

Ph.D. Thesis

**Post-Soviet Region, Authoritarian Stability,
and Autocracy Promotion: Limits to the
European Union's External Governance**

Katsiaryna Yakouchyk

[THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK]

**Post-Soviet Region, Authoritarian Stability, and Autocracy Promotion:
Limits to the European Union’s External Governance**

By

Katsiaryna Yakouchyk

B.A., Brest State Pushkin University, Belarus (2008)

M.A., Andrassy Gyula German Speaking University of Budapest, Hungary (2011)

Submitted to the Faculty of Philosophy, Jean Monnet Chair for European Politics
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PASSAU, Passau, Germany

May 2017

© Katsiaryna Yakouchyk, MMXVII. All rights reserved.

The author hereby grants to University of Passau permission to reproduce and to
distribute copies of this thesis document in whole or in part.

The undersigned hereby certify that they have read and recommend to the Faculty of
Philosophy, Jean Monnet Chair for European Politics, for acceptance a thesis entitled
“**Post-Soviet Region, Authoritarian Stability, and Autocracy Promotion:
Limits to the European Union’s External Governance**” as the afore-mentioned
thesis is fully adequate in both scope and quality as a dissertation for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

Signature of Author

Faculty of Philosophy, Jean Monnet Chair for European Politics

Certified by

Daniel Göler
Professor of European Studies
Thesis Supervisor

Certified by

Mathias Jopp
Honorary Professor
Internal Examiner

[THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK]

**Post-Soviet Region, Authoritarian Stability, and Autocracy Promotion:
Limits to the European Union's External Governance**

By

Katsiaryna Yakouchyk

Submitted to the Faculty of Philosophy, Jean Monnet Chair for European Politics
in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

Signature of the author

Katsiaryna Yakouchyk

[THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK]

Acknowledgments

First, and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Daniel Göler for his constant advice throughout my Ph.D. journey. Great thanks go to the Secretary's office of the Jean Monnet Chair, Ms. Maria Egger, who has constantly supported me with administrative matters. I would like to thank the Women's Office at the University of Passau for the financial support to attend several conferences and summer schools. I would like to thank Tanja Börzel for the warm hospitality and valuable feedback on my research. I owe special thanks to the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS) for awarding me a scholarship and also enabling me to meet wonderful people through its seminar program. Many of KAS fellows have become good friends of mine and have followed me during my Ph.D. adventure. Special thanks go to Liudmila Asipienka, Tanja Vaituleich, Lilia Usik, Diana Knyr, Helena Burgrova for our invaluable Berlin meetings. I have had a great opportunity to spend a year at the Kolleg-Forscher-Gruppe "The Transformative Power of Europe" at the Free University of Berlin. Special thanks also go to my long-standing friends Azra Avdagic and Victor Bashkatov for their constant encouragement and great hospitality. Finally, I am greatly indebted to my family in Belarus and my husband Rudy without whom this thesis would have not been possible.

[THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK]

To my Belarusian and Italian families

[THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK]

Abstracts of the single papers submitted in the framework of the Ph.D. thesis “Post-Soviet Region, Authoritarian Stability, and Autocracy Promotion: Limits to the European Union’s External Governance”

This cumulative thesis consists of six single contributions: five independent essays and an introductory chapter. All of the contributions have been published or accepted for publication. The overarching scope of these essays is to analyze different factors accounting for the stability of post-Soviet authoritarian regimes and the obstacles, which Western democracy promoters can face when dealing with autocrats. The starting point for these enquiries has been the striking inability of Western democracies and in particular of the European Union to encourage and to assist political transformation in the majority of the post-Soviet republics.

Chapter 1 (Introduction) has been published as following: Yakouchyk, K., 2018. Beyond Autocracy Promotion: A Review (forthcoming in Political Studies Review, DOI: [10.1177/1478929918774976](https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929918774976)).

Abstract:

In this article, I provide a survey of the recent and rapidly growing theoretical and empirical literature on autocracy promotion. In a relatively concise way, the reader is able to grasp all key concepts and related aspects on the topic. This article is a guide for all those aiming to begin their journey in the scholarly land of autocracy promotion, trying to stimulate these travelers in exploring off-beaten research avenues.

Chapter 2 has been published as following: Yakouchyk, K., 2016. The Good, the Bad, and the Ambitious: Democracy and Autocracy Promoters Competing in Belarus. European Political Science Review 8, 195-224. DOI: [10.1017/S1755773914000459](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773914000459).

Abstract:

How do China, Russia, and the European Union (EU) facilitate or hinder political liberalization in Belarus? In this paper, using the qualitative case study method, I primarily highlight the competition that the EU faces with the Russian active autocracy promotion in Belarus. The EU provides aid only in exchange for promise of democratic and economic reforms, which might be very costly and danger the persistence of ruling

elites. Russia, at the same time, offers economic and diplomatic support to Belarus, which is, however, conditioned by privatization of the Belarusian strategic assets in favor of Russian stakeholders. I also claim that China, with growing international ambitions, passively supports autocracy in Belarus, by providing financial aid without interfering with internal political affairs. For Belarus, whose leadership still enjoys legitimation by a large part of the population due to the economic stability, losing major state enterprises might weaken sovereignty. Thus, diversification of economic partners is of crucial importance for Belarus. I argue that Belarusian ruling elites may have found an escape away from democratic and autocratic pushes from the EU and Russia, respectively, by increasing linkages with China. To promote effectively democracy in its neighborhood, the EU ought to reconsider interactions with external non-democratic actors. The paper concludes by providing some policy recommendations for the EU.

Chapter 3 has been published as following: Yakouchyk, K., Schmid, A.M., 2016. EU-Belarus Cooperation in Border Management: Mechanisms and Forms of Norm Transfer, in: Bossong, R., Carrapico, H. (Eds.), *EU Borders and Shifting Internal Security. Technology, Externalization and Accountability*. Springer International Publishing, Cham, Switzerland, pp. 121-138. DOI: [10.1007/978-3-319-17560-7_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-17560-7_7).

Abstract:

On the eve of the Eastern enlargement the EU faced the challenge of defining its relations with the new neighbours. As a result, the EU launched the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) which aimed to prevent “new dividing lines in Europe and to promote stability and prosperity within and beyond the new borders of the Union” (European Commission). In 2009 the Eastern Partnership (EaP) was designed to reinforce the Eastern dimension of the ENP. In the framework of the neighbourhood projects the EU seeks to export its own rules, norms and standards beyond its legal borders in numerous policy fields. One of the priority fields is effective border management, since secure and well-managed borders are crucial for the EU’s internal security. The aim of this paper is to explain the EU policy transfer in border management issues to Belarus. Border management authorities are the biggest recipients of financial support in Belarus. Considering difficult relations between the EU and Belarus, cooperation in border issues

is one of the most successful cases of bilateral cooperation.

Chapter 4 has been accepted for publication in a Working Papers Series “Passauer Jean Monnet Papiere” and will be published as following: Yakouchyk, K., 2018. The Collective Security Treaty Organization as an Unconventional Stabilizer for Autocrats. Passauer Jean Monnet Paper, Universität Passau.

Abstract:

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is one of the oldest post-Soviet regional organizations, whose members are authoritarian regimes. Motivated by its membership dynamics, we present the qualitative evidence of how the CSTO is Janus-faced. On the one hand, relying on a comprehensive review of the CSTO official documents and its leadership statements, we show that the CSTO is able to help stabilizing its members against the risk of a regime change. On the other hand, the CSTO members face costs of being into the organization that could exceed benefits. These costs are related to the dominant position played by Russia, and its use of the CSTO as a tool for regional dominance.

Chapter 5 has been published as following: Yakouchyk, K., 2017. Governance Transfer by Non-Democratic Regional Organizations: The Case of the CSTO, in: Norm - und Regeltransfer in der europäischen Außenpolitik. Göler, Daniel, Stratenschulte, Eckart D. (Eds.), Schriftenreihe des Arbeitskreises Europäische Integration e.V., Bd. 99. DOI: [10.5771/9783845280417-233](https://doi.org/10.5771/9783845280417-233)

Abstract:

This chapter addresses the limits of European governance transfer in third countries by addressing the presence of alternative governance providers. In particular, this Chapter focuses on the post-Soviet region, in which the EU governance transfer has been facing considerable limits, among others because of the parallel development of other regional organizations led by Russia. This Chapter explores the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and its capacity for governance transfer. Previous research has showed that organizations formed by non-democracies are sometimes engaged in promotion of democratic governance for the sake of legitimacy and regime stability. At the same time, such organizations serve to cement norms of non-interference and

state sovereignty and to boost the image of the member states, who are excluded from Western integration initiatives. I show that in contrast to Western regional organizations based on democratic norms, the CSTO does not have a clear-cut ideological orientation and takes decision on the ad hoc basis. The CSTO members hold together on the premises of state sovereignty, non-interference and the importance of their political and economic stability. The regime type of the CSTO members is a limiting factor for close integration and effective governance transfer. The CSTO members are to some extent ‘free riders’, who need this regional grouping for security guarantees from Russia, but at the same time they prefer to avoid a too close integration of their military structures, fearing a potential intervention in case of an internal crisis.

Chapter 6 has been published in open access as following: Yakouchyk, K. 2019. Belarusian State Ideology: A Strategy of Flexible Adaptation. Working Paper. Universität Passau. <https://opus4.kobv.de/opus4-uni-passau/frontdoor/index/index/docId/602>.

Abstract:

While in some Eastern European countries a wave of colored revolutions challenged existing political orders, Belarus has remained largely untouched by mass protests. In Minsk, the diffusion of democratic ideas leading to the mobilization of population meets a stable authoritarian regime. Nevertheless, the stagnating democratization process cannot be only attributed to the strong authoritarian rule and abuse of power. Indeed, Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko still enjoys popularity by a large part of the population. Although international observers report that elections in Belarus have never been free and fair, few commentators doubt that Lukashenko would not have won in democratic elections. This evidence suggests that the regime succeeded in building a strong legitimizing basis, which has not been seriously challenged during the last two decades. This paper explores the authoritarian stability in Belarus by looking at the patterns of state ideology. The government effectively spreads state ideology since the early 2000s. Ideology departments have been created in almost all state institutions. The education sector has been affected by the introduction of the compulsory course “The Fundamentals of Belarusian State Ideology” at all universities, and increasing attention

to the patriotic education at schools. Based on document analysis, I trace the creation of “ideological vertical” in Belarus and focus on the issue of ideology in education and youth policy sectors.