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## Promoting Embedded Democracy? Researching the Substance of EU Democracy Promotion

ANNE WETZEL\* & JAN ORBIE\*\*

**Abstract.** This article introduces this special issue on the substance of EU democracy promotion. It explains the research question that is central to this special issue: What is the democratic substance that the EU furthers in third countries? First, we provide a review of the literature, arguing that existing studies have mainly focused on the impact and strategies of EU democracy promotion without sufficiently analysing the very substance it furthers in third countries and regions. While academic research has made a rough distinction between a broad and a limited notion of democracy promotion, scholars have not yet systematically and comparatively analysed this topic. Second, we develop a conceptual framework in order to ‘map’ the substance of EU democracy promotion. Starting from a liberal conception of democracy and based on an adaptation of the model of ‘embedded democracy’, different components, types and agendas of democracy promotion are identified. Third, we formulate a number of expectations on the substance of democracy advanced by the EU, focusing in particular on the distinction between a ‘one-size-fits-all’ and a differentiation scenario. This article ends with a summary of the different contributions to the special issue.

### I Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Democracy promotion in third countries has been on the agenda of the EU since the early 1990s.<sup>2</sup> Over the past twenty years, EU democracy promotion activities

\* Post-doctoral Fellow at the Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES), University of Mannheim.

\*\* Professor at the Centre for EU Studies, Ghent University.

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<sup>2</sup> EU democracy promotion refers to the activities of EU institutions and does not include the respective activities of EU Member States.

have substantiated through a ‘learning by doing’ process.<sup>3</sup> Today, scholars speak of ‘democracy mainstreaming’ because in its bilateral and multilateral relations the EU demands a commitment to democracy and has differentiated instruments in place to promote it.<sup>4</sup>

With the development of the EU’s democracy promotion policy a vast academic literature has emerged on the topic. Whereas many studies have focussed on the impact and effectiveness of EU democracy promotion in third countries,<sup>5</sup> others have dealt with the EU as a democracy promoter itself and in particular with its democracy promotion instruments and strategies.<sup>6</sup>

However, despite the extensive literature on EU democracy promotion, there is hardly any comprehensive and comparative study on the substance that the EU furthers. On the one hand, analysis of European democracy promotion ‘often gets stuck at a rather abstract level, involving the description of a ‘European approach’ that is said to be gradual, development-oriented and based on positive engagement and partnership’.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, even though scholars have made more precise suggestions regarding the normative principles that the EU promotes they admit that their claims would have to be tested empirically.<sup>8</sup> As we will summarize below, the literature has so far made a rough distinction between a ‘limited’ and a ‘broad’ notion of democracy as the foundation of EU democracy promotion. The EU itself has been discussing the adoption of an official definition of the concept as a basis for its external democracy promotion

<sup>3</sup> T.A. Börzel & T. Risse, ‘Venus Approaching Mars? The European Union’s Approaches to Democracy Promotion in Comparative Perspective’, in *Promoting Democracy and the Rule of Law: American and European Strategies*, ed. A. Magen, T. Risse & M. McFaul (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 34–60.

<sup>4</sup> A. Jünemann & M. Knodt, ‘Externe Demokratieförderung durch die Europäische Union. Ost- und Mitteleuropa, Mittelmeer, Lateinamerika, Karibik, Afrika und Asien im Vergleich – ein Tagungsbericht’, *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 13, no. 1 (2006): 113.

<sup>5</sup> For example, F. Schimmelfennig, S. Engert & H. Knobel, ‘Costs, Commitment and Compliance: The Impact of EU Democratic Conditionality on Latvia, Slovakia and Turkey’, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 41, no. 3 (2003): 495–518; F. Schimmelfennig & H. Scholtz, ‘EU Democracy Promotion in the European Neighborhood. Political Conditionality, Economic Development and Transnational Exchange’, *European Union Politics* 9, no. 2 (2008): 187–215; T. Freyburg et al., ‘EU Promotion of Democratic Governance in the Neighbourhood’, *Journal of European Public Policy* 16, no. 6 (2009): 916–934; H. Grabbe, ‘How Does Europeanization Affect CEE Governance? Conditionality, Diffusion and Diversity’, *Journal of European Public Policy* 8, no. 6 (2001): 1013–1031; M.A. Vachudova, *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage, and Integration since 1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> For example, contributions in A. Jünemann & M. Knodt (eds), *Externe Demokratieförderung durch die Europäische Union* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2007) and Magen, Risse & McFaul (eds), *supra* n. 3.

<sup>7</sup> R. Youngs, ‘Is European Democracy Promotion on the Wane?’, *CEPS Working Document* 292 (Brussels, 2008): 2.

<sup>8</sup> I. Manners, ‘The Normative Ethics of the European Union’, *International Affairs* 84, no. 1 (2008): 45–60.

efforts but has not yet done so.<sup>9</sup> Thus, we still have a limited understanding of what is actually being promoted by the EU towards whom. This special issue addresses the shortcomings in the existing literature. By ‘substance of democracy promotion’ we mean the substantive content that is being promoted by the EU towards a third country or region through various activities and which, regardless of the EU’s success, has the potential to advance the establishment of democracy within this country.<sup>10</sup> As we will elaborate in more detail below, the substance promoted by the EU may be the same or may differ across countries and regions. However, taking this variation into account, our main focus is on ‘liberal democracy’.

We will not investigate whether the EU is successful in democracy promotion. The research on the content of EU democracy promotion rather than its impact is not only motivated by the lack of systematic attention to the substance in the literature (see above), but also by two additional reasons. First, the question about what the EU promotes is prior to the question about the results of EU democracy promotion efforts and can thus be analysed independently. This also takes into account that the result of EU democracy promotion is not necessarily what it has intended. However, scholars and commentators often evaluate the impact of EU democracy promotion policies without explicitly acknowledging what kind of democracy the EU has in mind.

Second, we contend that a deeper analysis of the substance of the EU’s democracy promotion helps to better understand the nature of the EU as an actor in the world.<sup>11</sup> We are interested in what the EU does in the first place because this will tell us something about the EU as an actor with a distinct and normatively charged foreign policy culture and bearer of different foreign policy roles, among others the role of a democracy promoter.<sup>12</sup> To put it bluntly: even if the EU’s democracy promotion policies have no impact whatsoever on third

<sup>9</sup> M. Meyer-Resende & J. Wisniewska, *Democracy Revisited. Which Notion of Democracy for the EU’s External Relations?* (Brussels: Office for Promotion of Parliamentary Democracy, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> Note that our usage of the term ‘substance’ does not include issues of implementation in third countries. It thus differs from usages that understand ‘substantive democracy’ or ‘democratic substance’ as a second step after the transfer of ‘formal democracy’ or ‘democratic forms’ as found in M. Kaldor & I. Vejvoda, ‘Democratization in Central and East European Countries’, *International Affairs* 73, no. 1 (1997): 59–82, and P. Uvin, *Human Rights and Development* (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2004), 98–99. Also, our focus on activities that have the potential to advance the establishment of liberal democracy means that we do not look systematically at EU discourse on democracy promotion. While we do not neglect what the EU is saying, we focus mostly on what it is doing and largely ignore the impact it has in third countries.

<sup>11</sup> See also S. Lucarelli, ‘Introduction. Values, Principles, Identity and European Union Foreign Policy’, in *Values and Principles in European Union Foreign Policy*, ed. S. Lucarelli & I. Manners (New York: Routledge, 2006), 2.

<sup>12</sup> A. Jünemann, ‘Externe Demokratieförderung im südlichen Mittelmeerraum: Ein rollentheoretischer Erklärungsansatz für die Kluft zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit in den EU-Außenbeziehungen’, in *Der Nahe Osten im Umbruch. Zwischen Transformation und Autoritarismus*, ed. M. Beck et al. (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2009), 151–174.

countries, the pursued democracy-related objectives can still tell us something about the EU's international role. The research will in particular help us assess the EU's actual behaviour as distinct from its impact.<sup>13</sup>

In the literature on the EU's foreign policy the special character of this policy is often stressed – be it as ‘normative’, ‘civilizing’ or ‘ethical’.<sup>14</sup> Existing studies bring up several questions that are also relevant for our analysis on the substance of EU democracy promotion. For example, several scholars are pointing to the EU's disregard of ‘normative’ goals when overriding interests are concerned.<sup>15</sup> Can we detect such inconsistencies also with respect to the substance of EU democracy promotion, for example, by opting for more technocratic and less political contents when major EU or Member State interests are at stake?

Furthermore, it has been suggested to speak of the EU as a normative power only when its policy is inclusive and reflexive.<sup>16</sup> This implies that EU policy makers, on the one hand, involve those affected by the external action in its formulation and, on the other hand, try to anticipate the consequences on the ground and adapt the policy accordingly. Is such an approach reflected in the content of the EU's democracy promotion activities? Or do we observe the opposite, namely unreflexive behaviour and an ‘our democracy fits all’ approach?<sup>17</sup> What, then, would this form of democracy be?

Despite the existence of a mainstream liberal democratic approach to democracy promotion, scholars have observed that the specific model that is being promoted by an actor is often similar to the respective domestic political system: ‘It seems an endemic feature of western democracy promotion efforts that assistance providers promote what they know and admire most, which is almost always their own country's particular approach to democracy’.<sup>18</sup> For the EU as a democracy promoter, such an assumption cannot easily be made. The EU institutions do not

<sup>13</sup> This corresponds with what Elgström and Smith call the *performance* of the EU's role. O. Elgström & M. Smith, ‘Introduction’, in *The European Union's Roles in International Politics: Concepts and Analysis*, ed. O. Elgström & M. Smith (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), 1–10.

<sup>14</sup> H. Sjursen, ‘What Kind of Power?’, *Journal of European Public Policy* 13, no. 2 (2006): 169–181.

<sup>15</sup> For example, G.R. Olsen, ‘Promotion of Democracy as a Foreign Policy Instrument of “Europe”: Limits to International Idealism’, *Democratization* 7, no. 2 (2000): 142–167; K.E. Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy in a Changing World*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 165–167; A. Warkotsch, ‘Non-compliance and Instrumental Variation in EU Democracy Promotion’, *Journal of European Public Policy* 15, no. 2 (2008): 227–245.

<sup>16</sup> T. Diez, ‘Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering “Normative Power Europe”’, *Millennium* 33, no. 3 (2005): 613–636; Manners, 2008, *supra* n. 8.

<sup>17</sup> F. Bicchi, ‘“Our Size fits All”: Normative Power Europe and the Mediterranean’, *Journal of European Public Policy* 13, no. 2 (2006): 286–303.

<sup>18</sup> T. Carothers, ‘Democracy Assistance: The Question of Strategy’, *Democratization* 4, no. 3 (1997): 121–122; for the same argument see R. Youngs, ‘Trends in Democracy Assistance. What Has Europe Been Doing?’, *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 2 (2008): 166–167.

represent a model of liberal democracy that can be projected on third countries. Rather, the EU faces difficulties itself to clearly define what it understands by ‘democracy’. However, at the same time, it has been found to rely on external standards such as those from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).<sup>19</sup> Again, which consequences does this have for the particular content that the EU furthers in third countries?

This special issue takes up the above mentioned points and explores the following research question:

What is the democratic substance that the EU furthers in third countries? It presents the results of the first phase of a broader project. However, beyond this, it will also tentatively address the project’s second research question of how we can explain the democratic substance(s) promoted by the EU in third countries.

## **II The Substance of EU Democracy Promotion: Between a Broad and a Limited Notion**

Scholars have not yet systematically and comparatively analysed the very substance that the EU promotes under its democracy promotion agenda. Rather, EU democracy promotion literature has been concerned with the strategies and instruments of EU democracy promotion and its impact in third countries. Nevertheless, the substantive content that the EU promotes has been the topic of single pieces of work. On the basis of this literature, a broad EU definition of democracy promotion can be distinguished from a limited conception.

On the one hand, scholars see EU democracy promotion to encompass a variety of different aspects. Although there is no common definition of what a broad view of democracy promotion includes, Carothers summarizes that it:

rests on a broader notion of democracy, one that encompasses concerns about equality and justice and the concept of democratization as a slow, iterative process of change involving an interrelated set of political and socioeconomic developments. It favors democracy aid that pursues incremental, long-term change in a wide range of political and socioeconomic sectors, frequently emphasizing governance and the building of a well-functioning state.<sup>20</sup>

Especially in comparison with US democracy promotion he stresses this supposedly particular substance of the EU’s policy. In a similar vein, Youngs maintains that while a direct comparison between EU and US democracy

<sup>19</sup> Smith, *supra* n. 15, at 153–154.

<sup>20</sup> T. Carothers, ‘Democracy Assistance: Political vs. Developmental?’, *Journal of Democracy* 20, no. 1 (2009): 1.

promotion is hardly possible it is evident that EU democracy promotion ‘initiatives are often defined in a variety of ways and combine democracy assistance with governance, human rights, and civil society support’.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, there are numerous examples in the literature that point to a rather limited conceptualization of EU democracy promotion. Contrary to a broad, all-encompassing view, EU democracy promotion has also been characterized as tending to be apolitical and oblique, targeting democracy indirectly through initiatives focussing on governance aspects or social issues.<sup>22</sup> With regard to the concrete example of democracy promotion in the Middle East, Youngs concludes that ‘European approaches have exhibited a socio-economic, techno-governance character’.<sup>23</sup> A similar tendency has been described for the broader Middle East and North Africa region where political reform is (was) not an EU priority. This is reflected by the little attention that is paid to the benchmarking of political reform in the framework of the ENP Action Plans and the fact that ‘aid classified as “political assistance” related only indirectly to democracy’.<sup>24</sup> Crawford, who analysed EU democracy promotion in Ghana, concludes that ‘the European Community’s own development cooperation programme in this country has a minimal focus on democracy and governance issues. [...] Overall, EC cooperation remains a traditional development aid programme, with almost no political component’. Instead of interpreting this strategy as resting on a broad notion of democracy, Crawford argues that democracy in this case ‘is narrowly conceived by the EU, being more concerned with limiting state power than extending popular control’.<sup>25</sup>

The limited understanding takes its most extreme form when the EU supports unconnected diverse items such as ‘border controls in the southern Mediterranean, reconstruction in the Balkans or religious dialogue with Muslim states’<sup>26</sup> under a democracy promotion agenda.

Conversely, a limited conceptualization could also mean that the EU leans towards ‘electoralism’,<sup>27</sup> that is, exclusively focuses on ‘elections’ without considering other dimensions of liberal democracy and contextual factors. Such a ‘myopic strategy [...] – funding only elections and providing only short-term

<sup>21</sup> Youngs, 2008, ‘Trends in Democracy Assistance’, *supra* n. 18, at 160.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 165–166.

<sup>23</sup> R. Youngs, ‘Europe’s Uncertain Pursuit of Middle East Reform’, in *Uncharted Journey. Promoting Democracy in the Middle East*, ed. T. Carothers & M. Ottaway (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment, 2005), 245.

<sup>24</sup> H. Amirah-Fernández & I. Menéndez, ‘Reform in Comparative Perspective: US and EU Strategies of Democracy Promotion in the MENA Region after 9/11’, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 17, no. 3 (2009): 328, 332.

<sup>25</sup> G. Crawford, ‘The European Union and Democracy Promotion in Africa: The Case of Ghana’, *The European Journal of Development Research* 17, no. 4 (2005): 580, 573.

<sup>26</sup> Youngs, 2008, ‘Is European Democracy Promotion’, *supra* n. 7, at 14.

<sup>27</sup> T.L. Karl, ‘Electoralism’, in *The International Encyclopedia of Elections*, ed. R. Rose (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2000), 95–96.

aid' has been rejected for both the EU and the United States. In fact, EU funding for elections is not disproportionately high and only one aspect among others.<sup>28</sup> However, other scholars emphasize that the 'electoralist fallacy', that is, the belief in elections as a 'quick fix' because they are a technical, relatively inexpensive procedure that can be organized rapidly and quantified easily also applies to the EU. For example, aid sanctions have mostly been taken following failed elections or *coups d'état*. Human rights also figured among the official motives to suspend aid in most cases, however, these were typically civil and political rights closely linked to the electoral process.<sup>29</sup> In an analysis of European Community democracy assistance projects that were carried out between 1994 and 1997, Crawford found that European Community aid was largely dominated by electoral assistance measures, while neglecting the legislative and executive arms of government.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Herrero reveals a significant increase of European Instrument (formerly Initiative) for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) allocations to Electoral Observation Missions between 2000 and 2007 (after which allocations were restricted to 25%).<sup>31</sup>

### III Mapping the Substance of EU Democracy Promotion

In our analysis of the substance of EU democracy promotion, we deliberately confine ourselves to liberal democracy, which is only one particular and historically specific model of democracy.<sup>32</sup> Some explanations on this choice of the focus are in order. While there exist a number of other models, such as deliberative democracy, participatory democracy, and direct democracy,<sup>33</sup> we decided to focus on liberal democracy because '[w]hen democracy is called for it is overwhelmingly a *liberal democratic model* of democracy that is advocated'.<sup>34</sup> This relates to a number of international democracy promoters including the EU

<sup>28</sup> Youngs, 2008, 'Trends in Democracy Assistance', *supra* n. 18, at 165.

<sup>29</sup> C. Portela, *European Union Sanctions and Foreign Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>30</sup> G. Crawford, 'European Union Development Co-operation and the Promotion of Democracy', in *Democracy Assistance: International Cooperation for Democratization*, ed. P. Burnell (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 110.

<sup>31</sup> S. Herrero, 'A Decade of Democracy Promotion through the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights', *The EPD Working Papers Series on Democracy Support*, no. 1 (2009), 17.

<sup>32</sup> A.J. Ayers, "'We All Know a Democracy When We See One': (Neo)liberal Orthodoxy in the "Democratisation" and "Good Governance" Project', *Policy and Society* 27, no. 1 (2008): 1–13; B. Parekh, 'Cultural Particularity of Liberal Democracy', in *Prospects for Democracy. North, South, East, West*, ed. D. Held (Cambridge: Polity, 1993), 156–175.

<sup>33</sup> For example, D. Held, *Models of Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006).

<sup>34</sup> M. Kurki, 'Democracy and Conceptual Contestability: Reconsidering Conceptions of Democracy in Democracy Promotion', *International Studies Review* 12, no. 3 (2010): 365.

whose approach is ‘liberal democratic in its core’.<sup>35</sup> The choice was thus not made in an ‘uncritical manner’.<sup>36</sup> Rather, we think that because this model is so prominently announced it deserves further and critical study. As the previous section has shown there is a surprising variation within the accounts that scholars give of the ‘liberal’ substance that the EU promotes in third countries, which calls for more detailed analysis. This should not be equated with an approval of the EU’s policy nor an (implicit) acknowledgement of liberal democracy as a universal and superior democratic model. Furthermore, this choice should not be misunderstood in the way that the EU does only promote liberal democracy. In fact, researchers studying EU democracy promotion have in the past years also given increased attention to elements that are stressed by other models, such as participatory democracy.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, even in the studied cases the EU did not abandon liberal democracy as the main model that is to be promoted. It would certainly be interesting to investigate in further research how far EU democracy promotion also takes up elements particularly stressed by other models, for example, ‘deliberative capacity’ as suggested by Dryzek.<sup>38</sup> As a first step, however, we consciously confine our analysis to the model that dominates the democracy promotion practice.

Liberal democracy, however, is not an exactly defined concept. There are numerous attempts to pinpoint its core meaning. According to Held, the cluster of rules and institutions that characterize liberal democracy can be summarized to include elected government, free and fair elections with equal voting rights for citizens, universal suffrage, freedom of conscience, information, and expression, the right to stand for office and associational autonomy.<sup>39</sup> Others define liberal democracy more broadly and put emphasis on additional aspects such as rule of law, equality under the law, independent judiciary, checks and balances and horizontal accountability, rights of expression for minorities and disadvantaged majorities, multiple and ongoing channels for citizens’ expression and representation, substantial freedom of speech, publication, and petition.<sup>40</sup>

In order to map the substance of EU democracy promotion, we take as point of departure the democracy models developed by Linz and Stepan as well as

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*; see also Ayers, *supra* n. 32, at 3; Carothers, 2008, *supra* n. 18; T. Risse, ‘Conclusions: Towards Transatlantic Democracy Promotion?’, in Magen, Risse & McFaul (eds), *supra* n. 3, at 249.

<sup>36</sup> Kurki, *supra* n. 34, at 364.

<sup>37</sup> Freyburg et al., *supra* n. 4; A. Wetzels, ‘The Promotion of Participatory Governance in the EU’s External Policies: Compromised by Sectoral Economic Interests?’, *Democratization* 18 (2011).

<sup>38</sup> J.S. Dryzek, ‘Democratization as Deliberative Capacity Building’, *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 11 (2009): 1379–1402.

<sup>39</sup> Held, *supra* n. 33, at 94.

<sup>40</sup> L. Diamond, *Developing Democracy. Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 11–12; F. Zakaria, ‘The Rise of Illiberal Democracy’, *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 6 (1997): 22–43.

Merkel.<sup>41</sup> Both works have a broad conceptualization of liberal democracy and systematize its different elements, respectively in ‘five arenas’ and building on one precondition (Linz & Stepan) and in five ‘partial regimes’ and three context conditions (Merkel). The authors stress that these areas are ‘mutually reinforcing’,<sup>42</sup> and that democracy is ‘a complex of interdependent and independent partial regimes’,<sup>43</sup> that are mutually embedded and at the same time embedded into a broader environment. Such an analytical approach offers several advantages. First, it clearly distinguishes between democracy proper and its context. Adapting this approach to EU democracy promotion allows us to conceptually keep apart EU support of democracy’s core institutions and democracy enhancing external conditions. Second, within the notion of democracy, these approaches suggest the distinction of separate arenas or regimes. In the context of EU democracy promotion, this enables us to more exactly break down the substance. Furthermore, through the distinction of areas it becomes possible to answer the question of whether the EU is responsive to the situation in the third country when it devises the substance that it wants to promote.

Although both conceptualizations overlap, they also differ, in particular with regard to the question of whether some issues belong to the definitional core or the context of democracy, and the fine graining of categories. For Linz and Stepan, the five conditions for a democracy are civil society, political society, rule of law, state apparatus, and economic society. Democracy, in turn, is dependent on the existence of a state.<sup>44</sup> The model of embedded democracy maintains that ‘liberal democracy consists of five partial regimes: a democratic electoral regime, political rights of participation, civil rights, horizontal accountability, and the guarantee that the effective power to govern lies in the hands of democratically elected representatives’.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, it accounts for the issues of stateness, civil society, and social and economic requisites that have an influence on the quality of democracy but ‘are not defining components of the democratic regime itself’.<sup>46</sup> The following figure illustrates the concept:

<sup>41</sup> J.J. Linz & A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); W. Merkel, ‘Embedded and Defective Democracies’, *Democratization* 11, no. 5 (2004): 33–58. Please note that these frameworks were not originally developed to describe the substance of democracy promotion. However, we maintain that they offer a valuable starting point for this endeavour.

<sup>42</sup> Linz & Stepan, *supra* n. 41, at 7.

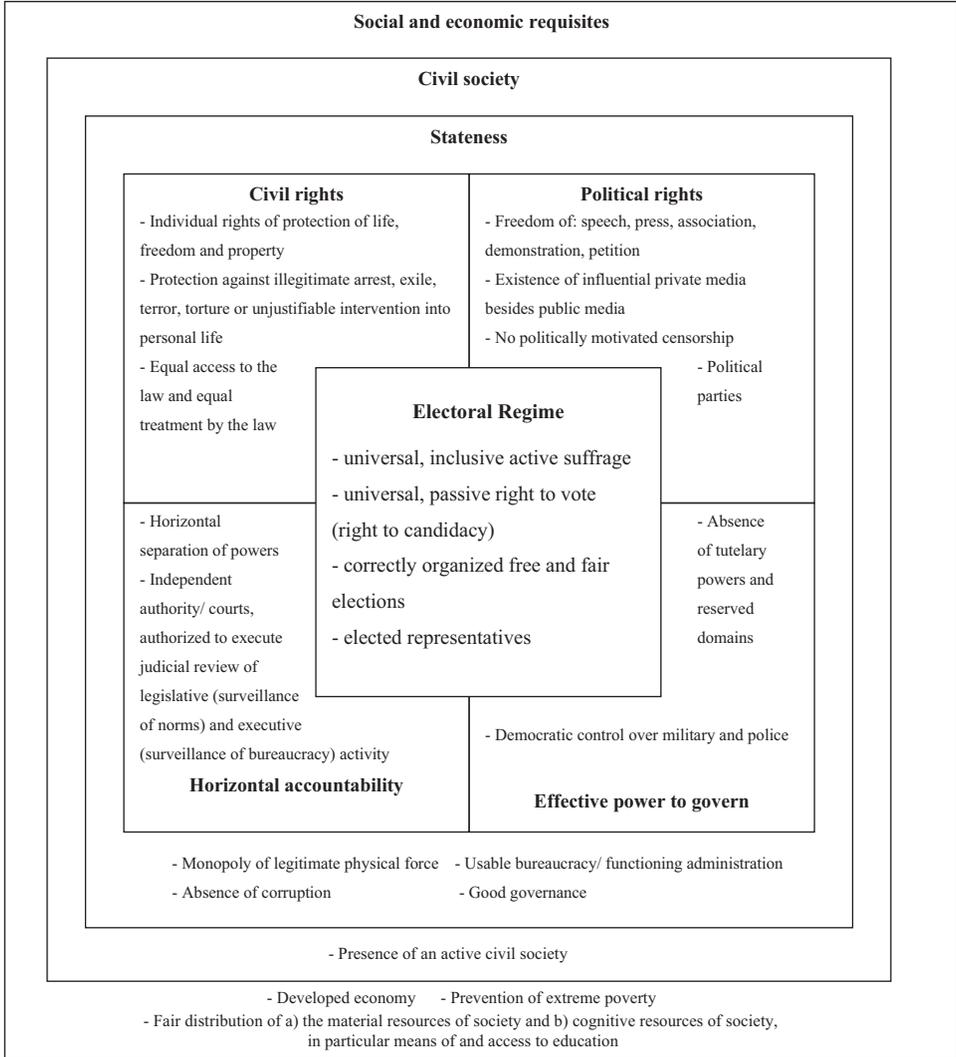
<sup>43</sup> Merkel, *supra* n. 41, at 43.

<sup>44</sup> Linz & Stepan, *supra* n. 41, Ch. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Merkel, *supra* n. 41, at 37.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

Figure 1 The Concept of Embedded Democracy (Adapted, Based on Merkel<sup>47</sup>)



For our purposes, we decided to follow Merkel’s model but adapt it with a view to the aspects from Linz and Stepan’s conceptualization of the five areas. This was mainly done for three reasons. First, Merkel’s model turned out to be more accurate. For instance, it allows us to distinguish more clearly between civil rights and civil society and to disaggregate complex issues such as the rule of law. Second, we do not follow Linz and Stepan’s suggestion to include an institutionalized market into the definition of democracy but rather see them as

<sup>47</sup> Merkel, *supra* n. 41, at 37.

distinct issues.<sup>48</sup> Third, this model helps to take up the distinction between broad and limited notions of EU democracy promotion that have been outlined in the previous section. In the following paragraphs, we briefly summarize the five partial regimes and three context regimes that constitute ‘embedded, liberal democracy’, and along which we will structure our analysis of the substance of EU democracy promotion.<sup>49</sup>

The electoral regime has the central position of the five partial regimes since it is necessary, but not sufficient, for democratic governing. Following Dahl, Merkel outlines four supporting elements of this regime: universal, active suffrage; universal, passive right to vote; free and fair elections and elected representatives.

The most closely connected partial regime is constituted by the political liberties that go beyond the right to vote. Most basically, they include the right to political communication and organization, that is, press freedom and the right to association. These define how meaningful the process of preference formation is in the public arena.

The third partial regime consists of the civil rights that are central to the rule of law, that is, the ‘containment and limitation of the exercise of state power’. Most fundamentally, this includes that individual liberties are not violated by the state and the equality before the law. Connected to these points is the existence of independent courts.

The fourth connected partial regime consists divisions of power and horizontal accountability. This implies that ‘elected authorities are surveyed by a network of relatively autonomous institutions and may be pinned down to constitutionally defined lawful action’.<sup>50</sup> The horizontal separation of powers thus amends the vertical control mechanisms of elections and public sphere. Particular emphasis is put on the limitations to executive power. Central to this partial regime is the existence of an independent and functional judiciary to review executive and legislative acts.

The last partial regime is the effective power to govern. This means that it is the elected representatives that actually govern and that actors not subject to democratic accountability should not hold decision-making power. In particular, there should be no tutelary powers and reserved policy domains.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Confer D. Beetham, ‘Market Economy and Democratic Polity’, *Democratization* 4, no. 1 (1997): 76–93.

<sup>49</sup> For the next paragraphs, see Merkel, *supra* n. 41, at 38–39.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 40; see also L. Morlino, ‘What Is a “Good” Democracy?’, *Democratization* 11, no. 5 (2004): 18.

<sup>51</sup> Merkel, *supra* n. 41, at 41–42; see also J.S. Valenzuela, ‘Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings: Notion, Process, and Facilitating Conditions’, in *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective*, ed. S. Mainwaring, G. O’Donnell & J.S. Valenzuela (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 57–104.

While these five partial regimes are understood to be the defining components of a democracy, there are some more conditions that, while not part of the definition itself, shape the ‘environment that encompasses, enables, and stabilizes the democratic regime’.<sup>52</sup> A damage of these conditions might lead to defects or destabilization of democracy.

The first of these conditions is stateness understood as the ability of the state to pursue the monopoly of legitimate physical force. Following Linz and Stepan, a modern state is indispensable for democracy. Stateness is on the one hand seen to be problematic when the territorial boundaries and the eligibility for citizenship are disputed. On the other hand, stateness implies a capable administration. As Linz and Stepan put it, democracy relies on ‘the effective capacity to command, regulate, and extract’. The bureaucracy must be usable by the democratic government.<sup>53</sup> Thus, an intact state with a functioning administration is seen as one characteristic of the environment into which democracy is embedded.<sup>54</sup>

The second external context condition is the presence of civil society. This is the ‘arena of the polity where self-organizing groups, movements, and individuals, relatively autonomously from the state, attempt to articulate values, create associations and solidarities, and advance their interests’.<sup>55</sup> The importance of this context condition stems from the assumption that a well-developed civil society strengthens democracy by generating and enabling ‘checks of power, responsibility, societal inclusion, tolerance, fairness, trust, cooperation, and often also the efficient implementation of accepted political programs’.<sup>56</sup>

The last external condition that has an influence on the state of democracy is the socio-economic context. On the one hand, this condition accounts for the link between economic development and the capability to sustain democracy, which has proven to be very stable.<sup>57</sup> On the other hand it reminds us that a certain level of socio-economic equality is necessary for meaningful political equality: ‘Only when citizens are secured and educated by means of a sufficiently developed social and economic status will they be able to form independent opinions as *citoyens*’ and participate in the political process.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Merkel, *supra* n. 41, at 44.

<sup>53</sup> Linz & Stepan, *supra* n. 41, Chs 2 and 11.

<sup>54</sup> A. Croissant, ‘Analyse defekter Demokratien’, in *Analyse demokratischer Regierungssysteme*, ed. K.H. Schrenk & M. Soldner (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2010), 97.

<sup>55</sup> Linz & Stepan, *supra* n. 41, at 7.

<sup>56</sup> Merkel, *supra* n. 41, at 47.

<sup>57</sup> R. Inglehart & Ch. Welzel, ‘How Development Leads to Democracy’, *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 2 (2009): 33–48.

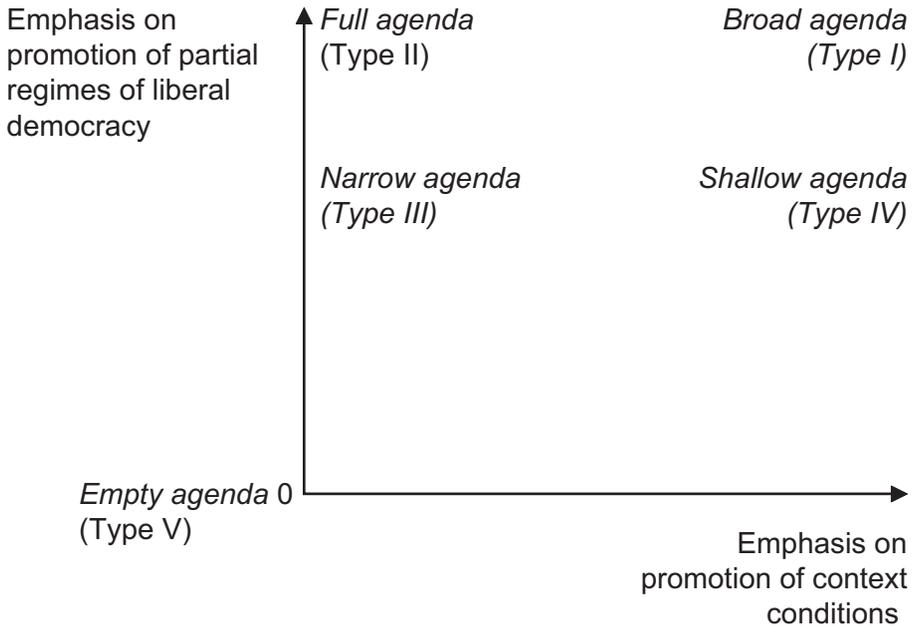
<sup>58</sup> Merkel, *supra* n. 41, at 45; see also G.A. O’Donnell, ‘Democracy, Law, and Comparative Politics’, *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36, no. 1 (2001): 27–29.

On this basis, we distinguish five possible types of democracy promotion that differ with regard to the substance that is being promoted. Theoretically, the substance of EU democracy promotion could be as follows:

- *I. Externally embedded liberal democracy promotion:* besides the five partial regimes, the EU also significantly supports the advancement of the external conditions.
- *II. Liberal democracy promotion:* the EU mainly promotes the five partial regimes of liberal democracy.
- *III. Partial liberal democracy promotion:* the EU mainly promotes some partial regimes while it neglects others, for example, ‘electoralism’.
- *IV. External conditions democracy promotion:* the EU mainly supports the advancement of the external conditions.
- *V. No liberal democracy promotion:* there are no activities related to the support of any partial regime or context condition (even though the EU may refer to some actions as democracy promotion).

We can map the substance of EU democracy promotion in third countries in the following way, distinguishing between a ‘full’, ‘broad’, ‘narrow’ and ‘shallow’ liberal democracy promotion agenda:

Figure 2 EU Democracy Promotion Agendas



In order to map the substance of EU democracy promotion, we do not only take into account activities that are explicitly labelled as such but every activity that is potentially conducive to the development of any of the partial regimes or context conditions. Conversely, activities labelled as democracy promotion are only counted as such when they are designed to develop any of the partial regimes or context conditions (regardless of their actual effectiveness).

The terms ‘narrow’ and ‘shallow’ are not meant to refer to a ‘worse’ form of EU democracy promotion. The EU might have good reasons not to pursue a broad democracy promotion strategy in a certain country (e.g., because the state of democracy is already rather advanced in a third country or because the third country government’s willingness to cooperate on democracy promotion is low). Thus, the main aim is to map the substance rather than engaging in a normative critique of the EU’s policies.

#### IV What Factors Shape the Substance of EU Democracy Promotion?

Having outlined a framework for identifying the substance(s) of EU democracy promotion, the question arises which type(s) of EU democracy promotion we can expect. In this section, we will explore a number of expectations that are based on the existing literature. Given the exploratory nature of this special issue, these are not (yet) hypotheses that will be systematically tested. However, the expectations outlined below go beyond mere description and should facilitate the construction of hypotheses for further research.

At the most fundamental level, we can formulate two possible general scenarios for the substance of EU democracy promotion. The first one follows an essentialist understanding of EU democracy promotion and suggests that the EU advances broadly the same content in different third countries. Alternatively, we could expect that the substance of EU democracy promotion is contingent on a range of factors and that the EU significantly differentiates the content between various countries and/or regions. Below we formulate expectations regarding the two scenarios.

##### 1. *One-Size-Fits-All Scenario*

This scenario is based on the expectation that the EU promotes the same substance around the world. Indeed, scholars of EU democracy promotion have come to the conclusion that in its democracy promotion activities ‘the EU follows one single cultural script [...] across the globe’.<sup>59</sup> This finding suggests an essentialist take on the substance of EU democracy promotion. It is plausible to

<sup>59</sup> Börzel & Risse, *supra* n. 3, at 48.

expect that the EU externalizes its internal model of democracy to third countries regardless of other factors, be it consciously or unreflexively. The expectation that the EU consciously exports the internal model of democracy is backed by the domestic analogy – an instrument that has been used to detect the basic patterns in the substance or content of the EU's foreign policy including democracy promotion.<sup>60</sup> Applied to the foreign policies of states and – as Peters and Wagner argue – the EU, the domestic analogy postulates that these 'want to see their international environment ordered according to the same values and principles governing their own political and social system'.<sup>61</sup> From a sociological institutionalist understanding of EU foreign policy, it can be expected that the EU unreflexively promotes institutional isomorphism, as a default option.<sup>62</sup> Thus, the following general expectation can be formulated:

The EU promotes the same substance around the world without significant differentiation, which is inspired by its own 'democratic condition'

What would this substance be? With regard to this question, several different expectations can be formulated. They emerge from different understandings of the EU's internal model of democracy. First, the EU can be understood to be founded among others on the 'core norm' of democracy, which is at the same time an objective of its external policies.<sup>63</sup> This 'democratic condition' originally related to the political regimes of the Member States but has been formalized in the Treaty of Amsterdam.<sup>64</sup> Given this process of internal constitutionalization of democracy as a core norm and the development of a foreign policy role that conceives the EU as an international democracy promoter,<sup>65</sup> it can be expected that the EU particularly advocates liberal democracy without differentiation

<sup>60</sup> D. Peters & W. Wagner, 'Die Europäische Union in den internationalen Beziehungen', in *Die Europäische Union: Theorien und Analysekonzepte*, ed. K. Holzinger et al. (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005), 215–272; A. Jünemann & M. Knodt, 'Externe Demokratieförderung der Europäischen Union. Die Instrumentenwahl der EU aus vergleichender Perspektive', *Integration* 29, no. 4 (2006): 287.

<sup>61</sup> G. Kittel, V. Rittberger & F. Schimmelfennig, 'Staatenmerkmale und Außenpolitik: Untersuchungsdesign und Hypothesen', in *Anpassung oder Austritt: Industriestaaten in der UNESCO-Krise*, ed. V. Rittberger (Berlin: Ed. Sigma, 1995), 68, translation taken from H. Boekle, V. Rittberger & W. Wagner, 'Norms and Foreign Policy: Constructivist Foreign Policy Theory', *Tübinger Arbeitspapiere zur Internationalen Politik und Friedensforschung*, no. 34a (Tübingen, 1999), 19.

<sup>62</sup> Bicchi, *supra* n. 17.

<sup>63</sup> I. Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 2 (2002): 235–258.

<sup>64</sup> P. Maignette & K. Nicolaïdis, 'The European Union's Democratic Agenda', in *The European Union and Global Governance*, ed. M. Telò (London/New York: Routledge, 2009), 46–48.

<sup>65</sup> Jünemann, *supra* n. 12, at 161.

around the world. For example, Manners suggests that the EU aims to spread ‘consensual democracy’, with an emphasis on power sharing and proportional representation, in line with the democratic model of the EU and the majority of EU Member States.<sup>66</sup>

A. The EU promotes the partial regimes around the world without significant differentiation (Type II for all countries).

Although the EU is committed to the norm of liberal democracy, the EU’s institutional design differs from that of a state and thus also from the way in which liberal democracy shapes the institutional setup of its Member States. With initiatives such as the 2001 White Paper on European Governance, the EU tries to introduce principles of civil society involvement that it deems important ‘for establishing more democratic governance’.<sup>67</sup> Thus, second, governance perspectives emphasize the role of non-state actors and the dispersion of authority in the EU’s multilevel polity. Consequently, it could be expected that:

B. The EU mainly promotes the development of civil society and the involvement of non-state actors in the decision-making process (Type IV for all countries with an emphasis on civil society).

However, some authors argue more straightforwardly that the ‘democratic deficit’ is a myth. The EU’s democratic nature should not be assessed in relation to the involvement of the legislative (input democracy) or non-state actors (governance perspective), but rather in terms of its capacity to perform its core mandate, which is to establish market integration. The creation of deeper markets (e.g., internal market) and regulatory functions (e.g., competition, central banking), which correct market failure, constitutes the main function of the EU. These are matters of low political salience, which are best delegated to a more technocratic level in order to be successful (output democracy).<sup>68</sup> This perspective may also inform the EU’s notion of democracy promotion externally. Indeed, some scholars stress that the EU’s ‘good governance’ or ‘democratic governance’ agenda towards third countries aims to create market societies. The external governance agenda would favour a neoliberal, technocratic approach to governance reform.<sup>69</sup> For example, in relation to the southern Mediterranean region, Holden suggests

<sup>66</sup> Manners, 2008, *supra* n. 8, at 50.

<sup>67</sup> European Commission, ‘European Governance. A White Paper’, COM (2001) 428 final.

<sup>68</sup> See A. Moravcsik, ‘In Defence of the Democratic Deficit: Reassessing Legitimacy in the European Union’, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 4 (2002): 603–624; G. Majone, ‘The Rise of the Regulatory State in Europe’, *West European Politics* 17, no. 3 (1994), 77–101.

<sup>69</sup> For example, W. Hout, ‘Governance and Development: Changing EU Policies’, *Third World Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2010): 1–12.

that the EU's liberal democratic objectives are translated into (neo)liberal economic goals.<sup>70</sup> Thus, from this third perspective, it can be expected that:

- C. The EU mainly promotes good governance, governance capacity and functioning administration, in line with its market enhancing objectives (Type IV for all countries with an emphasis on 'stateness').

In contrast, it may be argued that the 'European social model' constitutes a main characteristic of EU democracy. This view is particularly widespread in European policy circles where European welfare arrangements are often opposed to the more liberal democratic model in the United States.<sup>71</sup> When asked what distinguished the EU democratic model and subsequently influences its democracy promotion policies, one EU official emphasized that it is the welfare state component. According to this official, the EU pursues a broad democratic agenda in line with international conventions such as, for example, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, but in addition to this, it also aims to deliver welfare in third countries.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, the EU explicitly refers to its own internal experience through its international commitment to the 'social dimension of globalization' and the 'decent work agenda'. The EU's comprehensive global social agenda links the objectives of core labour standards, social protection, social dialogue and employment, with other normative external policy goals such as development, democracy and human rights.<sup>73</sup> In the framework of the special issue, this would mean that a 'full' democratic agenda is being promoted in non-EU countries and regions, namely Type II for all countries with an additional emphasis on the 'fair distribution' dimension of socio-economic development.

- D. The EU mainly promotes elements of social-democratic systems, in line with the so-called European social model (Type II with an additional emphasis on the 'fair distribution' dimension of socio-economic development')

## 2. *Differentiation Scenario*

This alternative scenario is based on the expectation that the substance of EU democracy promotion around the world is not so much driven by the same

<sup>70</sup> P. Holden, *In Search of Structural Power: EU Aid Policy as a Global Political Instrument* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

<sup>71</sup> For example, R. Youngs, 'European Approaches to Democracy Assistance: Learning the Right Lessons?', *Third World Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (2003): 130.

<sup>72</sup> Interview, European External Action Service, 12 May 2011.

<sup>73</sup> See, e.g., European Commission, 'The Social Dimension of Globalisation – the EU's Policy Contribution on Extending the Benefits to All', COM (2004) 383; European Commission, 'Promoting Decent Work for All: The EU Contribution to the Implementation of the Decent Work Agenda in the World', COM (2006) 249.

underlying ‘theme’ but rather that there is considerable variation in the content that goes beyond mere differences in emphasis. In this scenario, we would expect differences in the very ‘quality’ of the substance.

The EU qualitatively differentiates the substance of its democracy promotion activities around the world.

Such variation may be due to different factors. Although the literature on democracy promotion has not systematically paid attention to the explanation of the substance it has dealt with factors that determine the usage of instruments. By way of analogy, we could expect that differentiation of substance may be caused by variation in the following:

- (1) *The power structure between the EU and third countries (asymmetrical interdependence)*: Asymmetries in power were found to impact on the EU’s external governance more generally<sup>74</sup> and on EU democracy promotion more particularly.<sup>75</sup>
- (2) *EU or Member State interests in third countries*: The EU’s objective of democracy promotion was found to be compromised when it clashed with other interests.<sup>76</sup> In this regard, EU democracy promotion is in line with a more general trend.<sup>77</sup>
- (3) *The EU’s specific ‘diagnosis’ on the domestic state of democracy in third countries and subsequent individual response*: With regard to EU democracy promotion instruments, scholars have found that their usage depends ‘enormously’ on the particular perception of the national or regional context in which they are employed.<sup>78</sup>
- (4) *The degree of cooperativeness of the third countries*: Studies on EU democracy promotion have drawn attention to the importance of responsiveness of the political elite and civil society to EU cooperation. In particular the degree of pluralism and consequently the willingness to cooperate were identified as factors that impact the EU’s democracy promotion strategy.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>74</sup> S. Lavenex & F. Schimmelfennig, ‘EU Rules Beyond EU Borders: Theorizing External Governance in European Politics’, *Journal of European Public Policy* 16, no.6 (2009): 791–812.

<sup>75</sup> A. Jünemann & M. Knodt, ‘Explaining EU-Instruments and Strategies of EU Democracy Promotion. Concluding Remarks’, in *Externe Demokratieförderung durch die Europäische Union*, ed. A. Jünemann & M. Knodt (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2007), 357–358; R. Youngs, ‘Democracy Promotion as External Governance?’, *Journal of European Public Policy* 16, no. 6 (2009): 901.

<sup>76</sup> Jünemann & Knodt, 2006, *supra* n. 60, at 353–355, 362–363.

<sup>77</sup> P.J. Schraeder, ‘The State of the Art in International Democracy Promotion: Results of a Joint European-North American Research Network’, *Democratization*, 10, no. 2 (2003): 21–44.

<sup>78</sup> Börzel & Risse, *supra* n. 3, at 48.

<sup>79</sup> Jünemann & Knodt, 2006, *supra* n. 60, at 360–361.

- (5) *The paradigms on democracy promotion embodied in different regional institutional environments:* Scholars found that rather than using a single standard, the EU draws from several sources when defining the kind of democracy that it wants to promote towards third countries. While it refers to CSCE standards such as the 1990 ‘Charter of Paris for a new Europe’ in its relations with European countries it has defined own standards with regard to developing countries.<sup>80</sup>
- (6) *The geographical proximity of the third countries:* A comparison between neighbouring and non-neighbouring countries has shown that the EU responded more consistently and more forcefully to non-compliance with democratic norms in the geographically close countries.<sup>81</sup>

Should we find pronounced variation in the substance of EU democracy promotion, these factors could be tested more systematically in further research. For the time being, the aim of the special issue is to map the substance of EU democracy promotion across a variety of countries and regions and to establish which of the two basic scenarios EU democracy promotion it follows.

## V Contributions of this Special Issue

Each contribution to this special issue addresses the EU’s democracy promotion activities in a particular region. Most authors have focused specifically on two or three countries within the region. Their analysis is based on the common research question about the substance(s) of EU democracy promotion and on the concepts and expectations that are outlined in this introduction. However, rather than rigidly applying the framework and identifying components and, subsequently, types and agendas formulated in this introductory article, there is diversity of approaches and perspectives. Some authors look at particular components of the framework, for example, the triangle of state-market-civil society, while others consider the importance of particular factors shaping the substance of EU democracy promotion, for example, non-EU donors or domestic factors, and still others outline some general trends in the content of EU democracy promotion policy, for example, the new emphasis on democratic governance. While most contributions are of an empirical nature, some also reflect on the conceptual framework of liberal democracy. The concluding reflections complete the special issue by offering an outlook on the topic.

Starting with the closest and arguably the most successful EU foreign policy domain, Eline De Ridder and Dimitry Kochenov examine the enlargement

<sup>80</sup> Smith, *supra* n. 15, at 153–154.

<sup>81</sup> Warkotsch, *supra* n. 15, at 230–231; S. Maier & F. Schimmelfennig, ‘Shared Values: Democracy and Human Rights’, in *Governing Europe’s Neighbourhood: Partners or Periphery?*, ed. K. Weber, M.E. Smith & M. Baun (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 45.

process of the Central and Eastern European countries. Focusing specifically on the mechanism of democratic conditionality towards the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the authors emphasize the vagueness and inconsistencies in the EU's approach. The EU did not have a well-defined view on what specific democratic institutions should be promoted through the accession process. Despite its emphasis on the Copenhagen political criteria, their content has never been clearly explained, meaning that candidate countries had to comply with 'ad hoc demands' and 'with the unknown'. While the two countries were already quite advanced on the way to democracy (with some protraction in the Slovak case) there were nevertheless some problematic issues, which, however, the EU ignored or addressed only superficially. Thus, while rhetorically the EU emphasizes all the partial regimes of the conceptual framework, in practice, this seems like 'ambitious window dressing'. Furthermore, De Ridder and Kochenov show that Slovakia remained 'stigmatized' throughout the accession process, even though it had caught up regarding its democratic development. This entailed that the country was continuously treated differently from the Czech Republic and had to perform better than its neighbour in order to receive a positive assessment of its progress. This testifies to the authors' claim of a lack of equal standards. The latter is partly attributed to the Commission's limited experience in the field of democracy, which is not part of the *acquis communautaire*.

The next article moves further eastwards, studying the EU's policies in the Eastern neighbourhood. Susan Stewart brings out the contrast in democracy related content between the EU's policies towards the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Following an analysis of the democracy provisions in the main documents, she contextualizes the EU's democracy promotion policies towards Russia and Ukraine and then systematically evaluates the importance of the different components of the liberal democracy framework as elaborated in the introduction. Similar to the findings in the previous article, the EU's rhetoric hints to a broad liberal democracy agenda, including (almost) all the partial regimes and external context conditions. However, even at the rhetorical level it becomes clear that the democracy related content of EU's policy towards Russia is superficial and less far-reaching and can be summarized as narrow democracy promotion with attention to all external conditions. In contrast, a broad democracy agenda has been promoted towards Ukraine. The latter leaves sufficient flexibility to take domestic developments into account and the EU has shown a learning process over the past decade. In the conclusion, the author gives some explanations for these findings, pointing to differences in domestic receptiveness in Russia and Ukraine as well as interest-based considerations from the side of the EU.

Shifting towards the southern neighbourhood, Vicky Reynaert provides a critical reflection of the EU as a 'shallow democracy' promoter. This article focuses on the external conditions of the conceptual framework and more specifically on the EU's insistence on market-driven reforms. The author argues not

only that a preoccupation with neoliberal economic measures has overshadowed democracy-related objectives but also that the market reforms themselves (e.g., supporting the Aqaba Special Economic zone in Jordan) have contributed to a growing inequality and a lack of liberty. In turn, these constitute the root causes for the recent protests and revolutions in the southern Mediterranean region. Highlighting the importance of the so-called 'external conditions' of the conceptual framework, Reynaert's analysis is based on the 'democratic triangle' between the state, the market and civil society. While these three aspects should be balanced, she shows that the EU's main concern has been the market. EU support for the state apparatus often serves to enhance the functioning of the market (e.g., under the banner of good governance), and the promotion of a civil society contributes to the legitimization of the neoliberal state. Even if the EU believes that such an emphasis on economic liberalization will lead to development and eventually to democratization, Reynaert argues that the EU's approach negatively affects liberty and equality in the region. While the EU has come up with new concepts such as 'deep democracy' towards the region after the beginning of the protests there does not seem to be a U-turn in its policy with regard to the relationship between state and market. Eventually, implementation will show whether the EU's policy has changed.

Examining the case of Central Asia, Fabienne Bossuyt and Paul Kubicek also argue that EU democracy promotion activities mainly concern the 'external conditions' of the democracy framework. As in the previous article, it seems that the EU favours a long-term approach to democratization whereby the improvement of external conditions, in particular, the socio-economic context, should lead to political liberalization and democratization. However, there also appear fundamental differences between the two regions. Rather than emphasizing market-based reforms that characterized the EU's relations with the Mediterranean, the EU's socio-economic agenda towards Central Asia seems more informed by developmental objectives such as poverty reduction and education. Moreover, the authors emphasize that the EU does not have a one-size-fits-all approach towards the region. Rather, it has increasingly pursued a differentiated approach towards the five countries of the Central Asian region, adjusting the substance of its democracy promotion policies according to the domestic context. The authors hypothesize that the EU has a broader liberal democracy promotion agenda towards those countries that show some commitment to political liberalization (e.g., Kyrgyzstan) and a more narrow or shallow liberal democracy promotion agenda toward states that oppose any democratic openings (e.g., Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan). Although their research largely confirms the thesis that domestic resonance matters for the EU, Bossuyt and Kubicek add that strategic considerations also play an important role.

Subsequently, Karen Del Biondo addresses the EU's democracy promotion towards sub-Saharan Africa. This article starts from the observation that the EU

promotes a broad 'democratic governance' agenda towards this region, inspired by international development paradigms. This agenda includes both the partial regimes and the external conditions of the conceptual framework (as well as some additional issues whose relation to democracy is debatable). However, some qualifications are being made in relation to the EU's holistic and ambitious approach. First, there is also differentiation in the substance promoted towards sub-Saharan African countries, based on the countries' particular needs and their degree of cooperativeness. Second, the external conditions of 'stateness', 'civil society' and 'socio-economic development' are supported more often than the partial regimes of liberal democracy, and these objectives are not always aimed at democracy promotion in the sub-Saharan African countries. For example, strengthening governments' administrative capacity and the participation of non-state actors has mainly been meant to enhance aid effectiveness. Third, when focusing on political conditionality and on aid sanctions under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement, the EU's approach has been much more limited to flaws in the electoral regime. For example, the resumption of aid has mainly been related to improvements in the electoral process. The article's conclusions outline a number of explanations for the difference between a broad democratic governance agenda and the narrow application of political conditionality.

Still within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement, the next article looks at the EU's policy towards the South Pacific. Maurizio Carbone analyses the EU's democracy promotion efforts since the late 1990s. While these were originally focused on socio-economic development instead of democracy promotion as such, the Cotonou Agreement (2000) and the Strategy for Pacific Islands (2006) introduced a new approach that emphasized political dialogue at the inter-regional level. However, the author argues that through its view of 'regionalism as the solution of all problems', and specifically through its commitment to engage with the Pacific Islands Forum, the EU has in fact delegated the definition of the substance of democracy promotion to Australia and New Zealand. In conclusion, the substance of EU democracy promotion towards the South Pacific is not so much influenced by interests and power relations between both regions or by the domestic context of the targeted countries, but rather by the EU's entrapment in its own commitment to regionalism. However, there are indications that the EU has recently become less reliant on Australia and New Zealand, taking a more self-confident approach towards defining the substance of its democracy promotion policy. The creation of the ACP-wide Governance Incentive Tranche illustrates this point, although the author points to several flaws in this new system, which may jeopardize the EU's image as a promoter of democracy and good governance.

Subsequently, Susanne Gratius analyses the EU's democracy promotion policies towards Latin America. The author emphasizes that the mutual commitment to democracy reflects more a tradition than a policy. While both regions

share a long history of democracy building, the return to electoral democracy in Latin America also implied that the EU's political role in the region was diminished. The article makes clear that the EU's policies are mostly aimed at economic development, social progress (arguably in line with the EU's 'social democracy model'), technical governance projects, and human rights issues, but that the focus on this particular substance does not stem from a coherent approach to democracy promotion in Latin America. In addition, trade interests (e.g., the free trade agreement with Colombia) and security considerations (e.g., supporting counter-terrorist measures since after 9/11), partly based on Spain's strong preferences in the region, have hindered a 'broader' democracy promotion agenda. The author argues that the EU fails to address 'the real problem with democracy in Latin America: the authoritarian temptation within a democratic façade'. Furthermore, the European model of liberal democracy is being challenged by new democratic formulas that are also used to justify authoritarian practices, such as the participative or direct democracy discourses. Examining the three 'most problematic countries' – Cuba, Colombia and Venezuela – Gratius concludes that the substance of EU democracy promotion is strongly influenced by the 'transition paradigm' and by target countries' limited cooperativeness. The EU's policies have a strong government focus, even if it concerns (semi-)authoritarian regimes, which clashes with human rights concerns and marginalizes the role of political parties and non-governmental organizations that used to be the main beneficiaries of EU democracy activities in Latin America during the 1980s. In conclusion, current EU democracy promotion activities towards Latin America lean towards a shallow agenda.

Finally, we formulate our conclusions on the substance of EU democracy promotion. The main findings of the special issue are summarized in a table, which includes both the components of the embedded democracy framework and the various countries and regions that are examined. This mapping exercise allows us to evaluate what kind of democracy the EU promotes. At the same time it is the basis for our elaboration of tentative explanations for the research findings. Although some variation can be discerned within the embedded democracy framework and across the different countries and regions, we distil three common observations on the substance of EU democracy promotion: (1) the focus on elections has been more limited than expected, (2) the EU has largely focused on the external context conditions, and (3) the links between the latter and the partial regimes of the embedded democracy framework are under-specified. More generally, it appears that the EU is balancing between a narrow and shallow agenda of democracy promotion, which basically reflects the internal democratic condition of the EU. The conclusion also formulates several suggestions for further research.

In his concluding reflections, Frank Schimmelfennig analyses the academic merit of studying the substance of EU democracy promotion. He finds that the

issue is worth exploring further and outlines some approaches that could guide such an endeavour. In particular, he points to the relevance of democracy promoters' beliefs and the characteristics of the policy-making process. Furthermore, he demands that the study of substance is connected to the study of instruments and strategies in order find out whether substance matters. Some of these suggestions will be taken up in the next phase of the project.

### *AIMS*

The aim of the *Review* is to consider the external posture of the European Union in its relations with the rest of the world. Therefore the *Review* will focus on the political, legal and economic aspects of the Union's external relations. The *Review* will function as an interdisciplinary medium for the understanding and analysis of foreign affairs issues which are of relevance to the European Union and its Member States on the one hand and its international partners on the other. The *Review* will aim at meeting the needs of both the academic and the practitioner. In doing so the *Review* will provide a public forum for the discussion and development of European external policy interests and strategies, addressing issues from the points of view of political science and policy-making, law or economics. These issues should be discussed by authors drawn from around the world while maintaining a European focus.

### *EDITORIAL POLICY*

The editors will consider for publication unsolicited manuscripts in English as well as commissioned articles. Authors should ensure that their contributions will be apparent also to readers outside their specific expertise. Articles may deal with general policy questions as well as with more specialized topics. Articles will be subjected to a review procedure, and manuscripts will be edited, if necessary, to improve the effectiveness of communication. It is intended to establish and maintain a high standard in order to attain international recognition.

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