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This paper reviews the EU's conceptualizations of human rights and democracy promotion and its relevant policies to trace adjustments and their possible patterns. Concentrating on policy developments after the 2004 enlargement, scheduled policy reviews, the establishment of new policies, and the Arab Spring, the

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paper aims to show whether the EU has altered its strategies following internal or external developments. The paper suggests that adjustments have been more pronounced after external shocks, while the EU has not been inclined to adjust its approach when extending its democracy promotion to other regions.

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“Shocking” Adjustments? EU Human Rights and Democracy Promotion

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European Union

Human rights

Democracy promotion

Introduction

Following its successful model of enlargement, the EU has attempted to exercise the same leadership towards its neighbourhood (Kelley 2006), which, however, lacked one of the main incentives for democratization (Schimmelfennig, Engert and Knobel 2006) – the carrot of EU membership. While technical projects have been successfully implemented within its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), Eastern Partnership (EaP), Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and other policies, the EU's partner countries are still democracy laggards, demonstrating rhetorical but not behavioural commitment to democracy. Given the perpetual problems the EU has had with its foreign policy due to internal disagreements (Smith 2008), the positive developments brought on by it have been left largely unnoticed by analysts, who have concentrated more on its foreign policy failures (King 1999, Joseph 2009, Sked 2012), the “weak” reaction to the Arab Spring being one of these (Isaac 2012).

This paper aims to understand what triggers adjustments, if any, within the EU's approach to human rights and democracy promotion, and whether these adjustments have followed any patterns. Thus, this paper asks: have EU policies of human rights and democracy promotion evolved as a result of internal developments or external pushes? The paper suggests that adjustments have been more pronounced after external shocks related to specific geographic regions, while the EU has not been inclined to adjust organically its policies from the inside, thus extending revised policies to other regions as well.

Recently hypotheses have been put forward that the transatlantic relationship may either drift apart, transform into a functional partnership, or endure (Tocci and Alcaro 2012), with 39 percent of the surveyed public in 12 EU Member States opting for a more independent approach, 33 percent for coming closer to the US, and 24 percent for remaining about the same (GMF 2012). Meanwhile, the opinion of EU leaders is more favourable towards the US, with 49 percent advocating closer relations (GMF 2011). While the US has been occupied with

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operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, the EU has come to be viewed, if not as a successor, at least as a possible counterpart to the US in democracy promotion. However, the scope for the transatlantic partnership has been limited due to the EU's preference for soft power (Peterson 2008), while the US has not shied away from using its hard (military) power. This paper sets the ground for further analysis of possible paths for the transatlantic relationship, since it examines whether the EU has taken leadership in human rights and democracy promotion, or has initiated cooperation with the US, paying due attention to the latter's comparative advantage in specific sectors or geographic regions.

The paper considers adjustments to be discursive – changes in conceptualizations – or practical – modification, upgrade, or creation of a policy – and induced by either internal developments or external shocks. Internal developments are understood as enlargements or regular policy reviews, while external shocks are constituted by developments beyond the borders of the EU. To trace possible adjustments, the paper analyses EU policies, and pays special attention to developments in the EU's human rights and democracy promotion policies after the 2004 enlargement and the launch of the various neighbourhood policies, and, most recently, the events of the Arab Spring. All these events are possible turning-points in the EU's foreign policy approach which may have induced it to adjust its policies for enhanced effectiveness. Treating adjustment as an actual policy change, modification, or upgrade, this paper starts with a brief overview of EU human rights and democracy promotion policies. It then proceeds with the identification of discursive and practical adjustments. The paper aims *inter alia* to demonstrate whether and how the EU has adjusted to its role as a human rights and democracy promoter, and whether it has taken on a leadership role, especially given the launch of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) (Kostanyan and Nasieniak 2012, Brudzinska and Youngs 2012).

1. The EU as Human Rights and Democracy Promoter

Though Member States' perspectives are briefly discussed, the EU is treated here as a single actor, with the main focus being on EU policies, and not those of the Member States. The 2004 EU enlargement and the transitions to democracy of a number of post-communist States under the EU's guidance raised hopes of the EU's greater visibility within global affairs (Zielonka 2006), and of potentially successful democracy promotion projects in its neighbourhood. The position of the EU as a human rights player has gained attention in recent years. The Lisbon Treaty, the final recognition of the binding force of the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights, and a number of decisions of the European Court of Justice on issues related to human rights violations¹ have contributed to the standing of the EU within the human rights domain. While "human rights" as such are mentioned in Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union, the Charter, adopted in Nice in 2000, has reaffirmed and transformed this into a binding obligation for Member States since the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, making reference to "fundamental rights". The history of the protection of individual rights within the EU system shows that, when dealing with human rights issues internally, the EU institutions have often focused their attention on individual economic rights and rights connected to the enjoyment of the internal market freedoms – notably the freedom of movement – more than on the enjoyment and protection of civil rights.²

Having actively promoted the ratification of UN human rights treaties by third countries in the EU's external

1 The leading example being the *Kadi* decision, which involved a challenge by an individual to the EU's implementation of a UN Security Council resolution. The ECJ delivered a crucial judgment annulling the relevant implementing measures on the grounds that they violated fundamental rights protected by the EU legal order.

2 Such an attitude can be seen to be contradictory to the human rights discourse on external relations, i.e. the EU can be considered to adopt different approaches to human rights internally and externally.

relations (see, for example, European Commission 2001 and 2007a), EU Member States have also ratified the majority of human rights treaties, and have signed the European Convention on Human Rights (the ratification of which has been considered a condition for accession by new Member States). All Member States of the EU are party to the majority of the “core” human rights treaties elaborated under the aegis of the UN.³ Thus, any discrepancy in the behavior of either Member States or the EU institutions when discussing or approaching human rights issues, at either the internal/European or the external/international level, would undermine the role of the EU in the eyes of its international partners and other third parties, and would have a negative impact on its implementation of an effective external human rights policy (OHCHR 2011). In this sense the EU guidelines on human rights dialogues with third countries affirm the EU’s commitment to the “ratification and implementation of international human rights instruments, cooperation with international human rights procedures and mechanisms” (Council of the European Union 2008).

Recent debates have focused on the impact (if any) that EU policies have on human rights and democracy in general, rather than on the EU’s presence as a democracy and human rights promoter. Scholars are divided between those who have a negative perception of the impact of EU policies on human rights (Bogdandy 2000), and those who believe that there is space for the EU to affirm itself as a credible human rights institution (Besson 2006). However, even if human rights issues have evolved from tangential questions to declared policy objectives, mainly in the framework of foreign policy (Smith 2011, de Búrca 2011), this is not sufficient to mean that such an approach has a real impact. Some would argue that the EU’s role within the human rights domain has a deeper impact at the internal level (Boyle 2004), and that EU external action on human rights issues is often void of practical impact (Forsythe 2006). These doubts are often shared by the EU itself, which has also called for a “more effective approach” (European Commission and HR 2011a). In particular, the EU needs to strengthen its human rights and democracy promotion policies through, on the one hand, a deeper involvement with civil society stakeholders, and, on the other, the adoption of stronger common positions between EU institutions and Member States, as well as by means of a stronger commitment on the part of the EU Council via its Working Party on Human Rights.

In those regions where the perspective of EU membership is not applicable but where domestic conditions are less conducive, the EU pursues a strategy of persuasion and example, e.g. in the South Caucasus, Africa, and the Middle East. The EU’s policies of democracy promotion towards non-candidate countries follow a similar pattern: slight political conditionality with some economic and boosted political incentives, together with a strong emphasis on the notion of “shared values” through dialogue. The EU has developed numerous policies and instruments for the promotion of democracy and human rights targeting countries in different regions of the world, such as PHARE, TACIS, MEDA, the Barcelona process, the European Instrument (formerly Initiative) for Democracy and Human Rights, and so on. Practically every region of the world has been given its own policy to underline the context-tailored EU approach. However, all policies have followed the same line of development and implementation, and have often met with the same criticisms.

Through democracy promotion, the EU has aimed to strengthen the international order by “spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law, and protecting human rights” (Council of the European Union 2003:10). Though these democracy promotion priorities can be assessed against the benchmarks cited above, EU democracy promotion through

³ The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). All EU Member States have also ratified or signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

enlargement has been marked by an evident top-down approach, and has preferred to tackle the State rather than society. Instead of focusing on civil society groups, elections, or political parties, the EU has opted to strengthen the capacity of the State through constant monitoring of the implementation of its enlargement policy. Thus, the whole EU accession process is characterized by the “preference of order over freedom” (Kopstein 2006:90). The alluring incentive of membership, closely tied to the policy of conditionality, played the most important role in the success of EU democracy promotion in Central and Eastern Europe. The EU has followed the same approach with the current candidate countries. However, the lack of membership incentives and credible conditionality in relations with other target countries is likely negatively to affect the performance of its initiatives (Kelley 2006, Schimmelfennig, Engert and Knobel 2006, Babayan 2009).

Despite its rhetoric and emphasis on the importance of civil society for democracy, the EU has implemented its democracy promotion through intergovernmental channels. Despite conditioning inclusion into a new policy on democratic progress, the EU has included non-complying countries shortly after establishing a policy or even announcing the ineligibility of some countries, as happened in the case of the South Caucasus and the European Neighbourhood Policy. It is unlikely that current conditionality or incentives towards non-candidates will change. Considering assistance to opposition parties and NGOs as “an interference into a country’s internal affairs” (Risse 2009:251), the EU has followed a statist and top-down approach to democracy promotion, without learning from past practices. In its democracy promotion activities within the Eastern Partnership framework, the EU has channelled its funding through civil society only in Belarus, where the authorities have refused to cooperate. Such refusal should have induced adjustments in the EU’s approach. The next sections map those adjustments according to their type – discursive or practical. Since both internal developments and external shocks may prompt adjustments, here the main focus is on the types of adjustment they may cause.

2. Discursive Adjustments in EU Policies

Although the promotion of human rights and democracy has become one of the core elements of EU foreign policy, its actual promotion has, however, been patchier (Tocci 2009). Disagreements between Member States and the notoriously poor actorness of the EU in pursuing its policies have prompted some analysts to claim that the EU and its Member States could become an obstacle to the development of the multilateral order (Emerson et al. 2011). Despite arguments that the expectations-capability gap (Hill 1993) debate is largely over (Risse 2009), the multitude of voices within the EU’s decision-making process results in its indecisive role in the international arena. The failure to present a unified EU position at the December 2009 climate change summit in Copenhagen, and the confused reaction to the events in North Africa in early 2011, have underlined the confusion within the EU. However, despite internal disagreements and inconsistency, the EU has been an important and major donor to developing countries, even if “what the EU aims to support is still unclear” (Wetzell and Orbie 2012:2). Moreover, despite the EU’s rhetorical commitment to democracy, a widespread feeling has been expressed regarding its actual commitment to promote democracy and human rights:

Within the EU, there is an apparent absence of political will fundamentally to revise approaches to democracy support, even if the shortcomings of these policies have been apparent for some time (Youngs 2008b:7).

Though a part of the Copenhagen criteria is labelled as “political”, the EU has preferred to distance itself from such concepts as “democracy” and, to an even greater extent, “liberty” (Magen, Risse, and McFaul 2009). Others have even argued that “in Europe to talk about democracy promotion is not very popular” (Pavilionis in US Embassy

Vilnius 2009). The subtlety of EU democracy promotion can be seen when analysing its official documents and statements, where the term “good governance” seems to be preferred to “democracy”. Wherever democracy is mentioned, it is always followed by a set of other concepts, such as human rights, stability, and the rule of law, that can be included in the overall concept of democracy, with other concepts being closely interlinked (Girod, Krasner and Stoner-Weiss 2009). Similarly, EU democracy promotion policies include a whole variety of activities that aim to address social modernization, human equality and the peaceful resolution of conflicts (Cremona 2004, Leonard 2005), in addition to the commitment to emphasize “the importance [...] of the principles of parliamentary democracy and the rule of law” (European Community Foreign Ministers 1986).

Nevertheless, after two decades of democracy promotion, the EU has acknowledged that there was no “ready-made recipe for political reform”, and that “reforms take place differently from one country to another” (European Commission and HR 2011b). Scholars even go so far as to argue that, even during the successful cases, such as the Eastern enlargement, the EU did not have a well-defined view of democracy promotion (De Ridder and Kochenov 2011). This “fudging’ of the meaning of democracy” (Kurki 2012:3) has prompted calls for “tightened categorisation” (Youngs 2008a:14), also because the EU’s partners have preferred dealing with “clear-cut ‘liberal’ democracy supporters such as the US” (Kurki 2012:1). It has been argued that the ambiguity of the EU’s definitions of democracy has negatively influenced its performance (Wetzel and Orbie 2012), which has required discursive adjustments. Thus, along with its strategies, the elusive concept of the substance of democracy promotion has also required adjustments.

Even if still rather vague, these discursive adjustments have come long way since the 2004 enlargement, thus yet again underlining the EU’s adherence to a unified approach on these matters. The Council conclusions that resulted in a review of democracy support stated that the EU “was broadly doing things right in its democracy support” (Kurki 2012:5). However, a change in rhetoric has come after the Arab Spring, which resulted in the introduction of the goal of “deep and sustainable democracy” (European Commission and HR 2011b:3). Deep democracy, a new buzz-term in the EU’s vocabulary, has apparently come to replace the term “surface democracy”, which according to Catherine Ashton referred only to free elections. Even if not always focusing only on elections, this conceptual adjustment has emphasized the need for better implementation of EU policies. Acknowledging the need for a differentiated approach, since “no country in the region is the same” (European Commission 2011:2), and apparently requiring a strong and continuous commitment on the part of governments, deep democracy includes elements that have been present in the EU’s approach before:

- free and fair elections;
- freedom of association, expression and assembly and a free press and media;
- the rule of law administered by an independent judiciary and right to a fair trial;
- fighting corruption;
- security sector reform (including the police) and the establishment of democratic control over armed and security forces (European Commission and HR 2011b:3).

A failure to demonstrate the novelty or usefulness of the concept of deep democracy has left many unimpressed (Emerson 2011, Kurki 2012, Wetzel and Orbie 2012). However, what the review of the ENP did was to advance the “more funds for more reform” (European Union 2011) approach, as if underlining that the previous ENP mechanisms had not taken conditionality seriously. In addition, this conceptualization has brought the EU closer to the concept of liberal democracy, and slightly moved it away from its traditional avoidance of the word “democracy”.

The EU institutions' discourse on human rights when referring to external relations has always been linked to the promotion of democracy. The *EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy* adopted by the EU Council in 2012 mentions human rights as "universally applicable legal norms", and democracy as "a universal aspiration" with "democratic societies underpinned by human rights and the rule of law" (Council of the European Union 2012). While not strictly differentiating between the primacy of either human rights or democracy, the EU seems to regard them as mutually constitutive, without insisting on any desired sequence of promotion. In practice, the EU seems to focus on the interdependence between human rights and democracy promotion. Even though official documents state that the aim of the EU's external action on human rights and democracy is to prevent serious human rights violations (European Commission and HR 2011a) by "strengthen[ing] its capability and mechanisms for early warning and prevention of crises liable to entail human rights violations" (Council of the European Union 2012),⁴ EU action is in practice largely tailored to the specific promotion of freedom of expression, opinion, and assembly and association.⁵

3. Practical Adjustments in EU Policies

In its external action, the EU has developed a broad range of policy instruments and guidelines to put its commitment to human rights and democracy into practice, specifically with regard to the death penalty, the fight against torture, the protection of Human Rights Defenders, freedom of religion or belief, child rights, the rights of women, and sexual orientation. The EU quite closely reviews the human rights situation of partner countries in the context of its enlargement progress reports, based on a strong conditionality mechanism introduced by the Copenhagen criteria.⁶ Nevertheless, EU action on human rights protection has not been free of criticism (European Commission and HR 2011a), since it is not always consistent. Internally, EU action is focused on specific areas, and its impact largely depends on whether EU institutions have adopted acts of hard law or soft law.⁷ Externally, the European Parliament is the EU institution most directly involved in human rights protection. Through its committees, the European Parliament closely monitors and tries to enhance respect for universal human rights standards, with the Subcommittee on human rights within the Committee on Foreign Affairs dealing mainly with EU external action. Although the conception of human rights as universal and inseparable appears to be the same, attention to fundamental rights such as those enshrined in the Universal Declaration is reserved to the field of external action, whereas the internal level is more focused on economic and social rights. Member States are more inclined to discuss aspects concerning such civil rights when evaluating third states' behavior, rather than their own.⁸ Such discrepancies in the behavior of EU institutions at the internal or external level may undermine the impact of the EU's external action.

Originally conceived by the European Parliament, the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR I) was created in 1994 to promote the rule of law and human rights worldwide, together with the

4 It is also to be noted that when discussing the means required to achieve such results, the focus is on EU trade policies and economic and human rights, rather than on issues clearly concerning fundamental rights.

5 Respect for these freedoms is also part of the fight against discrimination in all its forms, including on grounds of race, ethnicity, age, gender or sexual orientation, which is also an element of EU external action.

6 The accession criteria, or Copenhagen criteria (after the Copenhagen European Council in 1993 which defined them), are the essential conditions all candidate countries must satisfy to become a Member State. The first group are political criteria, namely: the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities.

7 See, for example, Papadopoulou et al. 2013, Beaumont and Maguire 2013, European Parliament 2012.

8 At the internal level, EU institutions seem, more ready to get involved in studying and collecting data with reference to the situation of human rights protection within Member States (see for example the creation of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights and its tasks in relation to the collection and analysis of data with a view to producing comparative reports on particular thematic human rights issues).

recognition of civil society as a key actor in the process.⁹ The renamed European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR II) replaced and built upon EIDHR I (European Union 2006). The EIDHR II Regulation entered into force on 1 January 2007. EIDHR II follows a thematic approach, with the objectives of enhancing human rights and fundamental freedoms in countries where civilians are most at risk, and of supporting civil society. It has a specific focus on monitoring electoral processes. Within the framework of the reformed EIDHR, greater emphasis has been placed on civil society support, especially with reference to the inflexibility of the EU's funding system, which was heavily criticized by NGOs.¹⁰

Similarly, the EU reformed its external funding structure, and replaced MEDA, TACIS, and other programs with the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), which financially assists the implementation of the ENP in target countries. The EIDHR II Regulation (in force during the current EU financial perspective of 2007-13) is the basis for EU financial assistance on human rights and democracy promotion as managed by the Commission. The current EIDHR financial envelope totals 1.100 million euros for the period 2007-2013. For the forthcoming Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020, the Commission initially proposed to scale-up funding to 1.4 billion euros. Within the 2007-2013 framework, the focus of the EIDHR has been on human rights and less on good governance, capacity-building for parliamentarians, institution building, or democratic/civic education.¹¹ It is generally agreed that there are still some problems surrounding EIDHR II even after the reform. The capacity of the Commission to manage, fund and co-ordinate projects in a flexible way is open to question, since the system of centralized calls for proposals with long project-evaluation periods remains in place. Moreover, Commission officials still have a large number of rules to follow, which undoubtedly makes the whole system slow and not particularly effective (Řiháčková 2008, Herrero 2009).

Encouraged by the success of the 2004 enlargement, the EU created the ENP. Although the ENP follows a similar logic to enlargement, it does not offer membership to target countries. The ENP differs from other geographically-limited EU policies in that it includes countries from Africa, Eastern Europe and the Middle East. After elaborating on ENP strategies in the 2004 Strategy Paper (European Commission 2004), the EU proposed strategies to strengthen the ENP in 2006 and 2007 (European Commission 2006 and 2007b), which came not as specific adjustments in response to internal or external developments, but simply as a result of pre-scheduled reviews. EU strategies of democracy promotion usually follow the path of reinforcement by reward, employing positive political conditionality (Schimmelfennig, Engert and Knobel 2006, Schimmelfennig and Scholtz 2008). The EU has not always followed its own rules: for example, it included the South Caucasus countries in the ENP largely as a result of Georgia's Rose Revolution (Bardakçi 2010, Kurowska 2009) and despite the lack of democratic progress in the other two states of Armenia and Azerbaijan (Babayan and Shapovalova 2011).

However, some EU Member States thought the ENP insufficient, especially in light of the existing Northern Dimension, covering the Baltic States and Russia, and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), covering 16 Mediterranean partner countries from MENA and the Balkans.¹² In addition to these policies, Poland and Sweden proposed strengthening the EU's policy towards the Eastern Neighbours, which seemed to be a timely undertaking given the outbreak of the conflict between Georgia and Russia (Shapovalova 2009). The initiative met with a positive response from other Member States, including France, which was looking for support for

9 EIDHR I was intended to boost the capacity of NGOs, and to provide democracy assistance through them. Based on Council Regulations (EC) Nos 975/1999 and 976/1999, its key strength was the possibility to operate without the need for the consent of the host Government.

10 The need for the reform was connected to the lack of flexibility of the previous instrument and the excess of bureaucracy in granting financial assistance.

11 See EIDHR statistics at http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/worldwide/eidhr/working-documents_en.htm.

12 The UfM was created in July 2008 as a re-launched Barcelona process. Its 2009 and 2010 summits were, however, not held due to the stalemate in the Arab-Israeli peace process. In addition, the Arab revolutions have been seen to have put "the last nail in the UM coffin" (Torreblanca and Fanes 2011).

its own UfM initiative. The main argument of the supporters of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) was the inclusion of partner countries' interests, differently from previous policies (Runner 2008). The EaP covers ENP partner countries Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Introduced and perceived by some as an upgrade to the ENP (Danielyan 2010), and conditioned on the performance of the partner countries, the EaP nevertheless included all South Caucasus countries, despite their poor democratic performance.

One of the missions of the EaP has been to alleviate the shortcomings of the previous top-down approach (Shapovalova and Youngs 2012). The EaP introduced new modes of engagement with civil society, and created the Civil Society Forum (CSF) to facilitate dialogue between civil society and state officials (European Commission 2008). Even if still constituting a small proportion of EU funding to EaP partner countries, the amount of funds provided to civil society gradually increased over the period 2007-2012. Along with the CSF, the Civil Society Facility was established to provide financial support for the development of civil society and to make funds more accessible, even if the application process remains in English only (Shapovalova and Youngs 2012).

However, the events that jump-started the overdue discussion of the EU's inability to react quickly to developments on the ground were the failure of the democratic process in Belarus and, in particular, the Arab Spring (Pomianowski in Dempsey 2013). The Arab Spring underlined the sluggishness of the EU's decision-making. Arguably preferring stability over democracy in its neighbourhood (Börzel, Pamuk and Stahn 2009), the EU did not expect the unfolding and quick spillover of the non-orchestrated Arab Spring. Besides pointing to the importance of civil society for democratization, the Arab Spring also directed closer EU attention to the growing importance of communication and information technologies, which were more actively used by democracy promoters than by civil society representatives (Babayan and Braghiroli 2013).

In another effort "to retool our [the EU's] armoury" (Sikorski in US Embassy Warsaw 2009), and partly in response to these events, Poland proposed the establishment of the EED, which, after a series of deliberations, was established as a private foundation operating under the guidance of its Board of Governors. Being independent from the EU and registered under Belgian law, the EED co-functions with already existing EU instruments, and relies on voluntary contributions from Member States. The financial troubles of the eurozone make the prospects for success of this arrangement rather remote, despite its current "decent budget" (Pomianowski in Dempsey 2013) and the financial contributions pledged by Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, all the new Member States and Switzerland. Nevertheless, the EU considers the establishment of the EED to be a "concerted effort" by its institutions and Member States (Füle 2013) which is especially important for improving the performance of the recently-established European External Action Service. Its budget will be used mainly to "support the unsupported", whom the Commission recognizes as "journalists, bloggers, non-registered NGOs, political movements (including those in exile or from the diaspora), in particular when all of these actors operate in a very uncertain political context" (European Commission 2012).

The establishment of the seemingly redundant EED (Dempsey 2013) and the appointment of the Special Representative for Human Rights come despite calls for attention at such critical junctures as the Arab Spring for the EU to avoid "becoming more concerned with creating new structures than working concretely to support new democracies" (De Keyser 2011:2). It seems that piling policies up instead of adjusting them to better respond to international developments has been the main strategy of the EU (Babayan 2012). However, given the intergovernmental nature of its foreign policy decision-making, this approach should not come as a big surprise. With the consensus of all 27 Member States required, each nurturing its own strategic interests, an accumulation of policies seems a less complicated solution. However, the establishment of the EED seems to be intended not only to advance human rights and democracy, but also to "[send] a clear message of solidarity

to the peoples of the Neighbourhood” (Füle 2013) and to react to complaints made about the ENP, which was said to reward the laggards and punish the frontrunners.

Conclusion: “Shocked” into Adjustments

The pronounced belief that democracy and human rights are “universal values that should be vigorously promoted around the world”¹³ has over the past two decades put the EU into the crowded club of democracy promoters. Seeing human rights and democracy not only as prime objectives but also as means to poverty reduction, conflict prevention and resolution, and fight against terrorism (European Commission 2010), the EU has added numerous activities of its own to the plethora of democracy promotion projects. However, it has refrained from vociferous statements as to having a mission to bring freedom to the world, and has managed to avoid apparent failures in democracy promotion such as Afghanistan and Iraq. It can be suggested that these factors have played an important role in retaining the high level of support for EU democracy promotion among its population, which saw only a 5 percent decline, from 74 to 69 percent, over the period 2005-2011 (GMF 2011). Of course, it could also be that, unlike the US, the EU keeps a rather low profile, not extensively publicizing its human rights and democracy promotion aspirations.

This paper has reviewed the EU’s conceptualizations of human rights and democracy promotion and its relevant policies in order to trace adjustments and their possible patterns. The paper has assumed that adjustments to EU policies on human rights and democracy are likely to be induced by internal developments, including regularly scheduled reviews of policies, or by external shocks. In addition, it has been suggested that adjustments are likely to be revealed by changes in conceptualizations – discursive adjustments – or by policy changes or introductions – practical adjustments. The paper has shown that both discursive and practical adjustments have been introduced into EU policies over the last decade. However, while internal developments are more likely to result in discursive adjustments only, external shocks are more likely to lead to practical adjustments. New policies such as the ENP and the EaP were established after the 2004 enlargement, without, however, acknowledging the key difference between candidate and non-candidate countries. Only an external shock of the magnitude of the Arab Spring forced the EU to practically rethink its strategies and to broaden its approach to include civil society. It is of course possible that discursive adjustments may later lead to practical ones, but in times of pursuing enhanced effectiveness, practical adjustments may prove more efficient. Nevertheless, given the novelty of the EED, it remains to be seen whether this practical adjustment will prove the belief that “2013 will be a crucial year for democratic transitions, in particular in the EU’s neighbourhood” (European Commission 2013).

13 European Commission DG EuropeAid, Human Rights and Democracy, http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/human-rights/index_en.htm.

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THE PROJECT

In an era of global flux, emerging powers and growing interconnectedness, transatlantic relations appear to have lost their bearings. As the international system fragments into different constellations of state and non-state powers across different policy domains, the US and the EU can no longer claim exclusive leadership in global governance. Traditional paradigms to understand the transatlantic relationship are thus wanting. A new approach is needed to pinpoint the direction transatlantic relations are taking. TRANSWORLD provides such an approach by a) ascertaining, differentiating among four policy domains (economic, security, environment, and human rights/democracy), whether transatlantic relations are drifting apart, adapting along an ad hoc cooperation-based pattern, or evolving into a different but resilient special partnership; b) assessing the role of a re-defined transatlantic relationship in the global governance architecture; c) providing tested policy recommendations on how the US and the EU could best cooperate to enhance the viability, effectiveness, and accountability of governance structures.

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