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Normative power and democracy promotion in the
European Neighbourhood Policy
– A comparative case study of Azerbaijan and Egypt

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Abstract

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is deemed to be the EU's most ambitious initiative to date. The EU is often considered to have normative power over partner countries and therefore the concept of Normative Power Europe has been investigated. In order to narrow the scope, democracy promotion was chosen as the primary channel for normative power. The purpose is to investigate how the ENP uses normative power for democracy promotion.

The study was conducted by firstly creating an analytical framework on normative power and democracy promotion. The chosen countries for analysis are Azerbaijan and Egypt. The framework was then applied to the ENP Action Plans and Progress Reports on Azerbaijan and Egypt. The results show that the ENP mainly uses its normative power to promote democracy through political dialogue, support to democratic actors and by creating incentives for democratic change. Additionally, the ENP strives for increasing commitment from the partner country as well to issue standards and norms.

Keywords: democracy, normative power, values, political dialogue, commitment

Word count: 9986

Table of contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	4
1.1 Background of the EU	4
1.2 The European Neighbourhood Policy	6
1.3 Azerbaijan and Egypt	7
2. THEORY.....	8
2.1 Normative power	8
2.2 Operationalization of normative power	11
2.3 Democracy promotion	12
2.4 Operationalization of democracy promotion.....	15
3. METHOD.....	16
4. ANALYSIS	17
4.1 Azerbaijan.....	18
4.2 Egypt.....	21
4.3 Comparative discussion.....	24
5. CONCLUSION	26
BIBLIOGRAPHY	28

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the EU

In the aftermath of the Second World War Winston Churchill proclaims in a speech given at the University of Zurich in 1946 that a “kind of United States for Europe” is required if peace and prosperity shall be achieved and maintained throughout Europe. This is the starting point of what is today known as the European Union. Originally called the European Coal and Steel Union its original members were Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. In 1957 the Union developed its purpose to include not only the industrial sector but also the economic one. Hence the European Economic Community (EEC) is created. The notion of free movement of goods, people and services is also introduced at this time. Throughout the following decades the actions of the EU is colored by the ongoing Cold War and the division between the East and the West. Nonetheless new countries continuously join and when the Berlin wall falls in 1989 the union consists of twelve member states. Today the EU comprises the majority of European countries and has a total of 28 members, the most recent to join being Croatia in 2013. The EU has unremittingly increased the sectors in which it operates and today its activities ranges from environmental conservation to intellectual property (European Union official website 2015).

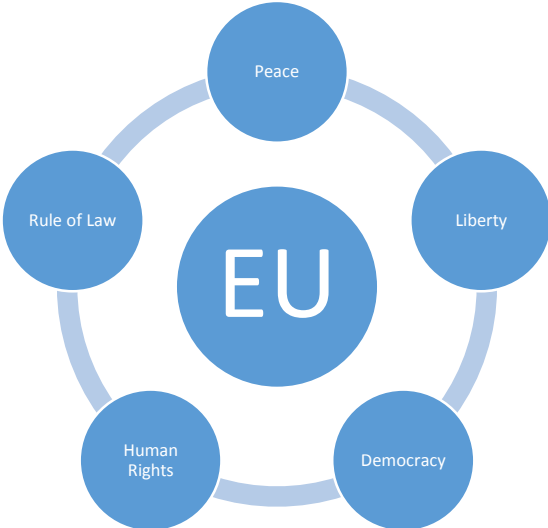
The EU has expanded exponentially the last decades and it is a seemingly continuing expansion of the EU throughout Europe and neighboring states. There are however copious of requirements that has to be fulfilled by the applicant country in order for it to be accepted as a new member state. Initially there are some overarching goals which has to be achieved. In order for a country to be considered as a potential new member it has to have:

- stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
- a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces in the EU;
- the ability to take on and implement effectively the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union (European Commission official website 2015)

In addition to this thirty-five points are negotiated between the applicant country and the European Commission. The negotiation process rests on the norms of the EU (illustrated below) and are uncompromised when a new country wants to become a member. For instance, no applicant country is allowed to have death penalty and if the country is reluctant to abolish it then it will be refused membership in the EU (Behrmann & Yorke: 2013).

Model 1 illustrates the norms of the EU, which should be present in all negotiations and deliberations. There are four additional norms that are at times included, although these are much more contested. The additional norms are: Social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development and good governance (Manners 2002:242).

Model 1:



Even though the EU is seemingly stringent with their norms and regulations when admitting new members there are cases when this has been contested. When the EU admitted Romania and Bulgaria in 2007, these countries did not fulfill the requirements that were set out before they became members. These countries faced, and still faces, severe issues with corruption, rule of law and organized crime (Vachudova 2013:132). This brings to question why Romania and Bulgaria were admitted when they did not meet the requirements that are so strongly advocated by the EU. This is however outside of the scope of this thesis but it is vital to note that the EU are at times malleable with their set regulations. In recent years the EU has been conducting trade and agreements through policies and initiatives. The European Neighbourhood Policy has been chosen as the focus of this paper.

1.2 The European Neighbourhood Policy

The European Neighbourhood Policy (hereafter referred to as the ENP) was launched in 2004 and serves as a tool to deepen the relations between the EU and its neighbors in the East and South. The countries that have been invited to take part in the ENP are: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine. As of 2015 there has been no agreements between the EU and Algeria, Belarus, Libya and Syria. Therefore the ENP consists of 12 countries and in these cases Action Plans¹ have been formulated. The Action Plans are the foundation of the cooperation between the partner country and the EU. The plans consist of priorities for action, for instance to strengthen democracy or fight corruption, and contains concrete goals that can be achieved by the partner country. The goals are designed to deepen the relationship between the EU and the country but also to improve the overall socio-economic situation. The ENP has become one of the major policies and is considered the EU's most ambitious project to date. This motivates why the ENP has been chosen for this study, it also delimits the scope since focusing on the entire EU would be too broad (European Union External Action website 2015).

The then president of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso made a statement to the ENP partners in 2004:

“We stand firm on the principle that this is not about forcing any country in a particular direction. It is about responding to the decisions you [ENP partners] make towards realizing our common vision of a zone of stability and prosperity. And we are committed to the idea that each country shapes its relationship with us individually” (European Commission press release database 2015)

This quote suggests that it is a mutual exchange of ideas that forms the relationship between the ENP partner and the EU. And that this negotiation is on an individual basis, meaning that the specific circumstances and requirements of the country will be taken into consideration when formulating the Action Plans.

The following list shows the priorities outlined in the Action Plan, which is tailored to fit the needs of the affected country.

- Political dialogue and reform, including human rights and governance;

¹ In the official EU documents Action Plan is written with capital letters and therefore the same will be done throughout this paper.

- Economic and social cooperation and development;
 - Trade related issues, market and regulatory reform;
 - Cooperation on justice, freedom, and security;
 - Sectoral issues including transport, energy, information society, environment, R & D;
 - Human dimension—people-to-people contacts, civil society, education, public health.
- (European Union External Action official website 2015)

One final aspect of the Action Plans that is important to note are that these are non-legally binding documents with the purpose to enhance political dialogue between the countries concerned and the EU (Eisele & Wiesbrock 2011:128). Therefore, if the country does not fulfill the strategies outlined in the Action Plan they will not be penalized. However, the ENP works on a more-is-more principle, sometimes referred to as a more for more approach. Meaning that the more steps a country takes towards the norms of the EU and the more adherence to the priorities outlined in the Action Plan, the more the EU will take steps towards strengthening economic and normative ties. In a way it is a promise that the EU gives to the partner country, which is designed to create incentives for approaching the EU, both economically and politically (Ghazaryan 2014:84). Since the Action Plans are written in dialogue between the EU and the partner country, it is possible that if the country has some leverage over the EU this can affect the outcome (Ghazaryan 2014:180). The ENP does, as have been stated, cover a wide range of areas. The focus for this thesis will be on how the ENP uses its normative power for democracy promotion. Both democracy promotion and normative power will be explained in chapter two on theory. The chosen research question is:

How is the European Neighbourhood Policy using normative power for democracy promotion in Azerbaijan and Egypt?

Before entering the theory chapter it is important to give an introduction of the chosen cases, Azerbaijan and Egypt. It will consist of a motivation why these countries in particular were chosen as well as some relevant characteristics regarding the countries.

1.3 Azerbaijan and Egypt

A comparative case study on Egypt and Azerbaijan will be carried out. Egypt is a part of the South division of the ENP and Azerbaijan of the East one. These two countries are different in many aspects but do also hold some similarities. Egypt and Azerbaijan primarily differ in the

geographical and historical sense. It will not however be elaborated upon these differences in this thesis, since it lies well outside the scope. The most important difference for the purpose of the analysis is that Azerbaijan expresses strong aspirations for EU membership and is embracing a European identity (Action Plan Azerbaijan). Egypt on the other hand expresses no such ambitions and is also more autonomous in its actions towards the EU (Action Plan Egypt). One suggestion as to why there is a difference in attitude towards the EU between Egypt and Azerbaijan is that countries in old communist states the people often have an absolute trust in the EU, or more precisely in Brussels. This can be traced back to communist times where everything coming from the West was seen as good (Wojciech, Czarnota and Krygier 2006: 28). The main similarity of relevance for this analysis however, is that both countries are part of the ENP, although belonging to different divisions. One final note is that not all documents required for the analysis are available in English. This further motivates the choice of conducting a comparative case study on Egypt and Azerbaijan, since all documents needed are accessible in English on the EU External Action website.

2. THEORY

The theoretical framework rests on two pillars: normative power and democracy promotion. The forthcoming sections will provide an overview of what the fundamental principles are and how these are applied to the EU. Additionally analytical frameworks will be created on normative power and democracy promotion.

2.1 Normative power

The theoretical discussion starts off with introducing Ian Manners and his concept of Normative Power Europe². His article was written in 2002 and has since received both critique and acclaim, both which will be considered when conducting the forthcoming analysis. Initially however an outline of the main arguments of Europe's normative power as discussed by Manners will be provided.

A change in power in Europe can be seen after the cold war, when military power and civilian power was slowly starting to be replaced by normative power. It is argued that one of the main reasons for this is that European interests are paramount for the EU, meaning that adhering to the external audience's needs is not prioritized. As the Cold War came to an end the EU saw it

² Manners has chosen capital letters for Normative Power Europe, and therefore the same will be used throughout the thesis.

as pivotal to spread ideologies of for instance democracy and human rights to the former communist states, so that stability and prosperity could be brought to these countries as well (Manners 2002:238). That is not to say that the EU does not hold any military power at present, it certainly does, but as Manners states: “its [the EU’s] ability to shape conceptions of ‘normal’ in international relations [that] needs to be given much greater attention.” (Manners 2002:239).

Even though the concept of normative power in Europe came about in the early 2000s, similar notions were discussed already in the 1970s. François Duchêne was discussing civilian power in Europe and he stated that military power in the traditional sense would be less important and hence less prioritized than civilian power as it becomes increasingly important to be influential in international relations (Manners 2002:236). Similarly to Manners, Duchêne also believes that European interests are principal when foreign policies are created. The final aspect of Normative Power Europe relevant to confer is the section discussing channels of diffusion. Manners identifies six factors that will shape the diffusion of norms in international relations. These are:

- Contagion
- Informational
- Procedural
- Transference
- Overt diffusion
- Cultural filter

The factors most relevant for this paper are procedural and transference diffusion and therefore these will be discussed in more detail. Procedural diffusion involves the institutionalization of the relationship between the EU and a third country, normally through trade agreements or membership. Transference diffusion is when the EU exchanges goods with or gives aid and technological assistance to an outside country. This also includes the export of standards and norms, which the EU is increasingly trying to impose on non-member countries (Manners 2002:245). These two channels of diffusions are present in the conditionality towards countries that are not members of the EU, but desires to join. There are those who support Ian Manners notion of Normative Power Europe but in order to not only give supporting arguments will some of the critique towards Manners be highlighted.

Three separate studies, Helene Sjursen’s in 2006, Michael Merlingen’s in 2007 and finally Thomas Diez’s in 2005, will be discussed as they are centering their work on critiquing

Normative Power Europe. There is a significant amount of literature reviewing the concept but it has been limited to two works which are often cited in the debate. The main critique given by Sjursen is that normative power needs to be better specified and the power executed by the EU needs to be assessed in terms of its legitimacy. Moreover, she also questions whether the factors of diffusion discussed by Manners are in reality only ways to benefit the self-interests of the EU. It is also debated if the EU really is a normative power and that it depends on the definition of it, but that this is not clear enough when introduced by Manners (Sjursen 2006). Merlingen also concludes that the normative power of the EU is policy-oriented, or driven by self-interest as was stated by Sjursen. He also discusses the ambiguity of Normative Power Europe and that there is no comprehensive definition of it. Merlingen additionally mentions how the power of the EU creates arbitrary relationships between the internationals, the EU, and the locals, the population of especially conflict ridden areas affected by the EU's foreign policy. Neither author rejects the idea of the EU holding normative power but they reach the conclusion that a definition of the concept is needed and that certain aspects neglected by Manners need to be taken into account as well.

The final article to be discussed was written by Thomas Diez. In contrast to Sjursen and Merlingen he does not criticize the idea as much as he questions the idea that it is the EU that holds the primary normative power in a global sense. He states that it is rather the US that has the normative power and that the role of the EU as a promoter of norms is exaggerated since the main influence has historically been coming from the US rather than from the EU. Another point made by Diez is that the EU is not unique in its normative power and hence its importance should not be exaggerated (Diez 2005). Manners actually wrote a response to the claims made by Diez, where he clarifies the difference between normative and civilian power and also explains why the normative power in Europe is different from any other in the world. He mentions for instance the post-colonial heritage and the Cold War as some of the differing factors between the EU and the US (Manners 2006).

Even though Normative Power Europe has been criticized by some it is still argued by the author that it is a concept of relevance and that analyzing how it is used in practice is advantageous in terms of deepening the understanding of the concept. One issue with the theoretical aspect of Normative Power Europe is that no definition is offered, not by Manners and not by any of the included critics. Therefore, it has been decided by the author that the operationalization of normative power will serve as the definition of it since it grants the possibility to grasp the concept in its entirety.

So far an introductory overview of Normative Power Europe has been provided but in order to conduct the analysis, an analytical framework is required, which will be created by operationalizing normative power.

2.2 Operationalization of normative power

For the purpose of this thesis a list of characteristics of normative power has been collected. This is designed to aid in the analytical process. When comprising the most vital components into a framework it becomes more manageable to conduct the analysis. Some studies conducted on normative power will be introduced and the main characteristic according to the results of it will be brought forward in order to create the framework needed for the analysis.

Zupančič and Hribernik (2013) investigates how Japan uses normative power towards its neighbors. The analysis show that it was done by committing and investing in financial, material and human resources in fields relating to security. By becoming involved in regional agreements Japan managed to strengthen its normative power at the same time as it became a more significant actor in international relations. According to this paper Japan has succeeded in certain aspects to implement its normative power in other countries in the south-east Asian region. The characteristic of normative power derived from this paper is that it heavily relies on investments in resources.

Steglich (2012) conducted a study on the EU-Moldova relations through the lens of Normative Power Europe. She found that the EU, is using power in the sense of setting standards and implementing business norms (84). She refers to it as a ‘carrot and stick strategy’ where the EU puts norms in the centre and rewards the country for implementing the guidelines set out by the EU. A brief discussion on the ENP is also included and she finds that “the Action Plan is too ‘thick’ on Moldova’s commitments and too ‘thin’ on EU responsibilities” (Steglich 2012:82). The results found by Steglich (2012) will be included in the analytical framework since it discusses some of the main characteristics of normative power.

The final aspect which will be included in the framework is transference and procedural diffusion. As has been discussed, channels of diffusion were introduced by Manners (2002) and is seen as ways of the EU to use its normative power. It has been fully acknowledged that these are not the sole factors that can affect normative power. Nor is it the only characteristics of it. However, due to time and space constraints and a desire to keep the analysis focused on the ENP have the framework been limited to including the following factors:

- Committing and investing in financial, material and human resources
- Setting standards and norms
- Commitment from the actor affected by normative power and responsibility from the actor holding it
- Transference and Procedural diffusion

The created framework regarding normative power will be implemented on the Action Plans and Progress Reports³ of Azerbaijan and Egypt in order to decipher how the ENP uses its normative power in democracy promotion. A similar framework for democracy promotion will be created in section 2.4.

2.3 Democracy promotion⁴

There is a vast amount of research done on the concept of democracy promotion. In this theoretical chapter some of the main contributions will be discussed. Monographs written by Jeff Bridoux, Milja Kurki and Peter Burnell will be the core of the discussion. They are often cited scholars who focus explicitly on democracy promotion and often includes the EU as an illustrative case study. By giving an overview of the debates surrounding democracy promotion in scholarly literature, the research question can be answered in a more comprehensive manner. Which will also aid in the forthcoming analysis.

The initial step when unwinding the concept of democracy promotion is to define it. As with many terms there no universal definition but for the purpose of this paper it is possible to find a definition. Democratization is when countries experience political changes moving in a democratic direction. Democracy promotion is defined by Bridoux and Kurki (2014) as when this change is not instigated by the country itself, but by an outside actor (2). Burnell (2000) has identified three categories of democracy promotion: use of force, conditionalities, and democracy assistance (283). It is argued that the method used by the EU is based on conditionalities (Bridoux & Kurki 2014:3). Schimmelfennig (2003) advocates a similar result and he defines democratic conditionality as how the EU has, since the end of the Cold War, “made assistance and institutional ties – first informally and later formally - conditional on the fulfilment of democratic and human rights standards” (497). It is the definition of democracy

³ In the official EU documents Progress Report is written with capital letters and therefore the same will be done throughout this paper.

⁴ There are numerous terms for promoting democracy, for instance pro-democracy policies or incentives. For reasons of coherence, the term democracy promotion will be used throughout since it is the term used by the majority of authors included in this paper.

promotion provided by Bridoux and Kurki that is going to be used when conducting the analysis. However, since it is conceived as somewhat broad, Schimmelfennig's definition of democratic conditionality is also included. However, before focusing solely on the EU and democracy promotion it is advantageous to give an overview how other actors utilize this as well.

Democracy promotion is not an act exclusive to the EU, numerous other actors and agents utilize it to varying extents as well. The US is one of the main promoters of democracy, together with the EU, and has specific instruments put in place for this purpose. The Millennium Challenge Corporation is one of these mechanisms and aims at incentivizing countries to democratize by tying development aid to set governance criteria (Bridoux & Kurki 2014: 24). The mechanisms put in place by the US resembles that of the EU in many aspects. Making the funds, aid or trade agreements conditional on the fulfillment of democratic standards is the favored approach by these actors. There are however other means of democracy promotion. The UN organ called UNDEF (United Nations Democracy Fund) provides funding to countries transitioning from an autocratic regime. The difference from the EU and the US is that in the case of the UNDEF the main focus is on civil society and human rights activists and is thus not overly concerned with state actors (Bridoux & Kurki 2014:27). There also exists some 'non-traditional' promoters of democracy. Russia for instance promotes democracy to its neighbors by reinforcing the unique post-soviet cultural heritage and it puts great emphasis on the sovereignty of states. However as was remarked by Burnell (2011) whether Russia's approach is promoting autocracy rather than democracy is debatable. As has been highlighted, there are numerous promoters of democracy and the approaches and target groups differ. Since the focus in this paper is on the EU and how it utilizes democracy promotion, a more detailed account of this will now be outlined.

The EU uses democracy promotion to endorse democratic values on countries desiring to become members, most notably those in Eastern Europe. The democratic rights utilized by the EU are specified in the Copenhagen Criteria⁵. Democracy promotion is however a relatively new focus for the EU. It was with the Copenhagen criteria that democracy was specified as a main objective in the work of the EU. The reason for this is to strengthen the role of the EU as

⁵ The Copenhagen criteria was accepted by the European Council in 1993 and specifies the democratic level a country has to reach before accession. It also discusses market mechanisms and stresses that for a country to join the EU it has to have a functioning, competitive market (Bridoux & Kurki 2014:9).

an international actor and to grant legitimacy to its operations in developing countries (Kurki 2013:148). Granted, democracy has been one of the core principles of the EU since its creation, and is one of the main statutes, but promoting it to countries outside of the union is a somewhat recent development. The main channel for democracy promotion is through trade, where there are conditions that have to be fulfilled by the country in order for it to carry on trading. However, problematics with monitoring the partner countries have occurred on the behalf of the EU and it is moreover argued that democracy promotion is often faulty and inconsistently applied (Kurki 2013:166). As has been stated in the previous chapter, the main incentive for democracy promotion is the ENP, which often uses trade in its policies, and it is considered to be the EU's most ambitious project to promote democracy to third countries as of yet (Kurki 2013). Granted, there is criticism towards how the EU promotes democracy, which will be further elaborated on presently.

It is argued by Kurki (2013) that there is reason to question the methods used by the EU when promoting democracy and that the techniques are not democratic in some aspects. This requires further attention since it is the methods used by the EU in democracy promotion through the ENP that is the main object of analysis. Kurki elaborates further on that democratic values are spread through the ENP, but there is no definition of what a democratic value is, and more importantly there is no debate on how democracy should be achieved. The ENP is mainly concerned with trade and socio-economic issues and it is assumed that when these are achieved, a more democratic society will be founded. One final aspect of importance discussed by Kurki (2013) is that according to her the only countries that are included in the ENP are those with very slim possibilities of ever being granted membership, but where the EU has reason to ensure security and increased trade. This brings to question the motives of the EU when using its normative power to spread democracy. Moreover, it also sheds light on how the EU might put its own interest first, rather than catering to the needs of the countries outside of the union hoping to get in. It is possible to exemplify this with for instance the EU funding and assisting authoritarian regimes such as Chile, Nicaragua and Egypt when these countries did not reach the democratic and human rights standards set out by the EU (Bridoux & Kurki 2014:39). There is a vast amount of literature dealing with democratizing the EU (i.e. Schmitter 2000, Schmidt 2006). However, for the purpose of this paper it is sufficient to acknowledge that there is operational issues within the EU that can affect the outcomes of democracy promotion to third parties. The arguments put forward in this section will be included in the analytical framework, which will be created presently.

2.4 Operationalization of democracy promotion

As was done with normative power an analytical framework of democracy promotion will also be created. This will aid when executing the analysis since it is imperative to fully comprehend what is looked for in the analysis. As has been identified democracy promotion is when steps towards democratization are promoted or initiated by an external actor (Bridoux & Kurki 2014:2). So far democracy promotion has been discussed in theory but how it is performed in practice needs to be further elaborated on since it is required for the construction of the analytical framework. Therefore, some studies will be elaborated upon and the key characteristics of democracy promotion will be identified.

Badella (2014) investigates how the US promotes, and has promoted historically, democracy in Cuba. It is argued that the main reasons has been for the US to ensure security and to get its neighbor to transfer to a capitalist system with free markets, all in order to benefit the US. Democracy promotion in Cuba is deemed a failure by Badella since the Cuban regime has not instigated any measures towards democracy. Nonetheless, the methods used are interesting to include since it offers insights on how democracy is promoted in practice. It might also be that the failure is circumstantial and that the same methods could be successful in another case. The Helms-Burton act was introduced in 1996 and it handles the US-Cuban relations and included the trade embargo. Interestingly enough there is one section of the act that gives the president of the US the power to cancel the embargo if there is evidence that a democratically elected government has been chosen in Cuba. There are additional requirements regarding the elected government which must be fulfilled as well (Badella 2014:164). This type of democracy promotion is founded on the principle that Cuba will benefit greatly by democratizing since it gives them access to the US market. This is one characteristic of democratization, creating incentives for democratizing.

In a study conducted by Babayev (2014) it is distinguished between ‘political’ and ‘developmental’ democracy promotion. The illustrative cases are Germany, which exemplifies developmental democracy promotion, and the US, which is for political. The actor being subjected to democracy promotion is Belarus. The US has diminished its relations with Belarus due to its deteriorating political situation and a failure to take steps towards democratization. This is especially clear in the amount of development aid given to Belarus which has decreased dramatically since the inauguration of Aleksander Lukashenko in 1994 (Babayev 2014:942). The one exception regarding aid was democracy aid, which increased by almost 60% between 1993 and 2008. The US also supported democratic forces within the country, certain political

parties and the independent media to mention a few actors which were benefited by the US. Finally the US issued temporary sanctions on Belarus in order to incentivize political change (Babayev 2014). Germany also stopped almost all types of aid directed to Belarus during the 1990s and early 2000s. One of the main initiatives from Germany was however focused on political dialogue, which meant lifting the sanctions and attempting to bargain with Belarus regarding its political prisoners. All in all, Germany followed a similar approach as the US with the difference that attempts were made to reach compromises with the Belarusian government (Babayev 2014).

The analytical framework for democracy promotion contains the following points:

- Creating incentives (e.g. increased trade or economic benefits)
- Withholding trade and relations by issuing embargoes or sanctions
- Increasing democracy aid
- Supporting democratic actors within the country
- Political dialogue

It is acknowledged by the author that the chosen characteristics might not be wholly representative of normative power and democracy promotion and some might even reflect other types of power, for instance investing in human resources might be considered material power rather than normative. Regardless, it is believed that these characteristics are representative of normative power and democracy promotion and can therefore be satisfactorily utilized in the analysis.

The two frameworks created will now be applied on EU documents in order to see how the EU uses its normative power to promote democracy. When conducting the analysis these are the aspects that will be searched for, separately as well as together to discover how normative power and democracy promotion correlate in the framework that has been created.

3. METHOD

The chosen method is to conduct a qualitative content analysis on documents published by the EU, more specifically the Action Plans and Progress Reports on Azerbaijan and Egypt. Thus a comparative case study on Azerbaijan and Egypt will be executed as well. Bryman (2012) offers definition of the key methods used in this paper. A case study is defined as “a research design that entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case. The term is sometimes extended to include the study of just two or three cases for comparative purposes.” (Bryman 2012: 709).

And content analysis is defined as “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (Bryman 2012: 289).

Some advantages of conducting a qualitative content analysis is that it is an unobtrusive method which does not seek to alter any findings or conclusions. Moreover, it is often regarded as a transparent method of analysis (Bryman 2012). Being transparent with the analysis is something that will be prioritized in the forthcoming analysis by being explicit with which documents are being analyzed. Additionally will the use of quotations be favored instead of paraphrasing, in order to ensure that the documents are not altered for the purpose of the analysis. It is also of essence to bear in mind that a content analysis can only be executed successfully if the document on which it is done holds high quality. Therefore all documents that will be analyzed are derived from the official EU External Action website, which guarantees that the documents are authentic and of high quality.

Available on the EU website are the Action Plans of all countries involved in the ENP as well as Progress Reports which are published annually. The Progress Reports spans from 2012 to 2015 and evaluates the progress the previous year. Only the most recent reports for Azerbaijan and Egypt will be used, the one published in 2015 that evaluates the progress in 2014. The reason for this is that a more in-depth analysis can be carried out while it still has the possibility of answering the research question.

4. ANALYSIS

By conducting a qualitative content analysis on Action Plans and Progress Reports a groundwork will be made for drawing conclusions on how the EU uses its normative power in democracy promotion in these two countries. The analysis will consist of three subchapters. The first will analyze the Action Plan and Progress Report for Azerbaijan. Following, the same will be done with Egypt and the final subchapter will be a comparative discussion of the two cases. Democracy promotion is deemed in this context as a channel for expressing normative power and therefore the key focal point will be normative power and how it is used by the EU. The analytical frameworks created will be applied throughout in order to answer the research question: How is the European Neighbourhood Policy using normative power for democracy promotion in Azerbaijan and Egypt?

4.1 Azerbaijan

The first step in the analysis is to investigate how the normative power of the ENP is revealed in the opening paragraphs of the Action Plan. The Action Plan covers numerous areas of significance reflecting the list of priorities outlined previously. Already on the first page of the plan it is stated that:

“The level of ambition of the relationship [between the EU and Azerbaijan] will depend on the degree of Azerbaijan’s commitment to common values as well as its capacity to implement jointly agreed priorities. The pace of progress of the relationship will acknowledge fully Azerbaijan’s efforts and concrete achievements in meeting those commitments.” (Azerbaijan Action Plan: 1⁶).

This quote suggest that it is mainly up to Azerbaijan to adhere to and implement the suggestions outlined in the plan. This reflects the more-is-more principle under which the ENP operates. It puts forward that the level of commitment to the ENP will reflect the EU’s willingness to deepen the relations with Azerbaijan. It is clearly illustrated already in the first pages of the Action Plan that the ENP uses its normative power when mentioning commitment from Azerbaijan. Moreover, the use of the phrase “common values” is interesting and requires further attention. The values of the EU rests on principles of democracy, peace and liberty (see model 1 p.5). Initially in the Action Plan it therefore becomes inherent that what the EU desires is that Azerbaijan takes steps towards the values of the EU and that the country implements the strategies suggested in the plan. In the opening chapter of the Action Plan there is one more sentence worth elaborating on: “The EU takes note of Azerbaijan’s expressed European aspirations.” (Azerbaijan Action Plan: 1). By using the relatively ambiguous phrase ‘take note of’ the EU hints that if Azerbaijan fulfills the criteria outlined in the Action Plan then a EU membership in the future is not unfeasible. Merely by studying the first paragraphs of the Action Plan it becomes inherent that the ENP is a strong authority which desires Azerbaijan to commit to common values. There is also a hint of transference diffusion where the ENP desires to keep Azerbaijan tied to the EU by supplying imprecise assurances of future membership. Normative power is clear in the opening section of the Action Plan, now it will be elaborated upon how this is transferred in the goals of the plan.

⁶ Due to the fact that there are no page numbers on the document itself, the page indicators are from the PDF file which was downloaded on the EU External Action website.

By reviewing the goals set out in the action plan it becomes evident that the vast majority of the reforms Azerbaijan has to implement is aimed at adopting EU standards, implementing EU declarations or cooperating more deeply with the EU in various areas. Some examples are: “Ensure a closer approximation to EU standards in the area of social policy (gender equality, labour law and health and safety at work).”, “Sign, ratify and implement the second additional protocol to the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal matters.”, and “Improve internal legislation in line with the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports” (Azerbaijan Action Plan: 13). This clearly shows that Azerbaijan is expected to adhere to the demands of the EU and there is no room for leverage. One of the few exceptions is when it is stated that they should ‘exchange views’ on for instance visa matters, this indicates towards a weaker power relation where the wishes of Azerbaijan can be included as well, at least theoretically. Nonetheless, issuing standards is common practice for actors using normative power and this applies to the EU as well. However, it is of essence to bear in mind that the EU already has established conventions, which are already put in place throughout the EU member states, which can straightforwardly be adopted by Azerbaijan. It has now been established that the ENP uses its normative power and the focus will thus be progressed to democracy promotion and how normative power is used as a tool to strengthen it.

There are ten priority areas in the Action Plan, not all will be outlined and analyzed since that goes well beyond the scope of this paper. In order to give an idea of how the priority areas are formulated, the first three will be listed below:

1. Contribute to a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict
2. Strengthen democracy in the country, including through fair and transparent electoral process, in line with international requirements
3. Strengthen the protection of human rights and of fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, in compliance with international commitments of Azerbaijan (PCA, CoE, OSCE, UN)

Since the focus is on democracy promotion, the second priority area will be analyzed in greater depth, especially when evaluating the Progress Report. As subheadings for the second priority area it is stated that it is vital to strengthen democratic institutions as well as improving local democracy. This should be achieved by continuing “approximation of national legislation with EU standards” (Azerbaijan Action Plan: 10), indicating that Azerbaijan should remain on the path towards adopting EU standards. As for local democracy it is deemed important to create municipal unions and to ensure that these are operating effectively (Azerbaijan Action Plan).

Converging with EU standards and legislations is portrayed as a way for Azerbaijan to become a more democratic society. It has now been established how the ENP uses normative power in the Action Plan, the following paragraphs will therefore focus on the Progress Reports and how normative power is used for democracy promotion in Azerbaijan.

The Progress reports consists of an overall assessment of the progress made by the partner country as well as recommendations for action provided by the EU. It is concluded that some progress were made by Azerbaijan in for instance municipal elections being executed on fair terms on a good technical level. Azerbaijan also entered numerous bilateral agreements with the EU such as the Visa Facilitation Agreement and the Readmission Agreement (Azerbaijan Progress Report 2015: 2). However,

“these achievements were overshadowed by regression in most areas of deep and sustainable democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms. As a result, Azerbaijan made very limited progress overall in implementing the ENP Action Plan.” (Azerbaijan Progress Report 2015: 3)

Overall, Azerbaijan did not adhere to the conditions set out in the Action Plan and “political dialogue was overshadowed by Azerbaijan’s deteriorating democracy” (Azerbaijan Progress Report 2015: 4). The EU did however continue to support civil society in Azerbaijan and in 2014 alone the EU gave grants to 14 projects amounting to a total of 3 million Euros. Moreover, regardless of the disappointment of following the Action Plan the EU still remains Azerbaijan’s main trading partner (Azerbaijan Progress Report 2015: 4). The ENP still aims at promoting democracy in Azerbaijan through for instance attempting to increase political dialogue granting privileges if certain conditions are fulfilled. Nevertheless, there seems to be little motivation for Azerbaijan to be given greater access to the European market. This brings to question the effectiveness of the methods of promoting democracy chosen by the EU. It is worth being critical to democracy promotion and how it is conducted.

The Progress Report shows other evidence of normative power. For instance:

“Azerbaijan started to apply Euro 4 standards in April 2014, and from that time banned the import of used cars which did not comply with the new requirements.” (Azerbaijan Progress Report 2015: 10)

Implementing standards is one characteristic of normative power brought forward in the analytical framework and therefore it proves that the EU is successful in certain aspects.

In the Progress Report there are also guidelines set out by the EU containing what Azerbaijan should work on in the coming year. It is stated that Azerbaijan should aim at “improving democracy and human rights in the country in almost all related areas” (Azerbaijan Progress Report 2015: 3). The areas stated are particularly mentioning a democratic judiciary system as well as democratic elections as key for democratizing Azerbaijan. Interestingly enough, in the Progress Report there is no mention of tangible incentives that could encourage Azerbaijan to become more democratic. Neither is there mention of withholding privileges by for instance issuing sanctions on trade. On the contrary, trade is rather encouraged by the EU. Certain aspects of the analytical framework that has been created for democracy promotion does not seem to apply to the actions of the EU in the Progress Report. While others still hold true, such as encouraging a political dialogue and supporting non-state actors holding democratic values.

It appears that the ENP uses normative power in a manner which aims at diverging the partner country with the standards and norms of the EU. However, regarding democracy promotion in Azerbaijan it has been relatively unsuccessful. The analysis on Azerbaijan has clearly shown how the ENP uses its normative power for democracy promotion as well as how it is used regarding other aspects as well. A similar analysis will now be conducted on Egypt so a comparative discussion can be carried out and similarities and differences highlighted.

4.2 Egypt

The Action Plan for Egypt follows the same set-up as the one for Azerbaijan. A similar analytical approach will be hence be taken. First a discussion on how normative power is used by the ENP, followed by analyzing democracy promotion as one of the primary goals and channels for using normative power. On the first page of the Action Plan it is stated that:

“The Action Plan between Egypt and the EU within the European Neighbourhood Policy sets ambitious objectives based on joint ownership, common interests, reciprocal commitments, differentiation, shared values and implementation of national plans and reform programmes, politically, economically, socially and institutionally.” (Egypt Action Plan: 1)

By reviewing the quoted paragraph it is apparent that the relationship between the EU and Egypt focuses on common values as a key determinant for the success of the ENP and that deepening the relationship will be greatly beneficial for both parties. Additionally, there is mention of “common values” in the beginning of the Action Plan and it is inherent that the values

mentioned are those of the EU. Deeming from what normative power is characterized as in the analytical framework there leaves little doubt that the ENP uses it in its policies towards Egypt. This argument is further strengthened in the following quote:

It is designed to, where appropriate, integrate and accustom Egypt to European Union economic, social and technological structures. In addition the Action Plan will aim for converging standards, norms and legislations between the two actors. The purpose of this is to improve possibilities for trade, investment and growth (Egypt Action Plan: 2).

By stating that Egypt should integrate and become accustomed to EU structures, standards and norms it is evident that Egypt should take steps towards converging with the EU. This will in turn lead to a deepened relationship and a more favourable climate for trade and investments. This illustrative example shows the normative power help by the ENP since there is no mention throughout the plan of the EU making any alterations on behalf of Egypt. However, the EU and Egypt agree upon “a shared responsibility in establishing an area of peace and stability” (Egypt Action Plan: 1). Since there is mention of a shared responsibility there is reason to believe that the EU does not use its normative power absolutely but in some aspects there is a hint of a shared obligation.

The final paragraph chosen reflecting normative power is:

“In light of the fulfilment of the objectives of this Action Plan and of the overall evolution of EU-Egypt relations, consideration will be given to the possibility of a new contractual relationship” (Egypt Action Plan: 3)

Commitment from the partner country becomes inherent in this paragraph and further intensifies the argument of the ENP holding normative power. There is additionally no promises made by the EU for a new agreement or even potential future membership, but Egypt should still follow the guidelines set out in the Action Plan because of the *possibility* of a new contractual agreement.

As with Azerbaijan’s Action Plan are priorities for action included in Egypt’s. The second priority for action is concerning an enhanced political dialogue and reform, and will therefore be chosen for the analysis. In the subheading ‘democracy and rule of law’ civil society is mentioned. The goal is to “Foster the role of civil society and enhance its capacity to contribute more effectively to the democratic and political process (...) in accordance with national

legislation” (Egypt Action Plan: 6). Supporting non-governmental actors is one of the characteristics of democracy promotion in the analytical framework. Another goal is to “Pursue and support the Government of Egypt in the further modernization and development of public services” (Egypt Action Plan: 6). The services include those designed to promote accountability and transparency. The EU desires to use its prominent role to influence the democratic development in Egypt. The next step is to analyze the Progress Report on Egypt, in order to see how the ENP uses its normative power for democracy promotion a decade after the Action Plan was produced.

There has been significant changes in the EU-Egypt relations since the Action Plan was formulated. In fact, the “formal EU-Egypt dialogue under the ENP remained *de facto* suspended” (Egypt Progress Report 2015: 2). Reasons for this is mainly relating to the unstable political situation as well as a severely faltering security and economic system in Egypt. Regardless of the priorities for action charted in the Action Plan no longer being practiced, the Progress Report still contains an evaluation of the progress and suggestions for reforms in Egypt, and can therefore still be used in the analysis.

It is stated in the Progress Report that there “was limited progress on Egypt’s reforms in the areas of democratic governance and human rights.” (Egypt Progress Report 2015: 2). The Progress Report also identified that:

“Overall, Egypt made limited progress in implementing the ENP Action Plan, especially on deep and sustainable democracy. The continued use of the death sentence [...] was of particular concern. The restriction on civil society and peaceful demonstrations were also of concern.” (Egypt Progress Report 2015: 3)

Concerning what Egypt should work on in the coming year the main priority outlined by the EU is that Egypt has to organize “genuine democratic parliamentary elections, with a free and open campaign, so that parliament can ensure national legislation compliant with the Constitution and with international standards” (Egypt Progress Report 2015: 3). This shows that the EU still aims at promoting democracy in Egypt, but lacks the power and perhaps the willingness to actually do so. A country such as Egypt, which has tackled numerous hardships in recent years, becomes a difficult target for normative power and:

“EU cooperation with civil society suffered due to the difficult process of CSO [Civil Society Organization] registration and the lengthy and complicated process of authorizing project funding. This resulted in the suspension of a substantial number of projects.” (Egypt Progress Report 2015: 7)

Even though the EU attempted to promote democracy through NGOs (Non-Governmental Organization) and CSOs, bureaucratic problems in Egypt made it near impossible for them to operate in the country. By comparing the Action Plan to the Progress Report it is evident that the ENP was aiming for promoting democracy in Egypt but that the political situation has meant that such incentives has been abolished. It appears that the EU is in a sense relinquishing in their attempts to promote democracy in Egypt through normative power. The difficult circumstances in Egypt is also acknowledged in the Progress Report:

“However, the above analysis needs to be seen in a difficult regional and internal security context, with Egypt facing challenges such as the ongoing insurgency of militant groups and the threat of a possible impact of the effects of Da’esh (including allegiance pledge to Da’esh by Sinai-based Ansar Beit al-Maqdis).” (Egypt Progress Report 2015: 4)

In the Progress Report the framework for normative power cannot be clearly distinguished since it is the author’s opinion that the EU does not attempt to use its normative power in Egypt any longer. Concerning the analytical framework for democracy promotion there are certain aspects still relevant in the Progress Report. However, supporting democratic actors, through various NGOs and CSOs, has proven to be difficult. The political dialogue between Egypt and the EU has also been suspended so that in this sense there is no progress in democracy promotion but the attempt is still present. The analysis has shown that how the ENP uses normative power for democracy promotion differs between Azerbaijan and Egypt in outcome, while still being similar in approach. Hence, the following subchapter will contain a comparative discussion on the two chosen cases.

4.3 Comparative discussion

In both Action Plans there are a vast amount of criteria that the countries should implement and adhere to. Interestingly enough, it appears that just the act of approaching the EU, both ideologically and economically, is considered reward enough for both Azerbaijan and Egypt. By following the Action plan these countries will be given more financial assistance and other means of aid from the EU. Moreover, there is hardly any room for leverage where the country

itself puts demands on the EU, this contrasts what is stated on the EU website, that the Action plan is agreed upon and formulated from joint discussions where both parties needs are taken into consideration (European Union External Action official website 2015). Drawing on what is argued by Kurki (2013) previously it can be stated with somewhat certainty that the EU might in this case put its own interests first. A liberal climate, which favors trade and economic investments is promoted by the EU and this is clearly shown in the outline of the Action plans.

Drawing on the analytical frameworks a clear trend of normative power can be seen in the Action Plans. Not all characteristics could be found but there is a definite trend in the ENP to set standards and norms as well as increasing commitment. Throughout the Action Plans the word recurring is in fact 'commitment' and it seems that the EU desires to keep the partner country dedicated to the EU. To conclude the Action Plans for both countries are focused on steps that these can take towards the EU. Promoting democracy is key in both plans and the EU is keen on ensuring that the countries take steps in the direction of becoming a democracy. There were however limited progress in terms of democracy and no adherence to the Action Plans in both countries. Even though Azerbaijan explicitly stated when the Action Plan was initially formulated that EU membership was desirable, no steps were taken in the following decade to ensure that this could happen.

The Progress Reports show that even though the Action Plans were relatively similar for Egypt and Azerbaijan, there is a great difference in the 2015 Progress Reports. Regarding Azerbaijan there still is discussions on how to strengthen the relationship with the EU. While for Egypt there is a feeling of renouncement in how the Progress Report is formulated. One cannot dismiss Egypt's turbulent recent history as being anything less than important when discussing the limited progress of Egypt in recent years.

To conclude the analysis, it has been shown that the main methods of normative power of the EU are those of issuing standards and norms as well as increasing commitment from the partner country. Democracy promotion is utilized mainly by supporting democratic actors and creating incentives for change, this follows the more-is-more principle of the ENP. There is no mention of removing privileges by issuing for instance embargoes so the EU appears to have vested interests in keeping good relations with Egypt and Azerbaijan. This analysis has shown how the ENP uses its normative power in Azerbaijan and Egypt. Particular focus has then been on democracy promotion as a main channel for normative power especially in the Action Plans but also to some extent in the Progress Reports. The final chapter will conclude the entire paper, summarize it and as a final point make suggestions for future research.

5. CONCLUSION

The first step in order to make a satisfactory conclusion is to summarize the contents of the paper. The aim of this analytical essay has been to find out how the ENP uses its normative power for democracy promotion in Azerbaijan and Egypt. This was achieved by creating an analytical framework which was applied on the Action Plans and Progress Reports of Azerbaijan and Egypt. The method chosen was a qualitative content analysis which was designed to find the key characteristics of the analytical framework in the chosen EU documents. The analysis showed that the ENP foremost creates incentives and issues standards and norms for the partner countries. This is the main tool for normative power that can be found in the scope of this paper and democracy promotion is a channel of expressing this power. The EU uses its normative power to put demands on countries to take steps towards democratization.

Following the summary of the thesis it is of relevance to answer the research question in a clear, coherent manner. The question is: how is the European Neighbourhood Policy using normative power for democracy promotion in Azerbaijan and Egypt? The ENP uses its normative power by creating incentives, issuing standards and norms as well as enhancing commitment from the partner country. This power is then applied on democracy promotion and it has been found that the main tool for promoting democracy is through political dialogue, supporting democratic actors and creating incentives for democratic change. The primary incentive is the one referring to the promise of potential future membership in the EU. The channels of diffusion introduced by Manners (2002) can be seen in the ENP to a certain extent. Procedural as well as transference diffusion is exceedingly present in the structure of the ENP as well in how it decides to handle its relations with third countries.

However, it is important to bear in mind that the study conducted is merely a comparative case study and is thus not representative of the entire ENP or all other agreements between the EU and third countries. Therefore no general conclusions can be drawn but in this case there appears to be numerous common characteristics of how the EU uses its normative power for democracy promotion, at least when Azerbaijan and Egypt are concerned. Moreover, the analytical framework is selectively created, since it is impossible to encompass all characteristics of normative power and democracy promotion. This can potentially mean that there are other characteristics that could have been included that would have led to slightly different results. But seeing as the framework was successfully applied to the Action Plans and to some extent to the Progress Reports the chosen characteristics were suitable for the purpose of this paper.

The final section will be concerned with suggestions for future research. During the process of writing this paper several questions appeared, which unfortunately cannot be answered here due to a word limit and time constraints. The first suggestion for future research is regarding the effectiveness of EU's normative power for attaining specific goals, such as democracy. It appears that the power held by EU does not have any real influence over the partner country since there was no progression in regards of democracy in either Azerbaijan or Egypt. One can also ask the question why normative power does not work in these countries, whether it is country-specific or it is the ENP that is defective in its structure would be interesting to investigate. Perhaps it is the EU that needs to change in its foundation, since if it is set on promoting democracy, then a more effective approach might need to be created.

The EU has changed significantly since Winston Churchill gave his speech in 1946 arguing for a United States of Europe, but holding different types of power has been present since its creation. This paper has shown how the ENP, and in extension the EU, uses its normative power in a way which is aimed at creating incentives for democratic change, but fails to do so. Perhaps a revision of how the EU uses power is needed it is to keep its powerful position as the 21st century carries on.

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