



WORK PACKAGE 2

# ***Security and Democracy in the Caucasus***

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The idea that democracy and security are fundamentally interlinked has, in the post-Cold War period, inspired an upsurge in both US and European democracy promotion (Carothers, 1999). Democracy promotion was predicated on the central notion that elected, accountable government underpinned by the rule of law enhances security, both within and between states. Furthermore, the EU's idea was that its security needs can only be attained by the externalisation of its norms and rules beyond its borders (Kirchner and Sperling 2007, p. 13); as a result, from the 1990s the EU 'developed into an agent of international democracy promotion in its neighbourhood' (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2011, p. 885). Translated into policy, this idea produced notable successes, most evident in the new EU member states of Central and Eastern Europe. However, the existence of unstable states on Europe's periphery, in an environment of weak governance and regional conflicts, has presented a number of security challenges to the EU and its member states.

Both academic and policy writing has revealed the complexities and tensions that call for caution in making a causal connection between security and democracy. This is particularly the case in the Caucasus. The collapse of the Soviet Union opened up multiple fissures, both intra- and inter-state, and set in motion political, economic and social processes that generated instability and insecurity (Cheterian, 2008; Coppieters, 1996; Zürcher, 2007). Expectations of a 'transition' to prosperous, independent and stable democracies have been disappointed and underlying drivers of insecurity – poverty, inequality, corruption, nationalism – remain present. The armed conflicts that erupted following the fall of the USSR – involving Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh – continue to pose unresolved and continuing threats to regional stability. The polities in the South Caucasus have remained at best 'hybrid' regimes (Levitsky & Way, 2002), combining formal elements of democratic governance with deeper-seated informal and/or illiberal practices common to authoritarianism (Freedom House, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). The insurgency in the North Caucasus in the first post-Soviet decade has been 'pacified', initially through the use of military methods by Moscow and more recently by co-opting local leaders, but ethnonationalist unrest and Islamist militancy remain (Hughes, 2007; Sanders, Tucker, & Hamburg, 2004). Russia's increasingly assertive regional policy has been seen as a potential counterweight to democratisation trends in the neighbourhood countries, including in the South Caucasus (Tolstrup 2009).

How do we understand the security problems of the Caucasus region and their root causes? Why has democratisation in the states and separatist entities in that region proved so difficult to achieve, despite the efforts of the EU to engage with local actors? What is the nature of the causal link between democracy and security, and how do external actors go about formulating policy? On the basis of an investigation into the existing literature on security and democracy, this working paper aims to provide a conceptual framework for understanding intra-state and regional inter-state security challenges in the Caucasus. A key focus will be to conceptualise the link between security and the domestic political practices of decision-makers in the Caucasus states/separatist territories.

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## Conceptual framework: security

### *The evolution of security governance in Europe*

Against the background of the Cold War in Europe, the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 formulated the framework for 'comprehensive security', comprising three complementary dimensions (or 'baskets') - political-military, economic-environmental and human - which were viewed as being of equal importance (Kovács, 1995; OSCE Secretariat, 2009; Pentikäinen, 1997). As a concept emanating from an intergovernmental organisation, 'comprehensive security' was defined in a very much top-down manner, by states for states, as a set of fundamental principles to mitigate the conflictual tendencies of the Cold War period. It presupposed the interaction between established nation-states which had recognisable forms of more or less stable governance, and which enjoyed the external protection of and conformed to the internal discipline imposed by strong military alliances, namely NATO and the Warsaw Pact. 'Comprehensive security' did little to offer broader or deeper conceptualisations that provided for the incorporation of regional or intra-state security dynamics, particularly in countries or regions where states were newly-established and prone to instability, however.

At the same time, in the post-World War Two period, the forerunner institutions of the European Union were partly founded on an intergovernmentalist logic, assimilating an ever-more comprehensive list of issue-areas in an effort to reinforce security through interdependence and integration (Dinan, 1999; Schlotter, 2005). The Council of Europe complemented these mechanisms through its emphasis on human rights and democracy. Evolving European governance was thus informed by elements of a broader, liberal approach to security.

Introducing security as practice in the European policy realm proved problematic, however. The EU (or, as it still was at the time, the European Community) had to establish a legitimate claim to security 'actorhood' in a world where the Westphalian state was still seen as maintaining a monopoly of legitimate force. NATO remained the predominant actor, dependent on US material power, in terms of the provision of political-military security, and the evolution of what is now called the EU Common Security and Defence Policy has been uneven. Could a supra-national entity with a complex legal and institutional personality, struggling to establish decision-making autonomy from its member states and its competences divided through subsidiarity and pillarisation, be considered a coherent security and foreign policy actor? At the same time, the EU was emerging as a security actor as the 'post-Westphalian' European state was being transformed, where the pooling of sovereignty to attain regional collective goods became ever more important (Kirchner and Sperling 2007, p. 21). Allen and Smith (1990, p. 20) argued that 'Western Europe [was] neither a fully-fledged state-like actor nor a purely dependent phenomenon in the contemporary international arena'; it was a 'presence... a feature or a quality of arenas, of issue-areas or of networks of activity, and it operate[d] to influence the actions and expectations of participants'.

The question being asked was whether a strategic culture where civilian institutional strengths predominate would diminish the EU's putative status as a 'security actor'. Indeed, the denial of full EU agency may find its origins in the narrow approaches to security employed by much of the policy literature: most of the authors problematising

Europe's status as an actor assume a narrow understanding of the concept, when – as we shall see – developments in academic thinking and policy practice have both 'deepened' and 'broadened' it to include an increasing number of non-military issue-areas (Zwolski, 2009, pp. 89-92). Rather than being seen in strictly military terms, security has expanded to encompass a variety of issues, particularly since the end of the Cold War. Much of it is rooted in the very beginnings of the European project as a way of transcending the enmities of the past through integration. Viewed from that perspective, the EU's status as a security actor becomes more plausible, its independent agency based on conceptualisations of security moving beyond the purely military-political issue-area and proving an adequate 'fit' with its predominantly civilian outlook. In fact, some scholars have argued that the EU should abandon any attempts at incorporating institutionally 'foreign' military interpretations (see Sangiovanni, 2003).

The governance of Europe's security is thus linked with the changing nature of the state, the broadening of the security agenda and the inadequacy of traditional forms of security cooperation (Kirchner and Sperling, p. xi). This conceptualisation of security has also implied a weakening of the inside/outside distinction prevalent in conventional realist approaches: the idea that in an interdependent, globalised world states can no longer be the sole referent objects of security, and that new types of threats tend to transcend national borders, has been fully taken up by the EU (Burgess, 2009). This more complex and multifaceted approach to security has informed the link between 'Europeanisation' and stability. Thus, in Europe's eastern neighbourhood – populated by newly-emerging states facing multiple internal challenges – security and stability have been seen as emerging from the increasing adoption of or convergence with European norms (Higashino, 2004; Lavenex, 2004): the EU conceived of itself as a 'pole of attraction', purveying the core values of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law (Bengtsson 2008, p. 606).

At the same time, the EU's self-image incorporated the idea of its increasing role as a global actor, using its material and normative resources to deal with security challenges. This has led to the burgeoning literature on security governance, which has developed as a framework to analyse 'the coordinated management and regulation' of European security arrangements by multiple authorities, acting both formally and informally and involving states and non-state actors, and the ways in which this regulation is 'structured by discourse and norms, and purposefully directed towards particular policy outcomes' – the regulation of inter-state relations based on trust, the voluntary acceptance of common goals and collectively recognised norms of interaction that underpin order [Webber et al 2004 p. 4; Webber 2007 p. 62-3]. Much of the literature on security governance has in fact centred on Europe, and the institutional and normative regulation of security challenges by the EU and NATO, reflecting the fact that these institutions have become the primary actors in developing in Europe a system of regulation that can claim wider legitimacy. In time, the 'idea that global solutions to security problems can better be achieved through the existence and the practices of post-Westphalian states... spurred debates on the exportation of *the* European system of security governance', including to the EU's eastern neighbourhood [Christou et al 2010, p 344; see also Kirchner and Sperling 2007].

## Conceptual challenges

A number of challenges relevant to this paper present themselves in conceptualising security. As Christou et al (2010, p. 341) point out, security may be thought about in a number of ways: as objective threats to specific referent objects; as a series of relationships between states, framed by the existence of international anarchy; as a mode of power relations between different groups; as a socially constructed norm that can empower and repress; as a mode of governmentality by which those in authority control the population; and as a positive norm, which if achieved, can emancipate the disempowered. The first challenge is reflected in the extensive debates on the exact conceptual boundaries of security studies. Security has become an 'essentially contested' concept in the academic literature and, indeed, in policy practice. In its broadest reading, security can be linked to 'widely held desires to be free from threat' (Dalby, 1992, p. 97). In traditional, state-centred notions of security, the political-military issue-areas affecting the state were ready 'conceptual anchors' that provided a clear point of focus (Krause & Williams, 1996, pp. 231-233) – put simply, security as 'national security'. However, these notions tended to downplay or even ignore important referent objects and sources of threat and conflict situated beyond their narrow purview.

A second, related challenge stems from the broadening of the discipline of International Relations (IR) as it broke out of its positivist shell to interact with post-positivist approaches in sociology, anthropology, environmental sciences, the humanities and other disciplines (Beier & Arnold, 2005; Mowitz, 1999), which are more equipped to shed light on emerging security challenges. Resolving the resulting disciplinary debates involves seeking commensurability; scholars must be able to study the specific dynamics within each of their specific disciplinary areas and apply appropriate methodologies while, at the same time, being able to 'talk' to each other.

The third challenge relates to the need for sensitivity to local perceptions of threats and challenges and to local practices. While some form of initial analytical and conceptual framework for security is necessary, limiting ourselves to predetermined, Euro-centric perceptions of security – inevitably coloured by the relatively stable environment of the EU – would limit our ability to understand the concerns of both state and societal actors in neighbouring regions with often sharply different political and cultural reference-points.

A fourth challenge stems from the *levels of analysis* problem within IR and the social sciences in general (Buzan, 1991, pp. 328-362; Buzan & Wæver, 2003, pp. 27-39; Singer, 1960; Waltz, 1959). Post-Soviet ethnic conflicts prompted a reappraisal of the importance of the intra-state level and the abandonment of a rigid adherence to the inter-state level and the idea of the state as a 'billiard-ball' (Bush & Keyman, 1997), whose internal processes could be easily ignored in explaining international politics. The state was de-reified through historical-sociological approaches (e.g. Tilly, 1990). The evolving concept of human security redirected attention towards the individual or society, with the state seen as a potential threat rather than an assumed provider of security (Axworthy, 2001; Paris, 2001); in particular, the increasing policy focus on linking human rights and democracy effectively made the individual and/or societal group the referent object of security. At the same time, with the end of bipolarity in the closing decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, theorists such as Buzan (Buzan, 1991; Buzan & Gonzalez-Pelaez, 2009; Buzan & Wæver, 2003), Acharya (2007) and Lake and Morgan (1997) were instrumental in conceptualising the *regional* level – situated between the state and the global system – into security studies thinking (for a discussion of regional security complex theory and

the South Caucasus see Oskanian 2013; on the regional dimension of state weakness or failure see Wolff 2011). Whether one takes individuals, societal groups, a single state or a whole region as the referent object of security means a considerable variation in terms of analytical approach; similarly, analysing a given security issue at the *intra*-state, bilateral *inter*-state, regional and *systemic* levels is likely to produce differing insights.

From its primary focus on interaction at the inter-state and systemic level, scholarship thus expanded its attention to include security's intra-state and regional aspects. This development highlights the need for a flexible conceptual framework for understanding the intra-state, state-state and regional security challenges present in the Caucasus, which would allow us to contribute to the scholarship on security by relying on empirical findings generated by research on the region. Methodological pluralism is also called for. Using interpretivist methodology, the framework may be used to specify views of 'security' prevalent within the social universe under investigation: *understanding* local views of security remains a crucial aim within the project. Researchers employing more objective, positivist approaches may use the framework to generate a reflexive awareness of the assumptions on 'security' in studying relations between external and local actors.

#### *The EU's policy in the Caucasus: security*

As suggested in the introduction above, the problems confronting EU in security terms in the Caucasus – as seen from the outside, at least - are varied and complex. The region is characterised by recurring political instability and economic crisis; weak or defective governance contributes to breeding transnational criminal activity, poverty, inequality and corruption, and can leave countries prey to nationalism. These problems both feed into and are exacerbated by a number of 'frozen' (or simmering) conflicts, generating violence that presents direct and indirect challenges to the EU's effectiveness as a security actor. Conflictual relationships between states (or between states and separatist entities) are complicated by the relationships of each of these actors with external actors – not only the EU, but also Russia and regional powers such as Turkey. In particular, the EU's influence in the region is increasingly contested by Russia, which makes much more fraught the EU's ambitions to promote its governance norms (see Christou 2010; Oskanian 2013, pp 58-9).

With the advent of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) the South Caucasus has become embedded in the idea of 'neighbourhood'. Christou (2010) points to the tension between two distinct security-related EU narratives and logics that have formed around the idea of 'neighbourhood': on the one hand a *normative/duty narrative*, stemming from a vision of a transformative foreign policy, promoting democratic reform, good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights as the basis for security, and underpinned by the EU's growing authority in key areas of security governance; and on the other a *threat/risk narrative*, motivated by the need to mitigate and contain instability that might spill over borders and affect the EU itself (Bengtsson 2008, p. 608).

This tension has generated contradictions and inconsistencies in the EU's approach to the Caucasus: 'The logic is not quite one of "security through democracy". Rather, it might best be captured as "security alongside democracy, when other conditions are fulfilled... What the EU really judges to be most necessary to stabilise fragile polities is a strong, more than a democratically accountable, state' (Youngs (2010, pp. 3, 11). These

contradictions have undermined the EU's aims in two ways. First, it suffers from a loss of credibility in terms of its security governance ambitions; the impression is that it is retreating from the more robust involvement promised in the ENP to tackle the pathologies present in the neighbourhood. Put simply, the threat/risk narrative has become increasingly dominant within the ENP logic. The Eastern Partnership (EaP) – which retained a very similar framework and method for engagement, and as a result the same tensions and trade-offs between the normative/duty and threat/risk narratives – was a product of the EU's internal lack of consensus over its approach towards the neighbours in light of the increased perception of insecurity resulting from events such as the Russia–Georgia war in August 2008; the EaP, in the EU's own words, was 'responding to the need for a clearer signal of EU commitment following the conflict in Georgia and its broader repercussions' (*Eastern Partnership* 2008). Second, this commitment suggested to Russia's security establishment a readiness in the EU to project power further afield [Richter 2016, p. 48] and establish its own 'sphere of influence' to the exclusion of Russia. This raises a fundamental policy problem for the EU: the shift in the logic of relations with Russia over the last decade or so challenges many of the assumptions on which European security governance has been built. The question arises whether the EU can now rely on institutionalised, normatively constituted forms of governance in the neighbourhood when confronted by Moscow's different threat perceptions and adherence to sovereign national interests (see Averre 2016). As de Waal and Youngs (Carnegie 2015) argue, the EU's level of ambition is now subject to some uncertainty, with member states' outlook shaped by concern over Russia's more assertive approach in the region.

### Conceptual framework: democracy

#### *Defining democracy*

While 'the progressive spread of the rule of law and democracy' (*European Security Strategy* 2003, p 1) has been a central aspect of the EU's efforts to promote security and prosperity, the absence of a formal definition of democracy reflects the extent to which policymaking was for a long time based on implicit assumptions rather than a clear conceptual foundation. It was left to the Council of Europe (1949) to include democracy in its founding statutes, with 'individual freedom, political liberty and the rule of law' providing the basis. A 1983 resolution by the Council's Parliamentary Assembly ('On the Principles of Democracy') states that 'democracy is the government of the people by the people. Its basic principles are the rule of law and the separation of powers', and specifies in addition free elections and effective participation as necessary conditions for its existence (Council of Europe, 1983). The OSCE (1990, p. 3) also provided a definition of 'democratic government' as

*...based on the will of the people, expressed regularly through free and fair elections. Democracy has as its foundation respect for the human person and the rule of law. Democracy is the best safeguard of freedom of expression, tolerance of all groups of society, and equality of opportunity for each person. Democracy, with its representative and pluralist character, entails accountability to the electorate, the obligation of public authorities to comply with the law and justice administered impartially.*

The closest the EU has come to defining the concept has been in the legal act establishing a 'Financing Instrument for the Promotion of Democracy and Human Rights Worldwide' (European Union, 2006), which speaks of democracy

*...as a process, developing from within, involving all sections of society and a range of institutions, in particular national democratic parliaments, that should ensure participation, representation, responsiveness and accountability ... Democracy and human rights are inextricably linked. The fundamental freedoms of expression and association are the preconditions for political pluralism and democratic process, whereas democratic control and separation of powers are essential to sustain an independent judiciary and the rule of law which in turn are required for effective protection of human rights.*

It further specifies its aim as the 'promotion of participatory and representative democracy, including parliamentary democracy, and the processes of *democratisation*, mainly through civil society organisations' (emphasis added), through the strengthening of a number of freedoms and the rule of law, democratic accountability and oversight, political pluralism and equality.

The absence of a clear and specific definition of 'democracy' was discussed at length in a paper by Meyer-Reysende (2009), published by the European Parliament's Office for the Promotion of Parliamentary Democracy, which advocated using the definition of an authoritative third party – in this case, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The definition in question emerged from a 2005 UNGA resolution on 'the essential elements of democracy', passed with overwhelming support, which holds considerable weight as the expression of most states' *opinio juris* and reflects the regime type's centrality as a norm of international society. These elements (Meyer-Resende, 2009, pp. 5-6) were

*...respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, inter alia, freedom of association and peaceful assembly and of expression and opinion, and **the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives, to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic free elections by universal and equal suffrage and by secret ballot guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the people, as well as a pluralistic system of political parties and organisations, respect for the rule of law, the separation of powers, the independence of the judiciary, transparency and accountability in public administration, and free, independent and pluralistic media.***

In academic discourse, democracy is a type of political regime - 'a set of rules, procedures and understandings which govern relations between state and society in a particular country' (Macridis, 1986, p. 2). Political-philosophical debates on the nature of regime-type touch on questions such as the democratic nature of its representative versus participatory iterations (e.g. Barber, 2003), or of majoritarian versus proportional electoral systems (e.g. Bingham Powell, 2000). Some scholars limit their definitions to the merely procedural question of elections – with democracy in effect being equated with *electoral* democracy - while others, by contrast, provide 'denser' definitions that combine electoralism with *liberal* civic rights and constitutional checks and balances. The concept is operationalised as a clearly bounded category by some – states are either democratic or they are not – while others see it as a graded variable, measured on a continuum between ideal-type autocracy to ideal-type democracy.



Schumpeter (1942, p. 260) perhaps provided the most established definition of electoral democracy: 'that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote'. This electoral minimalism was taken on by other important theorists (see Lipset (1959, p. 71); Bobbio (1987, p. 93); Huntington (1991, p. 7). Defining democracy as 'a regime in which governmental offices are filled as a consequence of contested elections', Przeworski (1999, pp. 48-49) similarly provided a defence of this minimalist approach, with 'voting seen as a proxy for the outcome of war....a peaceful substitute for rebellion'. From this perspective, democracy became a way of sublimating the historically violent struggle for political power into a (more or less) well-ordered electoral contest, one that, according to Popper (1995, pp. 132-133), gave citizens the opportunity to get rid of their governments without bloodshed.

Yet even Przeworski (1999, p. 50) had to admit that in some conditions 'elections alone are not sufficient... and while some of these conditions are economic, others are political and institutional'. Ultimately, the minimalist definition is only possible by separating the electoral process itself from the fundamental institutional and legal elements constitutive of a substantive 'competitive struggle'. Reduced to the status of regulated political competition, democracy merely equals the banishing of violent domestic conflict through elections, with not much else being said about sustaining the underlying conditions of this particular form of regulated, 'civilised' competition.

Both academics and policymakers have been susceptible to the 'fallacy of electoralism', privileging elections over other dimensions of democracy and ignoring the extent to which formal electoral processes can be deprived of any substantive significance through the manipulation and/or marginalisation of part of the electorate. In a term that is relevant to the Caucasus, Diamond (2002, p. 24) has written of 'pseudo-democracies' which permit elections but lack 'an arena of contestation sufficiently fair that the ruling party can be turned out of power'. Diamond (1999, pp. 1-19) further argues in favour of the addition of several 'liberal' elements to provide a definition of 'liberal democracy': the absence of reserved domains of power not accountable to the electorate; horizontal accountability of officeholders ('checks and balances') in addition to their vertical accountability to the electorate; and 'provisions for political and civic pluralism as well as for individual and group freedoms'. In similar vein, Gurr (1970, p. 38) defines 'liberal democracy' in terms of *three* essential elements: firstly, the 'presence of institutions and procedures through which citizens can express effective preferences about alternative political policies and leaders'; secondly, 'institutionalised constraints on the exercise of executive power'; and lastly, a 'guarantee of civil liberties to all citizens in their daily lives and in acts of political participation'.

Robert Dahl's definition of democracy (or, as he called it, 'polyarchy') acknowledges the inability of most regimes fully to attain its requirements. A 'key characteristic of a democracy [was] the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals' (Dahl 1971, pp. 1-4). The necessary - albeit not sufficient - conditions for this regime type were the unimpaired opportunity by all citizens to formulate their preferences; signify their preferences to their fellow citizens and the government by individual and collective action; and have their preferences weighed equally in the conduct of their government, with no discrimination because of the content or source of the preference. Dahl identified eight constitutional guarantees for democracy to be effective among 'a large number of people': freedom to form and

join organisations; freedom of expression; the right to vote; eligibility for public office; the right of political leaders to compete for support/votes; the presence of alternative sources of information; free and fair elections; and institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference. The final aspect was the inclusion of two 'dimensions', along which regimes could vary: *contestation*, or the extent of permissible opposition within a regime, and *inclusiveness*, or the proportion of the population involved in controlling and contesting the conduct of government. Dahl's definition avoids a dichotomous approach to democracy that would be counter-productive in relation to the Caucasus: democracy is a matter of degree, with 'really existing' democracies, oligarchies and autocracies necessarily diverging, to different extents, from the ideal-type polyarchic, oligarchic or hegemonic standards.

### *Democracy and the EU's policy in the Caucasus*

Following the end of the Cold War, EU policy aimed to influence democratic trends through patterns of deep institutionalised cooperation, locking third country political elites into relationships strong enough to impact on cognitive attitudes towards democratic norms. Though non-prescriptive in terms of institutional end goals, the EU invested good governance with more significant political meaning in order to nurture the political will for democratic policy-making. EU policy-makers also expected that economic liberalisation would spill over into democratic reform. Democracy promotion was thus not aimed at driving policy but rather was addressed indirectly as a by-product of economic change, regulatory reform, conflict resolution and social development at the local level, together with norms-based dialogue (Youngs 2001). The logic behind European integration was projected onto the former communist states of Central and Eastern Europe with their incorporation into the European project. This logic was eventually also applied, in diluted form, to Europe's broader neighbourhood - to states that formally remained outside the scope of future membership - through the ENP (Lepesant 2004; Lynch 2005; Wæver 1995) and, subsequently, the EaP.

A subsequent Commission document on the ENP speaks of EU support for 'deep democracy - the kind that lasts because the right to vote is accompanied by rights to exercise free speech, form competing political parties, receive impartial justice from independent judges, security from accountable police and army forces, access to a competent and non-corrupt civil service' (European Commission, 2011, p. 2). The elements constituting 'deep' democracy include free and fair elections, freedom of association, expression and the media, the rule of law administered by an independent judiciary, anti-corruption efforts and security sector reform, including democratic control over armed and security forces. Economic and social challenges in the neighbourhood regions are also highlighted in the document. It also states that the 'values that are enshrined in article 2 of the European Union Treaty and on which articles 8 and 49 are based' are 'at the heart of the process of political association and economic integration which the Eastern Partnership offers' (ibid., p. 14). Article 2 specifically states that 'The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail'; articles 8 and 49 respectively address relations with neighbouring states, and the admission of new members (European Union, 2012).

At around the time the ENP was launched Youngs (2004, pp. 416-17, 421, 431) put forward the argument that

*...concepts such as democracy, civil society and rights-based political culture, born in Europe and assimilated elsewhere, are key to understanding “from outside... what is peculiarly European”... To the extent that those outside Europe have come to associate the EU’s identity with democracy, human rights and “security community” dynamics, this has generated certain expectations that have further reinforced the EU’s focus on these issues... An emerging aspect of the post-cold war era has been the elaboration of new security doctrines linking western strategic interests to the advancement of human rights and political reform in other regions. These new ‘comprehensive’ concepts of security have presented human rights policies as integral to attacking the roots of international instability, stemming migration flows, tempering anti-western nationalism and reducing regional fragmentation... Ideational dimensions to the EU’s international presence have become more notable, but the increasing focus on promoting certain norms and values has exhibited security-conditioned specificities.*

The intrusion of these ‘security-conditioned specificities’ has prompted much debate in the literature on the ENP. Scholars have argued that the EU has relied more and more on promoting democracy through functional cooperation, extending some aspects of accession conditionality to non-candidate third countries that are mainly focused on technical and regulatory convergence rather than directly related to democracy – even though ‘there is no conclusive evidence that strong democratic governance in policy sectors leads necessarily to democratization of political institutions’ (Freyburg et al 2009, p. 1047). In addition to ‘linkage’ (bottom-up support for democratic constituencies in third countries) and ‘leverage’ (top-down pressure through political conditionality on governments to make democratic reforms) – neither of which have achieved the desired objective – this functional ‘governance model’ has emerged as a third vehicle for democratisation; however, it concentrates on the state level administration and does not address the core institutions of the political system as such. While the EU still proclaims shared values, including democracy, as the basis of neighbourhood cooperation ‘in practice, however, it is up to the neighbouring countries to decide to what extent they would like to cooperate with the EU on democracy, human rights, or the rule of law and intensive cooperation in sectoral policies may not be affected if the level of cooperation is low (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2011, p. 887). It is notable that the Commission document on the ENP, which speaks of EU support for ‘deep’ democracy, includes a section on ‘intensifying’ political and security cooperation, which promises to enhance EU involvement in solving protracted conflicts – which ‘[affect] EU geopolitical, economic and security interests’ - coordinate CFSP and other EU instruments, and promote joint action with ENP partners in international fora (European Commission 2011, p. 5).

Thus, as Youngs (2009) argues, democratic shortfalls have not halted the deepening of ENP cooperation in the South Caucasus; the EU has relied more on the network mode of governance rather than democracy-related conditionality, and most initiatives labelled as promoting democracy are governance projects whose immediate goal is to stabilise state institutions rather than decentralise political power. Western governments are not guilty of the above-mentioned ‘electoral fallacy’ – in other words, of believing that ‘democracy equals elections’ – but the promotion of the ‘governance approach’ in fact risks underestimating the importance of free and contestable elections in countries where

they are routinely manipulated (Youngs 2011, p. 8). Other scholars have also highlighted the shift to functional cooperation in the EaP towards a security rather than a democracy imperative, despite the EU's professed support for 'deep democracy', and the potential impact on democratisation in the neighbourhood countries (Delcour and Wolczuk 2015). Youngs (2010, pp. 4, 11) argues that 'most think-tank advocacy now pushes in the same direction, recommending collective EU-Russian problem-solving and greater "accommodation" with Russia's de-democratisation... donors' state-building efforts have "tended to strengthen or ignore predatory elites", undermining long-term state capacity'. Indeed, Freyburg et al (2011, p. 1047) have gone further, concluding that 'democratic governance rules may simply remain a dead letter', with neighbourhood governments neglecting to apply them if implementation costs are too high or vested interests are harmed, and may even undermine processes of democratic reform by stabilising non-democratic political systems.

Youngs and Pishchikova (2013) have argued that, with reformers within the neighbourhood critical of the imposition of EU governance rules that have little directly to do with democratisation, more needs to be done to base the neighbourhood policy on a more appropriate range of policy instruments and prioritise EU rules that have genuine democracy-enhancing potential: a more political approach to democracy support, one 'focused on the highest-level impediments to a genuine democratization of power', is required. The 'most serious pathology' in democracy promotion is an inattentiveness to local specificities – to Western governments' 'failure to defend core liberal norms in a way that would allow local variations in and choices over democratic reform – along with genuine civic empowerment and emancipation – to flourish' (Youngs 2011, p. 1).

The tendency of undemocratic regimes in the Caucasus to manipulate popular opinion and sideline domestic democratic practices is a fundamental problem in dealing with the post-Soviet region, where – according to one authoritative Russian political scientist – external influence on the transition processes as a result of internationalization and globalization is questionable and any approaches 'must be detached from all presumptions about there being a global movement towards democracy' (Gel'man 2003, pp. 97, 100). Gharazyan (2014) has highlighted how the EU has fallen short in terms of establishing the conditions for deep political reform in the South Caucasus and in promoting democratic values through clear and specific priorities and their consistent implementation. She argues that the ENP vitiates democratisation as it accords a central role to the executive branch of power rather than to elected parliaments and civil society and points to a decoupling of conditionality, such as trade-related arrangements, and political issues.

### The security-democracy nexus and the Caucasus

How does democratisation reinforce security and under what conditions can it generate insecurity? How do security problems impact on democracy? As outlined earlier, democracy has been widely seen in Europe as 'provid[ing] the political foundation necessary to sustain all other dimensions of security' (Youngs 2010, p. 1). The research agenda has focused on the interplay between assumptions that shape the policies of external actors, in this case the EU, and issues related to local ownership and interpretations of the concept of democracy. Three elements are of particular importance: first, openness in terms of questioning the often-assumed link between democracy/democratisation and security; second a sensitivity to how regime type shapes

local conditions in the Caucasus; and third, exactly how democracy is promoted, particularly through the ENP and EaP. On this last point, the European Endowment for Democracy (2014), an independent private law foundation located in Brussels, places the emphasis on 'fostering – not exporting – democracy. In line with Gleditsch's and Hegre's (1997) division of the democracy/conflict literature between the sub-state, inter-state, and systemic levels, we will structure our analysis around the interaction between regime type and insecurity/conflict at the intra-state level (within societies and/or between societies and their states), at the level between individual states and at the level of the international system, in whole (globally) or in part (regionally).

### *The intra-state level*

At the intra-state level, the institutional and normative frameworks necessary to sustain Dahl's two central dimensions of democracy – *contestation* and *inclusiveness* – are important. If democracy is about regulated contestation and participation, imperfections in either of its dimensions may lead to different types of intra-state conflict. Diamond (1990, pp. 56-57) sees 'conflict and consensus' as one of the most basic tensions inherent to democracy: 'democracy implies dissent and division, but on a basis of consent and cohesion', and a 'democratic political culture' is important in balancing these two potentially contradictory elements. Important here is thus how internal political cleavages determine the political map of the state and how these cleavages are changing; any investigation in the Caucasus should focus not only on regime type but also on cultural legacies, language issues, lower levels of political representation and participation due to marginalisation of minority groups (Sichinava 2015).

Imperfections within a democratic regime can result in two forms of dissent and division, depending on whether the resulting fractures within society are of an ethnic/religious or political nature. Different dynamics underlie the insecurities emerging from the deficiencies of the two types, with the former potentially resulting in separatist, ethno-nationalist violence or unrest, and the latter in instability in the political system, with the possibility of violence between elites. Both types are seen in the Caucasus; the 'frozen conflicts' emerged from the competing nationalisms of minority ethnic groups and dominant groups, while there were also conflicts in the countries of the region over state control among elites and counter-elites which were distinct from the ethnic dimension. In weak states, a 'thin veneer' of state force can mask sectarian rifts and leave underlying problems unaddressed; the use of authoritarian methods by the state can lead to a loss of legitimacy and trigger 'securitisations' of the state as a threat, producing 'fissures and deficiencies', including alternative political strategies of survival that can lead to lawlessness, armed conflict and civil unrest – in effect, two types of state failure, 'vertical' collapse and 'horizontal' fragmentation (Oskanian 2013, pp. 43-4).

Issues of 'vertical' political instability are illustrated in the literature in terms of links between 'inconsistently institutionalised' patterns of authority within partial democracies, with the period immediately following the fall of the USSR one of the most acute examples of this problem. Whereas in both autocratic and democratic polities political violence is minimised, more 'imperfect' versions of either regime type, by contrast, display greater instability (Gates, Hegre, Jones, & Strand, 2006; K. S. Gleditsch, 2002; Gurr, 1968, 1974; Hegre, Ellingsen, Gates, & Gleditsch, 2001; for counter-arguments, see Vreeland, 2008). Scholars have explored the link between democratisation and conflict: how is security affected if a regime is in the process of becoming more democratic or autocratic (Cederman, Hug, & Krebs, 2010; Snyder, 2000)?

The Caucasus is also distinguished by 'horizontal' fragmentation in the ethno-nationalist conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh and the north Caucasus. Mousseau (2001) found that homogenous or heterogeneous imperfectly democratic entities, for example Armenia (Ware & Kisriev, 2001), tend to be structurally less susceptible to internal ethnic conflict than states with a number of ethnic minorities, like Georgia and Azerbaijan. The role of nationalist mobilisation in generating secessionist conflict is important: the collapse of Soviet institutions left elites in the region with ethno-nationalism as a powerful mobilising factor against the parent state. One obvious line of questioning that emerges from this literature therefore pertains to the role of such patterns of mobilisation, and their effects on democratic inclusion and contestation, in exacerbating or attenuating the Caucasus' internal ethnic or ethno-religious conflicts.

Another important issue is connected to local 'ownership' of democracy and security. In semi-democratic or authoritarian states with weak institutions – as in the Caucasus – the exclusion (or imperfect inclusion) of elites and societal groups can lead to the state, and its Weberian monopoly of 'legitimate' violence, being captured by sectional interests and impacting negatively on societal groups, most evidently in the case of Azerbaijan. We must, therefore, clearly account for both the insecurity emanating from sub-state groups and insecurity emanating from the state itself: one of the central insights of the 'human security' approach that the state can be as much a problem as a solution to the well-being of the individual. The problem is intensified by the diverse nature of the political processes in each state or entity in the Caucasus.

### *The inter-state level*

A large body of scholarship has examined the link between a state's regime type and its conflict-proneness, notably the Democratic Peace Theory (DPT) literature. Doyle arguably offered the most comprehensive formulation to date, pointing to the ample empirical historical evidence of the absence of wars between 'liberal' states and, conversely, the relative frequency of wars within liberal/non-liberal dyads (1983, p. 213) (see, for instance Benoit, 1996; Chan, 1984; Maoz & Abdolali, 1989; Rousseau, Gelpi, Reiter, & Huth, 1996; Rummel, 1983, 1995; Vincent, 1987; Weede, 1984). The causal explanations for this correlation can be divided into two camps: structural/institutional and normative/constructivist (Rauch, 2005, pp. 29-40). The former argued that democracies interact peacefully because of the complex rationality inherent in elite coalition-building, institutional checks and balances, and public accountability in democratic states (e.g. Bueno De Mesquita, Morrow, Siverson, & Smith, 1999; Morgan & Campbell, 1991). Rational elites in democratic states are no different from their autocratic counterparts in their objective of maintaining power; they are, however, restrained by the above-mentioned factors in going to war. Normative/constructivist explanations, by contrast, saw democratic elites as espousing norms and values that are qualitatively different from their autocratic counterparts; the transfer of norms of compromise and negotiation underlying their pacific domestic political culture onto the inter-state level produced peace between states. Much of the literature, while acknowledging the importance of institutions and structures, preferred the normative explanation or saw institutions as fundamentally constituted by the norms associated with democratic culture and self-identification.

The next question was more directly policy-relevant: if democracy engenders peace, would *democratisation* result in a more peaceful world? Two groups of scholars confronted each other around this question. Di Palma (1990), Gleditsch (1995) and Diamond (1992) argued that even partial democratisation would tend to produce pacifying effects at relatively short notice. The opposing argument - that the resulting partial, immature democracies would be more war-like than either mature democracies or established autocracies - was primarily associated with a long-running research programme carried out by Mansfield and Snyder (Mansfield & Snyder, 2002; Snyder, 2000). The debate produced fundamentally divergent attitudes towards democratisation. *Gradualists* argued that early democratisation would be more likely to succeed, depending on a range of 'facilitators or non-facilitators' accelerating or inhibiting a country's democratic evolution: the level of economic development, the concentration of sources of national wealth, identity-based divisions, historical experience with political pluralism, and the democratic and non-democratic nature of a state's immediate neighbourhood (Carothers, 2007, p. 24). *Sequencers*, on the other hand, believed democratisation could only be successful when a sequence of necessary preconditions - stable state institutions, a developed economy - was already in place, otherwise the state in question would remain conflict-prone, suspended between autocracy and mature democracy; if necessary, these preconditions could be imposed by a modernising, state-building autocratic governments (Fukuyama, 2004, 2007; Mansfield & Snyder, 2007; Zakaria, 1997).

Institutional weakness has been identified as a source of conflict for democratising states. Transition elites tend to use ideological motivators as a replacement for such institutional deficiencies, which may lead to nationalist 'bidding wars' between competing elements of the elite. Two explanations for these phenomena were suggested. First, an emphasis on nationalism increased in-group cohesion in the often unstable environments such states and societies found themselves in. Second, nationalist foreign policy successes strengthened the position of competing elites in the unstable conditions of transition. Snyder (2000) (pp. 46-83) showed how, together with low economic development and a malformed media landscape, weak state institutions in such 'immature' democracies cause elites and counter-elites to use varying forms of conflict-generating nationalist myth-making as a mobilising mechanism in lieu of democratic legitimacy, through exclusionary politics, inaccurate strategic assumptions and pandering to nationalist veto groups.

The arguments outlined above are relevant to conditions in the Caucasus, a region marked by weak institutions, imperfectly modernised economies characterised by elites' dependence on resources/rents, identity divisions, little historical experience with democracy and undemocratic neighbours. Many of the key problems in the countries or separatist entities in the region combine to generate instability: post-Soviet national identities; state-building (civic v. ethnic); immature institutions of governance; disputed borders and territorial conflicts; uneven political, social and economic development; contending external alliances; gender security; and population movements/migration (Nodia/Stefes 2015, introduction). Any research agenda focusing on the democratisation of the states in the region must therefore consider a range of factors facilitating or impeding elite coalition-building, institutional checks and balances and public accountability, and how these structural/institutional factors impact in turn on inter-state relations.

The normative aspect of the democratisation problematique – how norms associated with democratic political culture can infuse institutions – is also important here. Could contact through the ENP/EaP with a post-national entity like the EU, whose external relations are conducted largely through negotiation and compromise and whose ‘normative’ power relies on the legal constraints of treaties and on convergence with European legislation to integrate the wider Europe (Smith, 2013), alter the way in which actors in the Caucasus people behave, through actor learning and diffusion of know-how, to avoid the pitfalls of nationalist mobilisation and overcome authoritarian tendencies?

### *The systemic level*

The diffusion of democracy through the international system, and its potential regional and systemic pacifying role as an established norm of (inter)regional or global politics, has prompted some scholars to emphasise the role of the ‘anarchic’ international system as an enabler of liberalism (Huntley, 1996; Macmillan, 1996; Thompson, 1996): ‘competition compels states to extend the rule of law internally, and externally in relations with other states ruled by law, while socialization reinforces both these republics’ peaceful relations and other states’ competitive incentives to “join the party”’ (Huntley 1996, pp. 58-59; Harrison (2003); (see also Harrison, 2004; Weber, 2003). Put simply, democratisation creates a ‘feedback loop’, generating socialisation effects once a ‘critical mass’ of democracies has established itself in the system. Russett and Oneal (2001, pp. 177-184) emphasised the systemic effects of the ‘Kantian triangle’ of democracy, economic interdependence and international organisations; Rasler and Thompson (2005) argued that modernity had shifted the structural advantage towards ‘trading’ rather than ‘political/military’ states. Gleditsch (2002) stressed the role of ‘clustering’ (both temporal and spatial) in shaping peaceful relations between democracies, underlining the importance of regional factors in creating democratic ‘zones of peace’ and non-democratic ‘zones of conflict’ in the international system, with regime transformation making states more similar to their regional contexts.

These ideas appeared plausible in terms of explaining the fall of the USSR, the absence of balancing behaviour in the post-Cold War world and the role of cosmopolitanism and ‘World Society’ in contemporary international politics. However, as the new century wore on democratic backsliding, the continuing emergence of ‘hybrid’ and other defective forms of democracy and failures in democratic experiments led to the emergence of literature critical of these ideas. Carothers (2002) wrote of the ‘end of the [democratic] transition paradigm’; others pointed to the manifold ways democracy could appear in partial or corrupted forms, decreasing the likelihood for success of the Democratic Peace by conscious design (Diamond, 2002; Merkel, 2004; Zakaria, 2007).

These ideas place the democracy-security nexus in the Caucasus in a broader, regional/global and historical context, and suggest potentially contradictory implications for the region. On the one hand, democratisation is seen as part of a long-term, almost deterministic evolution of the international system, making their spread inevitable. As Carothers and Youngs (2015) suggest, the current global wave of protests (for example, in Ukraine and countries of the EU’s southern neighbourhood) is linked to specific grievances over forms and structures of power, with an emphasis on corruption reflecting civic anger over how state power is exercised. The internalisation of democracy in many of these states is strong enough to provoke protests and hold governments to accountability, even if citizens are dissatisfied how democracy works in practice; the spread of protests reflects a fundamental shift in the relationship between citizens and



the state and a more deliberative form of democratic politics is being forged - a form of 'oversight of state action' - suggesting a 'paradigm shift' in how analysts understand democratisation. However, these protests have produced limited and variable democratisation outcomes; national leaders tend to blame external actors and ignore the evidence of the existence of genuine civic sectors with legitimate independent voices which utilise new networking capabilities. Whether these new broad-based inclusive movements can build new institutions or political processes that might reverse the downturn in global democracy remains to be seen.

On the other hand, the division of the regional international system into zones of peace, prosperity and stability and zones of conflict, poverty and instability suggests that contemporary conditions may militate against the Caucasus' pacification-through-democratisation, surrounded as it is by mostly autocratic states, and with Russia actively promoting an alternative 'Eurasian' normative-institutional project (Kempe, 2013) and acting as a 'spoiler' apparently intent on managing instability (Tolstrup 2009).

### Security and democratisation: the EU and the Caucasus today

As outlined above, the EU's approach to the South Caucasus countries, effected through the ENP and EaP, has reflected an ambitious range of commitments, including the pursuit of democratisation by promoting the benefits of the EaP to citizens and increasing work with civil society and societal partners. A European Commission document (European Commission 2011) declares that 'some EaP countries attach great importance to their European identity and the development of closer relations with the EU enjoys strong public support. The values on which the European Union is built - freedom, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law - are also at the heart of the process of political association and economic integration which the Eastern Partnership offers'. It promises sustained support by 'identifying tools to bridge the long period required to negotiate far-reaching and complex Association Agreements' and thereby facilitate conditions for democratic development.

This approach reflects the 'governance approach' discussed earlier in this paper. Chandler (2006) has argued that state-building has become central to international policy concerns and marked a clear shift in international thinking, spurred by the leadership of the United States and the EU. This approach rests on the regulatory role of international institutions: the 'privileging of "governance" over "government"' derives from an assumption that political processes can be externally influenced by promoting institutional changes at the state level (see also Kirchner and Sperling, p. 3). However, it pays less attention to how societal pressures and demands impact on the stability and legitimacy of institutions. Despite the emergence of this new normative framework of international regulation of the domestic affairs of states, concern has been expressed by policy-makers that the effectiveness of international practices in democracy-promotion and state-building has lagged far behind the demand for international action. The assumption that there is 'good governance', and by implication bad or wrong governance, legitimises the external regulation of states; the frameworks of *governance*, overseen by international bodies, take precedence over the domestic political processes of *government*: the assumption is that the problems of politics can be resolved outside the realm of the political, in the realms of law, social policy and administration and that 'good governance or state-building... has deep ideological presumptions which purport to offer technical solutions to what in essence are political problems'.

Wagnsson and Holmberg (Sperling ed Handbook of governance and security – check date) have also pointed out that global governance practices tend to remain a ‘Westphalian top-down project with predetermined conception of how the local should be’, whereas intrusive methods may not be appropriate for post-conflict societies and may in fact run counter to liberal values of global governance. They also argue that, as the EU and other institutions evolve into organisations with security governance tasks, ‘the context of legitimacy changes, it becomes less meaningful to speak of legitimacy in formal terms and should be considered from sociological point of view, as an entity or action considered appropriate by a certain audience or audiences which are diverse and complex – the local audience is important in determining legitimacy of certain actions’.

Empirical studies by Schimmelfennig and Scholtz (2008; see also Schimmelfennig 2007) have shown the robust effects of EU political conditionality - the adoption of liberal-democratic norms by the target states in exchange for rewards - on democracy in the neighbourhood countries if the EU offers a membership perspective in return for political reform. Without such a membership perspective, however, EU incentives – usually presented in the form of partnership and association – are not reliable in terms of promoting democratic change if the costs of compliance are high for the target governments. Authoritarian regimes will give up the benefits offered by the EU rather than risk losing power as a result of adopting the liberal democratic political norms of the European international society - respecting the outcome of free and fair elections, the competencies of courts and parliaments, the rights of the opposition and national minorities, and the freedom of the media. Even in the more democratic countries, governments have been reluctant to comply if threatened by loss of political power and the benefits accruing from it.

Recent European Commission documents have in fact been more explicit about the need to work more closely with the neighbourhood countries in tackling the problems affecting the region and to ‘better communicate how the ENP and its instruments can support genuine reform efforts’ as values, reforms and governance ‘cannot be imposed from the outside’ (European Commission 2013). They emphasise key elements of an evolving approach: a greater role for civil society in democratic and socio-economic reform; the need for differentiation across the ENP/EaP countries; and closer engagement on security, rule of law and civilian crisis management through Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) instruments. They also make brief reference to ‘the emergence of alternative regional integration schemes in the Eastern neighbourhood [which] presents a new challenge’ – a clear reference to Russia’s role - without, however, offering any ideas on how this impacts on local regime types or security engagement with states in the region.

The recent ENP review document (European Commission 2015) states that, while continuing to work with governments, civil society and citizens on human rights and democracy issues, ‘The new ENP will take stabilisation as its main political priority in this mandate. Differentiation and greater mutual ownership will be the hallmark of the new ENP, recognising that not all partners aspire to EU rules and standards, and reflecting the wishes of each country concerning the nature and focus of its partnership with the EU.’ This has prompted criticism from observers who discern a retreat from the EU values-based approach to its neighbourhood policy: ‘in countries that are not open to democracy, their civil society needs substantial support (including educational programmes) to engage people, while less or no funding should go to a government that

is averse to reform... The EU needs to understand that its democracy promotion efforts have had little effect so far, but that the Union is still a potential pole of attraction for the average citizen in the South Caucasus' (Boonstra 2015). The EU 'explicitly acknowledges the limits to its leverage' and 'fails to strike an appropriate balance between values and interests': 'to be sustainable, stability should be built – just like inside the EU – on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. However, the Review falls short of translating this approach into the concrete substance of EU policies' (Delcour 2015). Scholars have emphasised the need for strong local ownership to sustain reforms, a greater focus by the EU on the growing importance of external security threats, an enhanced effort to improve the knowledge and understanding of the EU and its policies, and a need for a higher political and security profile in the neighbourhood, including in security sector reform. The EU should be ready to support in-depth political and economic reforms and shift its policy approach away from narrow legal- technical approximation to broader societal integration through people-to-people contacts.

De Waal and Youngs (2015) argue that the need for greater flexibility, local ownership and differentiation is understood by the EU but these are promoted through modest design modifications instead of addressing the fundamental political questions of illiberalism, corruption and simmering conflicts, undermining EU efforts to establish more effective conditionality. Reform efforts in EaP states, supported more actively by the EU, could produce better functioning institutions to strengthen these states' sovereignty and allow them to form their own strategic identity. The conclusion is that the EU needs to consider the long-term incentive of an EU membership perspective to EaP front-runners in the democratisation stakes while refusing to give unconditional special status to defectors. This raises a fundamental point in the debate over EU approaches: Brussels should not skate over governance deficiencies in the name of state-level engagement aimed at modernisation and stability, but should concentrate on applying conditionality to a smaller number of core democratic standards and focus on the most serious obstacles impeding deep reform, taking account of views of the reform constituencies and using its political and diplomatic tools to ensure capacity-building initiatives are not sabotaged (Youngs and Pishchikova 2013). As Vivien Schmidt (2013) has argued, the *quality* of governance processes is important for overall democratic legitimacy; constructive output via discourse can not legitimate the EU if there is poor institutional output.

#### *Local perceptions of security and democracy in the Caucasus: some key findings*

What are the needs and expectations of the Caucasus countries at the current time? Rommens (2015) has argued that, as non-state actors in the Caucasus have limited means to induce change at regime level and EU conditionality has lost its bargaining power and can not offset the costs governments incur if they implement democratic reforms, a 'network mode of governance' may appear preferable as a means to strengthen democracy promotion. However, in the case of Georgia, links between the EU and local NGOs have been strengthened but this has not managed to overcome political divisions, showing that the EU 'governance mode' does not reach all levels or involve all relevant actors. Since the inauguration of the ENP democracy has been at the centre of EU policies, but this emphasis fades once plans are made on the technical and policy-related level, so the EU is seen as a weak actor in this regard.

Indeed, empirical research conducted as part of the CASCADE project reflects some of these concerns. The general awareness of the EU in the South Caucasus is still limited

due to its poor performance in terms of public outreach, which fails to counter the role of Russia-supported media, especially in Armenia and Georgia; indeed, rising anti-western public opinion in Abkhazia is blamed on the prominence of Russian mass media in the territory. Local perceptions highlight tensions between EU narratives and deeds on the ground; Azerbaijani civil society criticises the EU for not being vocal enough on the need for the country to democratise. The EU's economic involvement is seen as a positive development but Brussels is sometimes criticised for not following through on policies and implementing programmes.

### *Intra-state conflicts*

All three South Caucasus countries hope for greater EU involvement in conflict resolution, feeling that without more substantial efforts the EU will continue to be perceived as an ineffective security provider. A former EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus has argued that conflicts in the region will only be resolved when the primary needs of the parties have been satisfied - including human security and the right of return for internationally displaced persons - and that a common regional identity is needed, with a 'European layer' of identity overlaying narrow national identities (Semneby 2012).

However, empirical findings in the CASCADE project to date provide few insights into how the EU might tackle the complex and deep-rooted problems it faces. Conflict dynamics in the Caucasus has intersected with extra-regional conflicts, such as the presence of Chechen fighters in eastern Ukraine and the involvement of combatants from Russia and the Caucasus in the Syria conflict. War veterans are playing an increasing role in politics in Abkhazia, Chechnya and Armenia; memory of war is mobilised and used as a resource for building authority which can lead to resistance to efforts towards peace. There is a complex dynamic of interaction between nationalist and religious ideological motivations of fighters, challenging the idea that there has been a complete ideological change. Research also suggests that minorities can be a source of conflicts, for example Armenian minorities in Georgia, and so need to be included in domestic politics.

Oltramonti (2015) has focused attention on war economies, where state weakness and institutional factors are a hindrance to conflict resolution. The difference between the exploitation of a conflict environment by political groups on the one hand, and survival through adaptation to that environment on the other, should be kept firmly in focus. Studies show that for sustainable transition political economies have to be transformed in order to turn local political-economic elites who are stakeholders of war economies into stakeholders of peace economies. Some parties in Georgia's separatist conflicts, for example, are against conflict resolution and profit from the maintenance of a legal vacuum and the de facto independence of the separatist territories - a factor likely to militate against EU democracy promotion.

In the case of Abkhazia, Oltramonti argues that the EU is seen by local elites as avoiding Abkhazia due to Russia's overwhelming influence in the territory; recognition of Abkhaz independence by external actors is a key desire and EU recognition would facilitate greater engagement with Europe. The EU Assistance Mission in Georgia is actually perceived as an EU military mission to strengthen the border with Georgia: the EU can therefore not act as a peace-broker as it is seen as being on Georgia's side in the conflict. A minority of the Abkhaz public, mainly consisting of civil society activists, perceive the EU as a positive actor although a majority of public opinion see it as meddling in the region's affairs.

Melvin and Oltramonti (2015) suggest that the EU should pursue a twin-track approach in the South Caucasus: first, to increase political and diplomatic engagement to mitigate conflict dynamics, and second, to reduce the destabilising aspects of EU-Russia competition (particularly in the context of Russia's Treaty on Alliance and Strategic Partnership with Abkhazia and Alliance and Integration Treaty with South Ossetia). Armenia's accession to the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) is seen by Azerbaijan as tantamount to the integration of the Nagorno-Karabakh economy into the EEU along with Armenia, thereby consolidating the conflict status quo. The weakening of regional links as a result of integrating the South Caucasus into the competing EU and EEU blocs is not confined to high politics but risks deepening intra-regional political fault lines through the creation of 'harder' local customs borders within the region. Such a development could have a particularly negative impact on cross border communities, such as the Samstkhe Javakheti region in Georgia (bordering Armenia and largely inhabited by an Armenian minority in an area where ethnic, economic and political boundaries overlap); the post-Soviet history of the South Caucasus suggests that resentments expressed in communal or ethnic terms may emerge and engender territorial and even secessionist movements.

The EU approach to involvement in conflict-affected countries - focusing on top-down governance reforms at the expense of greater efforts to sponsor conflict resolution and deal with power relations that underlie and fuel conflicts - has failed to make a substantial impact on the South Caucasus' regional security agenda and could even contribute to a wider process of destabilisation around the regional conflicts. In light of the EU's positive relations with the Georgian government and popular support it enjoys in Georgia, the conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia should be the EU's regional priority. Attention should be paid to preventing regions at the interface of the EU and Russia-led integration projects from becoming a source of tension and instead to exploring ways for the two projects to work together to promote stabilisation. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, Paul and Sammut (2016) argue that the EU's leverage is limited due to neither Armenia nor Azerbaijan being prepared to embrace the Association Agreement with the EU, although there are still opportunities in both countries where some of the population desires closer relations with Europe.

#### *Socio-economic factors: migration and corruption*

Research carried out under the CASCADE project illustrates that human and societal security in the Caucasus has been understudied. The impact of economic dislocation and marginalisation of societal groups and the effects of migration on local life, as well as the potential for regional economic integration, emerge as key security concerns in parts of the region. Labour migration plays a major social and economic role in Azerbaijan, providing a safety net where the public health system has deteriorated; also important is the role it plays in reinforcing social ties in a situation where the state authorities are regarded with mistrust. The EU is experienced as unaccountable and non-transparent by migrants, undermining the perception of it as a democratic stronghold. An effective migration policy could be a major tool for strengthening the EU's impact in the South Caucasus, but it needs to be based on accountability and transparency and the EU should aim to strengthen social institutions in the region by promoting models that take into account local historical experiences.

Findings on the North Caucasus suggest that changing patterns of economic dependence and social movements, in particular the depopulation of mountain areas

and uncontrolled urbanisation, are leading to the degradation of the natural environment in the North Caucasus; this, together with the fact that land privatisation is shaped by informal practices, is leading to interethnic tensions and have the potential for conflict and insecurity. The main trend in the North Caucasus points to pluralisation rather than democratisation; the lack of civil society institutions means that they are substituted by other forms of consolidation, which are mainly religious-based or centred on family networks.

The issue of corruption in the context of democratic good governance is an important one in the context of the South Caucasus countries (see Gogolashvili et al, 2015). Even though the EU and Council of Europe developed similar approaches with all three countries in the region, domestic political will to implement and public support for anti-corruption policies are the key factors explaining the variation in anti-corruption outcomes across the South Caucasus. Armenia has achieved substantial progress in many areas where the risk of corruption was high, but it still needs to take additional measures to fully comply with its commitments; the shift away from association with the EU may result in a de facto limitation of ambitions for the fight against corruption. In Azerbaijan, society's attitude towards corruption is similarly negative. However, the increasingly difficult political environment, with growing pressure on civil society activists (as well as on journalists involved in investigations to reveal corruption facts), arrests of active critics and restrictions on the activities of the media and foreign providers of assistance, have all seriously affected society's capacities to effectively struggle against corruption. Given Azerbaijan's limited commitment to deeper cooperation with the EU, the latter's leverage in this country too is weak. In both Armenia and Azerbaijan it is important for the EU to use existing formats of cooperation to try to stimulate active dialogue between government and civil society and further empower independent NGOs to monitor corruption in all segments of society, providing proper access to information that can be used to fight corruption independently. This is likely to prove particularly difficult in Azerbaijan, given the suppression of civil society activists by the Aliiev regime.

Georgia did achieve significant results in the fight against corruption in the post-2004 period, after a young reformist government came to power in the wake the Rose Revolution, as reforms in this area became a political priority of the new elite. Georgia acceded to almost all International Conventions and initiatives promoting the fight against corruption. However, judicial independence still remains fragile. Human rights organisations have criticised violations of due process during trials of officials from the previous government, raising doubts over whether a fair trial can be guaranteed by the Georgian judiciary. In its ENP Country Progress Reports on Georgia from 2014 and 2015, the European Union has stressed the need to ensure fair, transparent and evidence-based due processes, free from political interference. Given its prominent role in the country, the EU should specifically focus on the above-mentioned shortcomings both in its dialogue with Georgian authorities and in its policies, for example in assistance under the European Neighbourhood Instrument and in monitoring ENP implementation.

### *Ethnic/religious factors*

Research on religion and ethnic nationalism in the Caucasus has highlighted how religions are being transformed by their encounter with nationalism and the nation state – producing a 'hybrid' a state between modernity and tradition – and the changing social and political functions of religion. For example, disputes over land in Dagestan mobilise religious references and involve religious actors. The pre-electoral contest in Georgia led

to the increased mobilisation of religious groups and their institutionalisation by church and state. Since the beginning of the century, religion has become a locus for political dissent: the challenge is to identify how and why political antagonism is voiced through religion. Research findings suggest that religions in the Caucasus are at the core of 'populist reason', acting as 'empty signifiers' thanks to which antagonist political identities can emerge in the wake of repressive Soviet state policies which led to a rupture in religious practice and teaching and forced secularisation. Religions may impact on quite disconnected cultural-societal issues, such as the condemnation of homosexuality and the prohibition of Harry Potter. These developments should form part of the discussion on deliberative democracy as they impact on understandings of conflict and democratisation. Conflict should not only be equated with war and explicit violence but with dissent, contest and counter-hegemony; at the same time religions can play a positive role in democratisation by contributing to inclusion. Democratisation is not just the establishment of democratic institutions but is a dynamic and fragile process embedded in social and economic contexts and requires the empowerment of a range of social agents, including religious actors – indeed, it is suggested that non-democratic groups such as Salafists can act as democratisation agents.

Important developments have to be considered in order to understand the role of public religion in Georgia, including the role of institutional actors, namely the Church and State, in shaping social attitudes towards minorities. There have been increasing tensions recently, with polarisation between liberals in favour of individual freedoms and traditionalists, involving contradictory dynamics that the dominant paradigm of secularisation/desecularisation can not explain (Serrano 2015). Conservative traditionalists in the Georgian church are inimical to many EU values.

## Conclusions

The following conceptual issues have been identified by the authors as warranting further consideration and research:

1. Under what (political, economic and institutional) conditions does democracy as a regime type endure and help to foster broader security – in other words, how should ‘deep’ democracy in the context of the Caucasus be conceptualised? What are the best routes to participatory and deliberative democracy, i.e. local participation in and ownership of the political processes? How does the EU ‘embrace a wider variety of tactics, models, actors and strategies’ to support democracy and reinvigorate democratic practices?

National leaders often ignore evidence of genuine civil society with legitimate independent voices with specific and diverse grievances (for example, corruption) over forms and structures of established power. How do we conceptualise this shift in relations between citizens and state in the Caucasus – is it leading to a more deliberative form of democratic politics and can these more inclusive movements build new institutions/political processes? Should the EU prioritise working with high-level officials or is the role of civil society key in breaking down authoritarianism? If so, how does the EU partner with civil society movements?

The EU has been criticised for engaging with a small part of civil society. However, recent protest movements have developed outside well-established civil society, raising the question of its ‘ownership’. Civil society is not a monolithic actor; to what extent civil society movements are sensitive to democracy, and to what extent are they simply driven by socio-economic motivations, including the rejection of the ruling elite’s corruption, is open to question. Local organisations may be linked to conservative, even antidemocratic interests. Would the indiscriminate empowerment of civil society in fact have a negative impact on both democracy and security? How are they connected to organised civil societies upon which democratisation programmes have so far relied? To what extent can current collective mobilisations yield some degree of democratic learning, even in a context of contestation of the normative basis of democracy? What is the balance between ‘differentiation’, dealing with each country’s specificities, and fostering people-to-people contacts and civil society cooperation across the region, for example to mitigate potential problems arising from migration, socio-economic changes? What about the case of the North Caucasus where there is ‘society pluralisation’ rather than democratisation and the lack of civil society institutions means they are replaced by other (religious) forms of consolidation?

2. How do we conceptualise the link between the promotion of EU ‘strategic’ interests (rarely defined with any precision) and political reform in the neighbourhood? In other words, between the ‘*threat/risk*’ narrative (political and security cooperation to mitigate threats, ‘leverage’ implying an element of power relations between the EU and the South Caucasus states, restricting sovereignty) and the ‘*normative duty*’ narrative (‘linkage’, expectations of the EU and of what is ‘European’, the promotion of democracy as a socially-constructed norm that can empower) in the EU’s neighbourhood policy?

Diplomatic pressure on governments to reform (leverage) needs to be seen separately from democracy assistance to level the political playing field by enabling society



(linkage); local civil society criticises the EU for not being more vocal on need for democratisation, lack of public outreach.

What are the implications of Russia's (at present underconceptualised) role in the region? Russia hosts a different regime type that feels threatened by the EU's 'transformative' agenda and promotes a different 'sovereign' approach to security. Can this transformative agenda's reliance on both conditionality and longer-term socialisation overcome the short-term efforts by Russia to shape local elites' and peoples' incentives through a combination of threats, incentives and public diplomacy/information management?

3. Where does the 'logic of governmentality' (implying control/containment of disorder) fit into the security-democracy nexus? With an increasing 'governance approach', is the EU prioritising state-building over democratisation? Can democratisation cause ruptures in the state-building process and impair stability? Is this not a preferable approach in the Caucasus, given the risks generated by weak states/immature democracies that can reproduce pathologies, generate exclusionary politics, and entrench (nationalist or other extremist) 'veto groups'? Do strong democratic structures nurtured by sectoral governance lead to democratisation of political institutions?

The difference between *governance* and *government* should be considered. Democratic politics presupposes dissent and contest; democracy is not just establishing democratic institutions but is embedded in socioeconomic and cultural contexts, involves social agents. Can we talk of a 'governance dilemma' – should the EU focus attention instead on 'highest-level impediments' to democratic reform and empower a wider range of social actors so that they can 'formulate their preferences, signify them to the authorities and have them weighted in conduct of government'?

4. Does democratisation produce a more peaceful environment between states or may a democratising state enter into conflict with autocratic ones – institutional weakness in partial democracies leading to mobilisation of public opinion (incomplete information resources), ideological motivations and 'memory of war', nationalist 'bidding wars' – and become a long-term feature of the region's politics, raising the need to reconceptualise the assumed link between security and democratisation? Can inter-state benefits be felt in a region which has only partially and imperfectly democratised?

5. Can EU democratic/pacific political culture of compromise and negotiation alter the way the Caucasus politics behave through 'actor learning' and diffusion of know-how in order to overcome authoritarian tendencies? How might democracy promotion help mitigate inter-state conflicts, also by including minorities (especially those at the 'interface' between politics)? What kind of 'security provider' can the EU be (for example, in the Abkhazia/Georgia conflict)?

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