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The Substance of European Union Democracy Promotion

1. Promoting embedded democracy? Researching the Substance of EU Democracy Promotion (Anne Wetzel & Jan Orbie)

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 analyzing 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 analyzed 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.

2. Democratic Conditionality in Eastern Enlargement: Ambitious Window Dressing (Eline De Ridder & Dimitry Kochenov)

This article addresses the promotion of democracy in the enlargement process of the Central and Eastern European countries. We start by outlining EU democracy promotion during accession, with a particular focus on political conditionality. In a subsequent part we argue that the European Commission did not make a clear substantive distinction between the concepts of rule of law and democracy. In addition various drawbacks are identified which demonstrate the vagueness and inconsistencies which characterize the EU's application of democratic conditionality. A final part illustrates these points by focusing on the EU's democratic conditionality towards the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The conclusion reads that the EU did not have a well-defined view and approach to the promotion of democracy and the rule of law in the Eastern enlargement.

3. EU Democracy Promotion in the Eastern Neighbourhood: One Template, Multiple Approaches *(Susan Stewart)*

The article sketches the EU approach to democracy promotion in the eastern neighbourhood, including the six countries involved in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and Russia. A comparison of the relevant documents reveals that issues of democratic development are much more present in the EU approach towards the six EaP partners than in its dealings with Russia. The remainder of the article presents a detailed account of EU democracy promotion efforts in Russia and Ukraine. The interactions with Russia in the realm of democracy promotion are found to be superficial and unsystematic, concentrating on individual cases without much depth or consistency. In the case of Ukraine the approach is much more holistic, with a variety of aspects of democracy being addressed over time through projects and dialogue, even if these have not had a high priority in EU-Ukraine relations until recently. There are two key reasons for these differing approaches. First, Ukraine under Yushchenko (January 2005- February 2010) was amenable to democracy promotion offerings from the EU, whereas Russia under both Putin and Medvedev has clearly rejected such efforts. Second, the perceived importance of the Russian Federation in the energy and security realms has made key EU Member States unwilling to alienate Russian elites by insisting on implementing projects related to democracy promotion.

4. Preoccupied with the market: the EU as a promoter of 'shallow' democracy in the Mediterranean *(Vicky Reynaert)*

This article investigates the substance of the European Union's democracy promotion towards its southern neighbours within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP)/the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Taking the distinction between core elements of democracy and supporting external conditions as a point of departure, the article concentrates on the latter and analyses the EU's view on the relation between the state, the market and the civil society. The article finds that the main objective of the EU's policy towards its southern Mediterranean neighbours is economic liberalization and that the promotion of the civil society, the functioning of the state and the core elements of democracy are oriented to the promotion of a market-based economy. Moreover, the EU's preoccupation with the market has affected the establishment of democracies in the southern Mediterranean region.

5. Advancing Democracy on Difficult Terrain: Substance of EU Democracy Promotion in Central Asia Adjusted to Domestic Resonance *(Fabienne Bossuyt & Paul Kubicek)*

This article examines the substance of the EU's democracy promotion activities in Central Asia. Although agreeing with the literature that EU self-interest calculations have shaped aspects of the EU's democratization policy in Central Asia, this article argues that the importance of other explanatory factors needs to be highlighted, and in particular the importance of the 'domestic context'. In assuming that the substance of the EU's democracy promotion activities differs between regions and countries, the article asserts that the EU does so in accordance with the

varying resonance in the respective target states. It hypothesizes that, *ceteris paribus*, the greater the targeted country's openness and commitment to political liberalization, the more the EU will aim to support externally embedded, i.e. broad, liberal democracy. Conversely, the smaller the targeted country's openness and commitment to political liberalization, the less emphasis the EU will put on the core aspects of democracy and the more it will promote narrow or shallow democracy.

6. Democracy Promotion Meets Development Cooperation: The EU as a Promoter of Democratic Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa (*Karen Del Biondo*)

This article analyses whether the EU has a standard substantive content it tries to promote in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is argued that the EU's policies are both broad and limited. On the one hand, the EU promotes a holistic agenda of 'democratic governance', inspired by the paradigms of international development cooperation: good governance, the securitization of development policies and participatory development. This is clearly reflected in the aid programmes. At the same time, there is some differentiation between various Sub-Saharan African countries which can be explained mostly by the specific situation and needs of the countries and by the openness of partner countries to democracy assistance. On the other hand, when looking at EU political conditionality, only a very limited, electoral, democratic model is promoted, with little variation according to the specific situation in the country.

7. Trapped in the Region: The EU and Democracy Promotion in the South Pacific (*Maurizio Carbone*)

This article analyses the substance of EU democracy promotion in the Pacific members of the ACP group (PACP) in the first decade of the new century. The PACP region represents a compelling, yet overlooked, case for several reasons: the EU has limited commercial and political interests, but has strongly committed to the promotion of democracy in the region; the South Pacific represents a unique case of regional integration, including two larger countries like Australia and Zealand and 14 smaller states like the PACP countries, and integrating traits typical of liberal democracies with more traditional forms of governance. Drawing on published and unpublished documents and confidential interviews, this article finds that by promoting inter-regional political dialogue with the Pacific Islands Forum, the European Union has been entrapped by its own commitment to regionalism and has (unwillingly) delegated the substance of democracy promotion to Australia and New Zealand. This situation slightly started to change towards the end of the 2000s, when the EU sought to project an autonomous approach on democratic governance.

8. EU Democracy Promotion in Latin America: More a Tradition than a Policy (*Susanne Gratius*)

Although interests are obviously part of inter-regional relations, the European-Latin American partnership is not mainly interest but value-driven. Since the early 1980s, when nearly all Latin American countries abandoned military regimes, democracy and human rights have had a

prominent place in EU-Latin American relations. Today, the mutual commitment to democracy and human rights is stressed in all official documents and cooperation accords between the EU and Latin America. Nonetheless, other regional priorities and the return to electoral democracy began to undermine the common values discourse and marginalize the political role of the EU in Latin America. The article is based on three major arguments: first, the EU's democratic engagement in Latin America still focuses on traditional authoritarian regimes (Cuba) and has not developed into a strategy towards the new political challenges of democratic backlash; second, the substance of democracy promotion mainly consists of technical governance issues and socioeconomic support; and third, Spain is still a major actor in EU policy and its low priority of democracy promotion influenced the EU's profile. Based on these assumptions and following a short discussion on underlying principles, the article will address EU's priorities in democracy assistance in Latin America, particularly with regards to the most problematic countries in terms of democracy, Cuba, Colombia and Venezuela.

9. With Map and Compass on Narrow Paths and Through Shallow Waters – Discovering the Substance of EU Democracy Promotion (*Anne Wetzel & Jan Orbie*)

This article presents the conclusions that we have drawn from the contributions to the special issue on the substance of EU democracy promotion. The main findings of the articles are summarized in a table which includes values for the components of the embedded democracy framework across the various countries and regions that were examined. Although some variation can be discerned within the embedded democracy framework and across the different countries and regions, the EU's policies remain firmly entrenched within the notion of embedded liberal democracy. In addition, three common observations on the substance of EU democracy promotion can be discerned: (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 democracy are under-specified. Thus, while the EU's democracy promotion policies suggest that one model suits all, it is not assumed that one size should fit all. More generally, it appears that EU democracy promotion sits uneasily between a 'narrow' and 'shallow' agenda, which can be explained by different factors. At the same time, it reflects the internal democratic condition of the EU.

10. How substantial is substance? Concluding reflections on the study of substance in EU democracy promotion (*Frank Schimmelfennig*)

This essay offers some reflections on the enterprise of studying and explaining the substance of EU democracy promotion. Three arguments are put forward to explain the fact that the substance of democracy promotion has been neglected in an otherwise vibrant field of research. First, *substance may be trivial*. According to this line of argument, the EU is composed of democratic countries that share basic principles of liberal democracy. How could and why should the EU promote anything else? In a quite different second perspective, *substance may be non-existent*. Echoing the pervasive criticism of inconsistency and incoherence in EU democracy promotion – and EU foreign policy in general – this view disputes the existence of an identifiable

“model” of democracy beyond a set of country- or issue-specific and otherwise only loosely connected policies. Finally, according to a somewhat intermediate position, *substance may not be consequential*. In this view, the EU may well have a (liberal) model of democracy but whatever the substance emerging from the EU’s policy planning and programming may be, practice is driven by specific interests, available instruments, committed resources, and other factors. As a result, the substance of EU democracy promotion may be the dependent rather than the independent variable. Rather than shaping the EU’s democracy promotion, substance is being shaped by interests and instruments that have little to do with democracy promotion at all. The essay takes up these challenges one by one. Taken together, they provide an assessment of how substantial the study of the substance of EU democracy promotion is.

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Jan Orbie is a Professor in the rank of lecturer at the Department of Political Science at Ghent University. As a co-director of the Centre for EU Studies, he plays an active role in research and teaching on EU politics at Ghent University. His research and teaching focus on the ‘soft’ (trade, development, social) dimensions of EU external relations and on the EU’s role as a civilian/normative power. He has published articles on these topics in various journals such as the *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *Journal of European Integration*, *Studia Diplomatica*, *L’Europe en Formation*, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, *Internationale Spectator*, *Res Publica*, *Journal of European Social Policy*, *Politique Européenne*, and the *European Foreign Affairs Review*. He has recently edited two books on EU trade and development politics (with Gerrit Faber, Routledge, 2007 and 2009), one book on European external policies (Ashgate, 2008), and one book on Europe’s global social policies (Routledge, 2008). He has also co-edited special issues of the *European Foreign Affairs Review* and *Res Publica*.

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