western Balkans: EU Enlargement, Domestic Obstacles and Institutional Change," in A. Elbasani (ed.), *European Integration and Transformation in the Western Balkans: Europeanization or Business as Usual?*, Routledge, London 2012, pp. 3-23.

the target states. The next set of problems arises due to a combination of promoters' inconsistent expectations, target countries' own lack of capacity, and discordant tools and strategies of implementation.

### 5.1. EU Democracy Promotion and the Western Balkans

The EU's democracy promotion strategies are listed in its Common Foreign and Security Policy,<sup>41</sup> and the Western Balkans has tested them in legal and institutional spheres.<sup>42</sup> The civil war in Yugoslavia was the utmost test, and demonstrated that the EU's institutional capacity was insufficient for a conflict of this magnitude. Its capacity was also restricted by various member states' divergent interests.<sup>43</sup>

These restrictions did not demotivate the EU. The Dayton Agreement (1995) established a more coherent and effective policy of political stabilization and economic recovery towards the Western Balkans. This resulted in a shift from reconstruction towards democracy building.<sup>44</sup> The European Commission also introduced its Regional Approach to the Countries of South Eastern Europe in 1997 to implement pre-accession processes initially developed for Central and Eastern European (CEE). A next step was the 1999 Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. The goal was EU accession for the countries of the Western Balkans upon meeting the Copenhagen criteria. Following the Kosovo campaign and the subsequent US withdrawal from the region after 9/11, the EU expanded its democracy-promotion efforts.

These efforts were also directed at increasing support for accession of the Western Balkan countries among existing member states.<sup>45</sup> To become a member of the EU, not only must a candidate state fulfil the Copenhagen criteria, it must also receive the unanimous support of member states; this incentivizes candidate states to accept democracy-promotion efforts.<sup>46</sup> The

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- 41 N. Klein- W. Wessels, "CFSP Progress or Decline after Lisbon?" *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol: 4, no: 1, 2013, pp. 449-469.
- 42 Dimitar Bechev and Andreev Svetlozar, "Top-Down vs. Bottom-Up Aspects of the EU Institution-Building Strategies in the Western Balkans," Occasional Paper No. 3/05, South East European Studies Programme, European Studies Centre, University of Oxford, 2005, p. 4, [http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/esc/esc-lectures/bechev\\_andreev.pdf](http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/esc/esc-lectures/bechev_andreev.pdf) (accessed 10 February 2015).
- 43 Sonia Lucarelli, "Europe and the Breakup of Yugoslavia: A Political Failure in Search of a Scholarly Explanation," *Kluwer Law International*, The Hague 2000, p. 2.
- 44 Richard Youngs, "Trends in Democracy Assistance: What has Europe Been Doing?" *Journal of Democracy* vol: 19, no: 2, 2008, pp. 160-169.
- 45 Jacques Rupnik, 2011. "The Balkans as a European Question" in J. Rupnik (ed.) *The Western Balkans and the EU: The Hour of Europe*, Paris, European Union Institute for Security Studies, Chaillot Papers, 2011, pp. 17-31.
- 46 Antoinette Primatarova, "Where Do We Go From Here? Wrapping Up the Discussion," in D. Stone and D. Syrri (eds.) *Integrating the Western Balkans into Europe, The aftermath of the Greek Presidency*, Center for Liberal Strategies, pp. 125-132, <http://www.cls-sofia.org/en/media/-299.html> (Accessed 1 June 2014).

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EU used this process as a multi-dimensional and multi-purpose instrument promoting reconciliation, reconstruction, and reform in the Western Balkans through conditionality.<sup>47</sup> The Royaumont Process, the South-East European Cooperation Agreement, the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative and the Stability Pact for South-East Europe strengthened this conditionality. In practice the signing of the Stabilization and Association agreements between the EU and respective Western Balkan countries put democratization processes largely under the auspices of EU enlargement policies.

Conditionality has been actively used throughout the 2000s. The 2003 EU Thessaloniki Summit declaration saluted the Western Balkans, stating, 'the future of the Balkans is within the European Union.' This sent a clear message advising these states to adapt the same European standards as the CEE countries, which again highlights the issue of the EU's monolithic understanding of democracy and how its democracy promotion efforts aim to transform target countries' values and institutions in its own image.

To that end, the EU channelled various structural aid and assistance programs into the region. Until 2000, Albania, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina benefited from EU funds for Central and Eastern Europe through PHARE (Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies).<sup>48</sup> In 2001 the EU created the Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development, and Stability (CARDS) program particularly for the Western Balkans. It functioned as the main financial instrument of the Stability and Association Process (SAP), which prioritized democratic stabilization, strengthening of civil society and the media, protection of minority rights, and promotion of good governance.

Since the democracy outlook of the Western Balkans is not very stable, the EU has had to recalibrate these programs. By 2007 CARDS and PHARE had been replaced by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), which offers financial aid and technical assistance to candidate and non-candidate countries around the region. IPA aimed to increase the efficiency and coherence of aid to the Western Balkans, and to prepare these countries for membership.<sup>49</sup> The European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) also functioned until 2008 to provide assistance in Serbia, Kosovo and Macedonia in their democratic reforms.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, the OBNOVA program (reconstruction aid based

47 Liu Zuokui, "EU's conditionality and the Western Balkans' Accession Roads," *European Perspectives - Journal on European Perspectives of the Western Balkans*, vol: 2, no: 1, 2010, pp. 79-98.

48 Blomberg, op. cit., pp. 8-39

49 Alexander Sirakov-Pavlin Delchev, "Funding for the Western Balkans 2010-2012: A short survey on EU funding programs and instruments in the countries of the Western Balkans," SERDON, March 2011 Sofia, p. 3, <http://bcserdon.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/eu-funding-for-the-western-balkans-2010-2012.pdf> accessed 1 April 2013. (Accessed 23 December 2014).

50 Richard Zink, Delivering on Promises to the Western Balkans: The European Agency for Reconstruction, European Union, p. 1, <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/ear/publicati>

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on the existing Fund for the Reconstruction of Former Yugoslavia) funded projects dealing with reconstruction and rehabilitation between conflicting parties and preventing the resurgence of ethnic hostilities. Last but not the least the Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) aimed at promoting political reforms in the region.<sup>51</sup>

None of these policy formulations/re-formulations boosted democratization in the Western Balkans. None were *haute couture* for the region since they were derived from the EU's ideals. Moreover, the question of how much synchronization was cultivated remains.

## 5.2. US Democracy Promotion and the Western Balkans

The US strategy in the Western Balkans is comprehensively outlined in the 1996 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace report entitled 'The Unfinished Peace', which describes the major obstacles in the region as the 'legacies of war, of communism, and of history'. The report claims that supporting civil society and human rights activists could be a cure. Accordingly the it took an NGO-oriented approach focused on societal transformation-as opposed to the European model of state transformation-viewing NGOs as pioneers of democratic values in the name of civil society development.<sup>52</sup> With NGOs integrated into its official efforts, the US government not only reduced its burden, it also shared responsibility for potential failures. This burden-sharing also related to the decreasing priority of the Western Balkans for the US since 2004 due to the incredible costs of the Iraq and Afghanistan operations combined with a financial crisis. As the US reduced its foreign commitments, it turned them over to the EU.<sup>53</sup>

Yet the US did not completely abandon the region. The USAID Office of Transition Initiative (OTI) has continued to provide flexible, short-term assistance. The OTI has launched various programs, such as the Conflict Building Initiative in Macedonia, to support community-based interaction among ethnic Albanians and Macedonians; to promote citizen participation in community decision-making; and to foster transparency, responsiveness and accountability between citizens and local governments. The International Republican Institute is another US-based non-profit organization that deals with democratization and effective governance in the region. Community Revital-

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ons/main/documents/AgencyarticleREPRINT9July07.pdf (accessed 13 February 2013).

- 51 Börzel-Risse, "One Size Fits All!", op. cit., p. 10.
- 52 Denisa Kostovicova-V. Bojicic-Dzelilovic, "Introduction: Civil Society and Multiple Transitions - Meanings, Actors and Effects," Vesna Bojicic-Dzelilovic, J. Ker-Lindsay and D. Kostovicova (eds.), Civil Society and Transitions in the Western Balkans, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2013, pp. 1-25.
- 53 Daniel Serwer, "US Policy on the Western Balkans," in V. Dzihic and D. Hamilton (eds.), Unfinished Business, The Western Balkans and the International Community, Center for Transatlantic Relations, The Johns Hopkins University, Washington DC 2012, pp. 221-231.

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ization through Democratic Action (CRDA) in Serbia was another USAID initiative; between 2001 and 2007, CRDA used community development activities to build trust between different ethnic groups, demonstrate the value of citizen participation, support grassroots democratic action and bring immediate improvements to participants' lives.<sup>54</sup>

The US blends its democratization efforts with an integration process. NED and NDI aim to help the Western Balkans meet the democratic requirements of Euro-Atlantic integration. The NDI in particular conducts projects in Albania, Serbia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro to support such integration.<sup>55</sup> The US also works with private firms and various international and inter-governmental bodies. Management Systems International, for example, is active in Serbia with the USAID-funded Serbia Judicial Reform and Government Accountability Project, promoting judicial independence and the administration of justice.<sup>56</sup> The Organization of American States, OSCE, the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme also partner with Washington.<sup>57</sup>

These activities are part of a policy of conditionality pursued by the US in the region. A good example is Serbia's submission of war criminals to the International Criminal Tribunal. The US provided aid to Serbia on the condition of its cooperation with the War Crimes Tribunal. This conditionality successfully catalysed the arrest and transfer of Milosevic to the tribunal in 2001.<sup>58</sup> Today, conditionality is still used to encourage Serbia to negotiate with Kosovo and cooperate with Bosnia.

US democratization efforts have become more indirect, especially since 2004, operating via private firms and NGOs. However, these local elements' limited capacity has limited its efforts. Here the efforts of promoters and locals have not been successfully synchronized.

### 5.3. The Pressure of Inconsistent Priorities/Expectations on Democracy Promotion

Although different democracy promoters have a common vision and understanding of democracy, and have developed a systematic partnership, there

54 Theodore J. Piccone, "International Mechanisms for Protecting Democracy," in M. H. Halperin and M. Galic (eds.) *Protecting Democracy: International Responses*, Council on Foreign Relations Book, 2005, pp. 101-126.

55 National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Central and Eastern Europe, <http://www.ned.org/where-we-work/central-and-eastern-europe>, (Accessed 27 January 2015).

56 Management Systems International, Strengthening Government Accountability in Serbia, available at: <http://www.msiworldwide.com/project/building-up-anti-corruption-agencies-in-serbia/> (accessed 26 January 2015).

57 Piccone, op. cit., p. 107.

58 Steven Woehrel, Serbia: Current Issues and U.S. Policy, Congressional Research Service, 2008:1. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS22601.pdf> (accessed 27 January 2015).

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are usually discrepancies in their expectations, policy priorities and goals. This is the case between the US and EU. The top priority for the US is security, which it pursues via a strong peacekeeping force, followed by reform of the state apparatus to maintain ultimate control over the security machinery. Thereafter it primarily pursues low-level democracy-promotion activities focused on civil society development and subcontracted by USAID to NGOs. The EU, on the other hand, prioritizes liberalization; promoting human rights and democracy in conflict zones before security stabilization.<sup>59</sup> These differences also relate to differing capacities; the EU does not have enough hard power to establish a secure environment, as was seen during the civil war in Yugoslavia. Such differences in priority and capability hamper collaborative and complementary efforts between the EU and the US.

The other issue is about expectations in the field. Despite the generous funds funnelled into the region, the achievements have not met the expectations of the promoters. The funds had boosted the number of NGOs in the region, but many of these have been ineffective. Some have been nicknamed 'briefcase NGOs' for doing nothing but apply for foreign funds, engendering distrust of the very concept of civil society on the part of both donors and local populations.<sup>60</sup> The finger pointing and tough tone of Western civil society has also discouraged reforms. This has made international donors-the most important income source for local civil society-to become hesitant in their support of local civil society. The recent financial crisis also further curtailed US donor contributions.

This expectation gap is exacerbated by the complexity of democratic transition. Civil societies are expected not only to promote human rights and democratization, but also to perform the ambiguous role of state building and post-conflict reconstruction, for which they are usually not qualified.<sup>61</sup> This shortfall widens the gap. For example, declining US interest in the Western Balkans was not replaced by the EU at a level sufficient to push local civil society towards fundamental change. The years-long activities of some NGOs ceased due to the EU's mentality of funding, which supports long-term, strategically important projects focused on governance. The EU supports only beneficiary organizations and seeks sustainable budgets. It offers almost no funding for small organizations with low financial sustainability. As a consequence of this incongruence in strategy and implementation, the Western Balkan states have

59 Felix Berenskoetter, "Mapping the mind gap: a comparison of US and European security strategies," *Security Dialogue*, 36(1), 2005, pp. 71-92.

60 Kim D. Reimann, "Up to No Good? Recent Critics and Critiques of NGOs," O. Richmond and H. Carey (eds.) *Subcontracting Peace. The Challenges of NGO Peacebuilding*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2005, pp. 37-53.

61 Kostovicova-Bojicic-Dzelilovic, Introduction: Civil Society and Multiple, p. 56.

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shown strong resistance to the EU's transformative push, raising doubts about its efficacy.<sup>62</sup>

#### **5.4. Even More Shortcomings of Democracy Promotion in the Western Balkans**

In addition to the issues examined above, another set of shortcomings of EU and US democracy-promotion efforts relates to their current and future achievements. Current achievements are unsatisfactory, which fuels scepticism about the future. This can be seen clearly in the former Yugoslav republics where, despite multiple rounds of democratically held elections, scepticism about the establishment of functioning liberal democratic institutions lingers.<sup>63</sup>

The promoters' monolithic understanding of democracy has curbed the development of methods adapted to the region's particularities. Throughout their histories of democracy promotion neither the US nor the EU have really tried to adjust their strategies to the historical, cultural, political and economic realities of particular states or regions. In the case of the Western Balkans, the West has been slow to realize that it did not clearly identify problems; in turn, its remedies have been similarly ineffective. The CEE countries had adapted to the EU integration process quickly, which gave the EU confidence in its approach to the Western Balkans. But democracy promotion in the CEE had been primarily a process of restructuring formal institutions, and the EU was slow to accept that this approach would be unsuitable for the Western Balkans. Not only did ethnic conflicts keep the region divided and insecure, the ruling elites also proved to have a low respect for democracy. By the mid-2000s it became clear that the EU's project of democracy implementation had faltered.<sup>64</sup>

For example, in Bosnia a complex institutional structure developed after the Dayton Agreements created an administrative crisis. This crisis, together with unresolved ethnic conflicts, were obstacles to the establishment of democratic institutions and fuelled scepticism about the future of such efforts.<sup>65</sup> Even the substantial international commitment of many NGOs and some 27,000 peacekeepers was unable to achieve normalization over years of slow and feeble efforts, and the process reached a dead-end in 2010. Ethnic

62 Tina Freyburg-Solveig Richter, "National identity matters: the limited impact of EU political conditionality in the Western Balkans," *Journal of European Public Policy* vol: 17, no: 2, 2010, pp. 263-281.

63 Susan Woodward, "Is Democracy Possible in the Balkans? On Preconditions and Conditions in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Serbia" The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research. TITLE VIII PROGRAM (2007).

64 Rosa Balfour-Corina Stratulat, 2011. "The Democratic Transformation of the Balkans," EPC ISSUE PAPER NO.66.(2011): 6.

65 Sofia Sebastian, "Leaving Dayton Behind: Constitutional Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina," Pride Working Paper, November 2007, p. 1.

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nationalism skyrocketed and separatist discourses began filling public squares, signalling a return to the pre-war political atmosphere<sup>66</sup> and preventing democracy from taking root.<sup>67</sup>

Bosnia is also a clear example of the influence of local socio-political culture on democracy promotion. In Bosnia democracy is traditionally viewed not as the freedom and equality of individuals but as freedom of the collective. Therefore, the implementation of a pure American or European model of democracy would not have achieved the expected results. The case of Bosnia is largely applicable to the rest of the Western Balkans. As Džihic<sup>68</sup> argues, this instance of Western democracy promotion in the region is not the first of its kind, and each time the ideal of democracy collides with reality.

This reality reveals that the efficacy of external democracy promotion depends on breaking down barriers between domestic and international structures, and on building locale-specific empirical knowledge for each case. Accordingly, democracy promotion in the Western Balkans met with limited success due to the promoters' poor understanding of the complexity and bitterness of the transition processes, especially relative to those of the CEE countries. Indeed, the success of EU policies in Eastern Europe blinded it to the multiple zones of transition in the Western Balkans, which included not only states transitioning out of communism but also those in the grip of post-conflict challenges. These ongoing processes would have required a more substantial investment from external actors in areas such as judicial reform and education in order to be successful.<sup>69</sup>

That peace and democracy efforts would have mutually reinforcing effects in the post-civil war environment of the Western Balkans also proved wrong.<sup>70</sup> In post-conflict territories, state building needs to be the first priority; pursuing state building and democratization in parallel can very quickly sabotage democracy-promotion efforts.<sup>71</sup> EU enlargement policies in the Western

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- 66 Murat Önsöy, "Coping with Bosnia-Herzegovina's Critical Problems: Reconsidering the International Community's Role," *Review of International Law and Politics* vol: 7, no: 25, 2011, pp. 121-150.
- 67 Michael Mandelbaum, "Democracy without America," *Foreign Affairs*, September 1, 2007, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/62833/michael-mandelbaum/democracy-without-america> (accessed 3 September 2013).
- 68 Vedran Džihic, 2012, "Dilemmas of Young Democracies in the Western Balkans 20 years after Yugoslav Dissolution," Vedran Džihic and Daniel Hamilton (eds.) *Unfinished Business, The Western Balkans and the International Community*, Center for Transatlantic Relations, The Johns Hopkins University, 2012, pp. 11-17.
- 69 Rosa Balfour-Corina Stratulat, "The Democratic Transformation of the Balkans," EPC Issue Paper No. 66 (2011), p. 1.
- 70 Jai Kwan Jung, "Power-sharing and Democracy Promotion in Post-civil War Peace-building," *Democratization* vol: 19, no: 3, 2012, pp. 486-506.
- 71 Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* vol: 13, no: 1, 2002, pp. 5-21.

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Balkans focused on state- and democracy-building processes simultaneously, which had the effect of allowing local ruling elites to manipulate democratic institutions by promoting belligerent pressure-group lobbies or an upwelling of militancy, resulting in persistent nationalist rhetoric<sup>72</sup> and sabotaging democratization processes.

These shortcomings also underline that there is very little consensus or genuine enthusiasm within the region that carrying out democratic reforms would result in a healthy integration of the region into the international community. This also curbs the transformative power of external actors.<sup>73</sup> Even if the various Western Balkan countries had been enthusiastic about reform, they did not have sufficient governance capacity to carry out the reforms demanded within the framework of conditionality. Their state mechanisms proved ineffective in coping with new problems that arose, and the international community also proved incapable of supporting the process of constructing these institutions in a timely manner.<sup>74</sup>

The absence of a high-functioning state apparatus alongside other socio-political and economic requirements obstructs the task of democratic consolidation. As Robert Dahl states,<sup>75</sup> 'We cannot solve the problems of the proper scope and domain of democratic units from within democratic theory. Like the majority principle, democratic process presupposes a unit. The criteria of the democratic process presuppose the rightfulness of the unit itself. If the unit is not (considered) proper or rightful-if its scope or domain is not justifiable-then it cannot be made rightful simply by democratic procedures.' While a vibrant civil society is necessary to support the development, deepening and consolidation of democracy, neither civil society nor democratic institutions can flourish in the absence of the rule of law. In order for democracy to fully take root, a healthy economy, a healthy institutional environment, and a functioning state are core requirements. As Woodward argues, 'the statehood question had to be solved first, before anything else could be decided and acted upon'.<sup>76</sup>

The EU is skilled at directing target countries onto a reform track and then encouraging them to internalize democratic procedures and institutions in return for EU membership. However, the absence of the core requirements highlighted above-especially in Bosnia and to some extent in Kosovo-has made it very difficult for these countries to succeed. True progress can only

72 Edward Mansfield-Jack Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," *International Security* 20(1), 1995, pp. 5-38.

73 Tania A. Börzel, "When Europeanization Hits Limited Statehood: The Western Balkans as a Test Case for the Transformative Power of Europe," KFG Working Paper Series, no. 30 September 2011, p. 3.

74 Bechev-Svetlozar, op. cit., p. 6.

75 Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Crisis*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1989.

76 Woodward, op. cit., p. 16.

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be achieved when all components of the governance system are functioning properly.<sup>77</sup> Contrary to the democratization literature, which sees a viable state as a precondition for the promotion of democracy,<sup>78</sup> state building and democratization in the Western Balkans need to coexist,<sup>79</sup> but in sequence, with the establishment of a high-functioning state apparatus first and foremost. The Western Balkans still fails to meet this criterion.

Another shortcoming is the problem of forming a stable supra-national entity-a *sine qua non* for effective democracy promotion. Such a political apparatus should have the unanimous approval of all parties in the region.<sup>80</sup> Yet the post-conflict elected rulers of Bosnia and Kosovo do not support such a supra-national unit. Rather, national unity and territorial sovereignty have been destroyed in the region by exclusionary policies based on ethnicity, and national collective logic, clientelism and corruption-blocked individual liberties, effectively obstructing democratization over the last decade.<sup>81</sup> Destabilizing factors such as the presence of ethnic minorities, the persistence of illiberal political forces and ultra-nationalism have aggravated this failure.<sup>82</sup>

A supra-national entity could also provide a firmer foundation for efficient intermingling among regional actors. Regional cooperation can be used to ensure political stability, security and economic prosperity, as well as democratization. Since the majority of problems in the region that have inhibited a democratic transition have a clear cross-border dimension-e.g. the return of refugees and internally displaced persons-such an entity could be critical for ethnic reconciliation, which is an indicator of democratic maturity.<sup>83</sup> Limited inter-governmental cooperation in the fight against corruption and organized crime undermines the democratic rule of law and democratic stability in the region. Further efforts from the US and the EU to establish such an entity could strengthen intra-regional cooperation, which is vital in tackling these issues.

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- 77 Michael McFaul, Amichai Magen-Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, "Evaluating International Influences on Democratic Transitions: Concept Paper," (working paper, Program on Evaluating International Influences on Democratic Development, Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University, 2009), p. 12.
- 78 Juan J. Linz-Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1996, p. 17.
- 79 Dahl, op. cit., p. 35.
- 80 Dankwart A. Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model," *Comparative Politics* vol: 2, no: 3, 1970, pp. 337-363.
- 81 Vedran Dzihic-Angela Wieser, "Incentives for Democratisation? Effects of EU Conditionality on Democracy in Bosnia & Hercegovina," *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol: 63, no: 10, 2011, pp. 1803-1825.
- 82 Geoffrey Pridham, 2008, "Securing Fragile Democracies in the Balkans: The European Dimension," *Romanian Journal of European Affairs* vol: 8, no: 2, 2008, pp. 56-70.
- 83 Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans: A Policy Priority for the European Union, European Commission, [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/nf5703249enc\\_web\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/nf5703249enc_web_en.pdf) (accessed 12 July 2014).

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## 6. Conclusion

This study has examined democracy promotion from a negative point of view by trying to highlight problems for both promoter and target. The main argument is that the democracy promotion process is not as naïve and constructive as it seems, and carries the risk that promoters will fail to account for particularities in the character or circumstances of the targets. Examining US and EU democracy promotion efforts in the Western Balkans highlights these problems clearly and also hints at areas of possible improvement.

Based on this example, the problems faced by promoters can be divided into three types. Firstly, promoters' understanding of democracy tends to be monolithic and not very adaptable to the realities/traditions/political culture of the targets. Although the common understanding of democracy seems like an advantage, it has the effect of blinding promoters to difference and ultimately hampering their success. The second type of problem complicates the situation further. Because of inconsistencies in policy priorities, expectations, capabilities, tools and strategies it is very difficult for promoters to collaborate and complement each other. The third category of problems emerges from incongruity between promoters' expectations and what happens on the ground; in other words, how well their efforts and expectations are received, digested and institutionalized by the target states' domestic elements.

Target states also face three types of problems. Firstly, the example of the Western Balkans shows that not only might outcomes be unsatisfactory, there is also a great deal of scepticism about the efficacy of ongoing efforts. Secondly, this scepticism deepens as promoters, due to their monolithic understandings, fail to identify real problems. Thirdly, the situation is often aggravated by the lack of a high-functioning state apparatus in target states, together with a lack of a supra-national structure, factors that synergistically boost democratization via cooperation among target states.

This study claims that, in democracy promotion, the perspectives of promoters and targets should be considered symmetrically and simultaneously. The more synchronization can be achieved between promoters' expectations and targets' realities, the more efficient and fruitful the results will be.

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