Europe's Own Narrative and the Effort to Spread Democratization Globally

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Abstract

Given the centuries of dominance of European political thinking, and European economic and cultural influence, many have a tendency to regard globalization as the same as the world adapting to European norms and values. Some caution is therefore needed, both for those in other parts of the world who try to emulate what has been done in Europe and for those in Europe who try to 'export' their experiences and values. It is important to keep an open mind about the fact that we expect the basic principles of democracy to be shared values – even if they are not given unreserved and explicit support everywhere and their interpretation may differ somewhat. When we look at some of the attempts in other regions of the world to start a process of democratic integration, the uniqueness of the background of the European case becomes clear. It also becomes clear that it makes a big difference whether there are real, practical problems for which acting in common makes sense or such integration is mainly based on a political dream. The functional approach is a method of integration that builds on the principle of focusing on those problems that are truly shared and which can best, or only, be resolved by common action. A more functional definition of sovereignty is joining with others to create options for action that were out of the reach of a country acting on its own. It has gradually become evident in the crucial and traditionally power-focused area of foreign and security policy that Europe must be able to speak with one voice if it wants to exert any influence on global matters and to be able to take care of its legitimate interests. The successive rounds of enlargement of the EU provide the strongest possible evidence of the attractiveness of the basic principles behind European integration as well as their practical application. It should also be noted that for countries such as Greece, Spain and Portugal – not to mention the whole wave of Central and East European states and the Balkan countries – it was not only economic reasons that made the EU attractive. Membership of the EU made newly achieved democratization irreversible. Continuing support for democratization through all its instruments is both meaningful and important, but the decisive contribution will come from the EU's own behaviour globally. That is what determines the credibility of the actions undertaken under the banner of promoting democracy.

1. Introduction

It is always risky to make comparisons between different countries and regions. We tend to take it for granted that our history and experiences are well known to others. This is especially the case for Europeans, and for Westerners in general. Given the centuries of dominance of European political thinking, and European economic and cultural influence, many have a tendency to regard globalization as the same as the world adapting to European norms and values. Some caution is therefore needed, both for those in other parts of the world who try to emulate what has been done in Europe and for those in Europe who try to 'export' their experiences and values.

On the other hand, we also know that there would have been more human progress if we were better at learning from the mistakes and successes of others. It is important to understand difference in order to better identify elements that are relevant and applicable to others, and to keep an open mind about the fact that, in the world today, we expect the basic principles of democracy to be shared values – even if they are not given unreserved and explicit support everywhere and even if their interpretation may differ somewhat. We do not live in a global village. This idea is misleading. A village is characterized by closeness, shared norms and cultural uniformity. The world today may be characterized by closeness, due to modern communications technologies, but not by shared norms or cultural uniformity.

The background and historical setting in which the Coal and Steel Community was founded was unique. The huge logistics operation across the Atlantic during the Second World War (1939–45), which necessitated effective brokering between different interests and stakeholders as well as a high degree of centralized management in its implementation, was the cornerstone and the experience on which key architects, such as Jean Monnet and Robert Schumann, built the Coal and Steel Community. The Marshall aid from the United States and the conditions attached to it about opening up national economies across European borders was another important element.

The task during the war had been to ensure that the productive capacity of the USA could be put to use in Europe. The challenge after the war was to restructure the basic industrial sectors – coal mining and steel production – which had been the backbone of civilian and military production in all six countries – Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. There was a structural overcapacity, but each country was afraid to reduce its capacity. A common and balanced plan was needed to create sufficient confidence in the planned changes, but a plan was not enough. A High Authority with independence and the power to ensure that plans were adhered to was key to the successful transformation. This was accepted by the six countries – mainly because the alternative would have been chaos.

2. A Europe built on a Functional Approach

In reality, this was the birth of the functional approach – the method of integration that builds on the principle of focusing on those problems that are truly shared and which can best, or only, be resolved by common action. It became clear that dealing with the closure of surplus mines and industrial sites across Europe, and eliminating or redefining millions of jobs, was not only a highly demanding and dynamic process politically, but also a process that could not be limited in scope to specific sectors or

geographic locations. This was the birth of the dynamic substantive character of integration. It was clear early on, and clearly expressed in the Treaty of Rome which launched the Common Market in 1958, that it would not make sense to try to define a fixed limit to the kind of issues that could or should be drawn into the cooperation. This was not in any way a deviation from the functional approach – it had simply been experienced in practice that other issues such as social affairs, labour market relations, transport and energy were necessary components for inclusion in the management of the industrial and economic change processes.

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To the core principles that grew out of the Coal and Steel Community the Treaty of Rome added a layer of political principles and aspirations of a more general character for the future of Europe. This is the other cornerstone of what is special about the case of Europe: it made future wars between the European nations impossible, expressing work towards an ever closer union as a political goal in itself and establishing an architecture of institutions that was unique – first and foremost by creating an independent Commission that built on the experience of the High Authority.

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When we look at some of the attempts in other regions of the world to start a process of democratic integration, the uniqueness of the background of the European case becomes abundantly clear. It also becomes clear that it makes a big difference whether there are real, practical problems for which acting in common makes sense or such integration is mainly based on a political dream.

Over the years many attempts have been made to draw up a more definite delineation of the scope of issues and policy areas that the Community should deal with. The most prominent of these was the proposal for a so-called competence catalogue, which was brought into the discussions of the convention to draw up the proposed constitutional treaty, which later became the Lisbon Treaty and finally entered into force on 1 December 2009. Germany had been pushing this idea, but no magic formula could be found to describe in a definitive manner what the Community should engage in and what it should not. More or less at the same time, in the light of serious flooding of rivers in Europe, Germany proposed the establishment of a Disaster Fund of more than one billion euros, to be taken from the budget of the European Union (EU) and managed by the European Commission. All of a sudden such events were no longer a national responsibility. The difficult situation created by bovine spongiform encephalopathy is another illustration of a problem that sparked recognition of the need for stronger collective legislation and action. While no competence catalogue was included in the Lisbon Treaty, there are more checks for national parliaments to ensure that the principle of subsidiarity is respected when the Commission makes new proposals, that is, to make sure that matters really are of a kind that necessitate common action.

In other words, tasting the fruits of the successful application of the functional integration method provides feedback that stimulates institutional self-confidence. The overall picture of the attitude of EU member states towards more integration, however, means that this does not simply lead to uncritical acceptance of the pooling of more

political decision making power into the collectivity of the Community. The Lisbon Treaty shows us that although the EU member states are willing to move forward on matters concerning justice and home affairs, such as how to cope with the problems of terrorism or migration pressure, they are not ready, for instance, to pool decision making power in the area of foreign policy. The creation of an EU Foreign Minister does not change the fact that the two European permanent members of the United Nations Security Council do what they do there without any discussion in the Council of Foreign Ministers.

3. The EU Institutions

Probably the most important source of misunderstanding in many descriptions of the institutional character of the EU is the temptation to compare this unique emerging political system with the model of a nation state. The Commission in particular is the victim of many false comparisons. That the architecture and the relations between the institutions are neither finalized nor static, and that there are no clearly defined, final goal towards which European cooperation is moving, also add to the confusion. A key to a better understanding of the character and mode of operation of the EU is to note that in everything that any of the institutions does, they are working on an explicitly expressed legal basis.

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The European Commission

The Commission is unique because of its independence. Commissioners are loyal to the EU and do not represent their national interests. It is important that the Commission consists of members from all EU member states because this ensures the presence of political know-how covering all of Europe. A Commission without such a composition would have less legitimacy and authority. The Commission is unique also because it has been given the right of initiative. Giving responsibility for preparing, proposing and steering legislation to a body that is independent of the politics and special interests of individual member states has been key to building up the huge 'acquis' of more than 85,000 pages of legislation. The fact that legislation starts with preparatory work and analysis inside the Commission makes it the focal point of interest. The Commission has considerable administrative and political clout in executing its role as the guardian of the Treaty, especially in core areas of the Community such as securing competition and the smooth functioning of the internal market. Finally, the Commission exerts direct influence in areas such as agriculture, trade negotiations and development cooperation where it has explicit competences to act on behalf of the Community. This all looks highly impressive. The reality, however, is more complicated. The Commission does not act alone in all these areas, and from one policy area to another the balance of power may shift considerably between EU institutions.

The European Parliament

The European Parliament has emerged as a body of real political significance, not only generally as the representative voice of the European electorate but also by performing constructively in the legislative process. The huge investment in interpretation services, which makes it possible for Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)

to speak in their own language, is an interesting feature of some relevance to other regional assemblies. That Europe-wide political party groupings are the real elements in the brokering processes, rather than national parties, is also an important factor to note.

A good measure of the increased political weight of the European Parliament can be seen in the growing number of lobbyists who court the different committees, compared to the situation in the past when lobbyists focused on influencing the Commission at all levels or the committees and working groups in the Council. In recent years a deliberate effort has been made to register these lobbyists, which puts the European Parliament and the Commission ahead of most EU member states in this regard.

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The Council

The Council, in its different configurations which cover different ministerial areas as well as the foreign minister's General Affairs and External Relations Council and the heads of governments' European Council, is the ultimate centre of decision making. There is an elaborate structure of committees that prepares these meeting in a process that continually involves government structures in the capitals of the member states. The Committee of Permanent Representatives of the member states (COREPER) is the final brokering organ at the professional and diplomatic level before the ministers take over. The whole operation is managed by the Council Secretariat General along with the member state that holds the rotating Presidency of the Council. The character of the decision making process varies from one area to another, according to whether it is covered by qualified majority voting. The Council and the European Parliament have to agree, and the Commission is the broker in this often complex process. In this sense, it could be argued that Council and Parliament together perform what in a national political system would be the role of the parliament. This is broadened out in the sense that national parliaments are drawn into the process to varying degrees by giving more or less explicit mandates to their ministers before they attend Council meetings, in addition to the general control functions they exercise over the performance of their governments.

The six-month rotating presidencies have had a tendency to push special items up the agenda, reflecting a wish to raise profiles either domestically or internationally. This can be both good and bad, but is normally a waste of time and energy given the burdensome character of getting anything decided in the first place. The rotating presidencies may have injected more energy into the process, and in any case have increased the visibility of European cooperation in the presidency country. They have also added to the complexity of the processes, however, and the inclusion in the Lisbon Treaty of the office of President of the Council, thereby creating a more permanent chairmanship, will probably give more continuity and predictability to the work of the EU.

In practice it has not been easy for the Commission to defend its right of initiative. Both individual presidencies and the meetings of the European Council have frequently asked the Commission to take on more or less specific tasks, so the dialogue between Council and Commission is in reality more of a two-way street. This is even more the case in the area of foreign policy, where the shared competence is now expressed in the

position of EU foreign minister who will chair the Council of foreign ministers as well as being vice-president of the Commission. The economic and monetary sphere is also an area where the Commission, the Council of finance ministers and the European Central Bank share competences in a somewhat unclear manner.

The Court of Justice

The Court of Justice of the European Communities is also among the most important EU institutions. The existence of an institution that has the power to interpret and decide with legal authority on all disputes that relate to the treaties and legislation of the EU is the ultimate reality check that confirms that the EU is an emerging political system. The role of the judiciary is very different in different EU members states. Some have a judicial tradition with well established powers to rule on the constitutionality of issues, and so on, while in others the judiciary has a more passive role. The role of the Court of Justice is more firmly defined in the Lisbon Treaty and it actively upholds and uses its independence. This is a feature of the EU that is also of great relevance to other regions of the world that are trying, with more or less determination, to create something similar.

4. Functional Sovereignty, Internal Democracy and Effective Governance

The relationship between the EU and its member states is often described in the framework of a zero sum game: member states transfer decision making power to the EU on matters they have decided to deal with collectively, thus reducing their sovereignty. This description is, of course, correct if the term sovereignty is given its traditional and rather narrow meaning. It is not the whole truth, however, if sovereignty is defined as a nation's genuine capacity to deal meaningfully with issues by itself, that is, to decide and manage alone. Looked at in this way, a more functional definition of sovereignty becomes apparent, and that a nation can add to its functional – or real – sovereignty by joining with others to create options for action that were out of the reach of a country acting on its own. The traditional – or primitive – definition of sovereignty has naturally been a powerful element in the rhetoric of eurosceptics across the continent. On the other hand, it has gradually become evident in the crucial and traditionally power-focused area of foreign and security policy that Europe must be able to speak with one voice if it wants to exert any influence on global matters and to be able to take care of its legitimate interests.

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The Democratic Deficit

One of the most frequent criticisms to arise in discussions about EU institutions is the so-called democratic deficit. This is mainly aimed at the Commission, which is, on the one hand, often described as consisting of bureaucrats while, at the same time, being criticized for being a political institution without the legitimacy of having been directly elected. The fact is that the Commission is a political institution and the Commissioners are politicians. The method of their appointment reflects the fact that the governments in the member states have a direct say in this, in a process in which they first agree a President of the Commission and then, together with him or her, nominate the other

Commissioners, who are then examined by the European Parliament before being appointed. This procedure is a good illustration of the extent – or the limits – of EU integration. The interesting point is that those who talk about the democratic deficit in this regard are usually the same people who are opposed to more integration in Europe.

There is, however, another way of looking at the issue of the democratic deficit. Democracy is not only about human rights and the protection of minorities. Democracy is also a method for governing and for making society function. Given this fact, the whole discussion of a democratic deficit in the EU is a confirmation that the EU is regarded as a political system, and the most serious element contributing to a democratic deficit is the inability of the Council to make timely, clear and authoritative decisions. The 'governance delivery capacity' of the system is weakened primarily by the veto rights of member states, which survive under the Lisbon Treaty. Secondarily, the continued insistence of member states on limiting the Community's jurisdiction when it comes to prosecuting fraud involving the use of Community funds in the member states is also testimony of a democratic deficit.

It would, of course, be easy to stretch this point too far, but the yardstick of the discussion about a democratic deficit is that the EU is being compared to an established democracy in a nation state. If this were really taken as the basis for such a judgement, one could be tempted to characterize the EU as something that came close to a failed state. It has been made clear above, however, that the EU is not only still a work in progress, but also a unique political experiment that does not have a definite end goal. Nonetheless, as a European parallel to the well established international discussion of governance it makes sense to take a closer look at the importance of a system's capacity to produce authoritative political decisions and to deliver credible and efficient administration.

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Governance is such a useful term because, in spite of its lack of precision, everybody is able to use it meaningfully. Democracy is not possible without some level of governance – and vice versa. Given the experience of post-conflict situations, failed states and the emerging democracies around the world, more practical, down to earth issues such as securing stability and some basic functioning in a society have gained increased recognition as crucial to the broader processes of democratization. A case in point is the emerging more pragmatic attitude to a strategy for Afghanistan.

Bureaucracy

The next step in this discussion is to focus on the much maligned term 'bureaucracy'. In the EU context bureaucracy is almost synonymous with the Commission. Naturally, the negative side of the term relates to excessive and rigid administrative practices, which often reflect the system's own internal interests and dislike of adapting to new ideas – or of letting go of some of the power that has been built up by these practices. It is often the case, however, that criticism comes from those who have had more or less special interests ruled out in favour of the common interest of the Community. The fact that European cooperation is more than governments meeting now and then to agree broad principles also contributes to the demonization of the 'bureaucrats in Brussels'. The Single Act in 1986 was in principle only a reconfirmation of the basic principles contained in the Treaty of Rome, defining the internal market as the free circulation

of people, goods and services. It took more than 300 directives, however, to hammer out specific rules and to abolish the different protectionist practices, technical trade barriers, and so on, that EU member states had used to protect their home markets. In the areas of telecommunications, insurance and other services as well as energy supply – especially electricity and natural gas – it took more than a decade for the opening up across borders to be taken up in a second wave of comprehensive legislation.

Everyone agrees that this has been highly beneficial for the economy of Europe, but it was only achieved because the Commission was equipped with sufficient staff – quantitatively and qualitatively – to carry out the analysis, sector by sector and issue by issue, to make it possible for the Commission to produce the huge body of complicated legislative proposals, and to maintain expertise in all these areas, which made it possible for the Commission to credibly oversee their implementation and thus deliver on its role as the guardian of the Treaty.

Most of the huge endeavour of making the internal market a reality has been carried out using directives rather than regulations as the legal instrument to harmonize standards and rules across Europe. Directives are typically easier to get member states to agree to, because their transformation into national law is in the hands of the member states, which normally allows for some degree of flexibility over how details might be interpreted. In short, the purpose and core substance of a directive has to be adhered to, but there might be some room for manoeuvre in the choice of methods of implementation. Regulations, by contrast, are immediately applicable law in the Community and are identical in all members states.

One obvious question is why clear and seemingly much more expeditious regulation has not been the preferred way of legislating. The answer is that directives are politically easier to integrate or 'weave' into existing national legislation and that regulations, methodologically speaking, represent a higher level of European integration. One might say that this process has been nothing less than an orgy of pragmatism, and that without the bureaucracy – and institutional stamina - the Commission would not have been able to steer it and push it forward. Maybe one difference between the bureaucracy of the Commission and the traditional perception of bureaucracy lies in the fact that the Commission bureaucracy performs the innovative and dynamic role of the Commission in exercising its right of initiative, whereas bureaucracy in well established nation states is more vulnerable to criticism.

The lesson from this discussion of 'governance, bureaucracy and democracy' is that without allowing for an administrative capacity to grow and a civil service to gain some strength and respectability, the prospects for democracy in a nation state will be weak; and without allowing the same to happen in the context of a regional organization, the prospects for successful regional integration will be also be weak. The checks and balances are always there. The legitimate interests of member states in maintaining a strict control over anything the Commission does has a negative side-effect of adding layer after layer of procedures, and the amalgamation of different administrative and legal cultures into a common system adds to this complexity. Administrative reform and an ongoing effort to modernize and streamline must be part of the culture in order to avoid petrifaction. The lack of acceptance of adequate levels of staffing – quantitatively and qualitatively – is the Achilles heel of most regional integration processes.

Democracy and Integration

What is the relationship between democracy and integration? Obviously, history tells us about many great empires that, in terms of stability and longevity, demonstrate that integration does not necessarily presuppose democracy. Conversely, it is also true that democracy does not in itself lead to regional integration. Nonetheless, the regional and global challenges that confront today's world suggest that democratically negotiated solutions in institutionalized frameworks based on a functional approach are the way forward. There seems to be a kind of a symbiosis between democratic principles guiding states in their interactions, and integration as a main tool in designing, deciding and implementing solutions. Globally, problems such as climate change and trade negotiations illustrate this point. Regionally, looking, for instance, at the complexity of the vital issue of integrated water resource management in transboundary river basins is enough to make us understand the rationality and attractiveness of collective, democratically negotiated solutions that have the added quality of being monitored and enforced by a credible and neutral authority.

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The successive rounds of enlargement of the EU provide the strongest possible evidence of the attractiveness of the basic principles behind European integration as well as their practical application. It should also be noted that for countries such as Greece, Spain and Portugal – not to mention the whole wave of Central and East European states and the Balkan countries – it was not only economic reasons that made the EU attractive. Membership of the EU made newly achieved democratization irreversible. More than the technicalities of their compliance with the legislative acquis of the EU, their compliance with the 1993 Copenhagen Criteria on democracy and human rights was the needle's eye for the former communist countries and dictatorships in the process leading to membership. This is also the case for the remaining candidate countries in the Balkan region as well as the protracted accession negotiations for Turkey.

From the outside, the enlargement process has undoubtedly been perceived as proof of the democratic value and attractiveness of the European model. The list of countries on the periphery of Europe that wish to become members, including Ukraine and Morocco, illustrates this. Of course the EU cannot perform as the guarantor of democracy in the world simply by continuing a process of enlargement. Indeed, it is difficult to see much more happening than that which is already in the pipeline. The point has been made so effectively, however, that it has become an important element in the global branding and perception of the EU.

5. Promoting Democracy: Tactics and Methods

The first question to address is why we do it. There are several dimensions to the answer. Promoting the spread and the rooting of democratic ideals and practices globally is simply a projection of Europe's own ideology and experience. These are simply values that we believe in. The basic elements of the United Nations declarations on human rights and democracy to a large extent reflect Europe's own development

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and history. Engaging actively in strengthening democratization underscores how we want to be perceived by the rest of the world.

But there is more to it. The endeavour to strengthen democracy in the world globally, regionally and at the individual country level also reflects the kind of a political world order that Europeans would like to promote, and this again can be seen as having two dimensions. First, there is a general belief in multilateralism and in the possibility of peacefully negotiated solutions to the problems and conflicts confronting mankind. Second, there is a recognition of the fact that defending and managing Europe's global interests is better done in a political climate where 'soft power' is an option, which means that promoting multilateralism and international governance is also in Europe's self-interest.

The next question is: how do we do it? The list of so-called instruments relevant to this endeavour is so long that it almost brings to mind a symphony orchestra. This melodious picture, however, is not quite what most people have in mind when discussing the myriad rules and procedures linked to the different ways in which the EU carries out its activities in support, more or less directly, of democratization processes in different parts of the world. Democratization, election support, human rights promotion, administrative capacity building, judicial reform, support to independent media organizations, fighting corruption, civil society support – the list of activities directly related to the broad goal of supporting democratization is long. The initiative to reduce the enormous financial problems of the highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) was also a crucial factor in securing political stability and preventing many poor countries from sinking into the misery of failed states – or even into conflict. Improvements in social services such as health and education as well as to infrastructure such as roads, and water and electricity supply are also related to the prospects for democracy. Reducing poverty enhances the prospect for democracy.

The themes listed above for promoting democracy more directly are meaningful and important development goals in their own right, but they also reflect the fact that citizens, and thus voters, in the EU member states want these elements to be present in any of the EU's development cooperation strategies as well as in cases where the EU engages in security and stabilization efforts, such as in the Balkans.

Conditionality and the Integrity of Development Cooperation Partnerships

The phenomenon of conditionality is much discussed for many reasons. It can be seen as an intrusive misuse of the donor's position of strength in the dialogue with a partner country, as an unavoidable political cost in the struggle to maintain public support in a donor country for continued or even increased assistance, or as an essential element, technically as well as politically, in safeguarding the efficiency and even meaning of a strategy for supporting a partner country. In recent years this discussion has received renewed attention in the light of the increased presence and activity of China – especially in Africa. The differences in the approach and partnership philosophy of China and the EU have been clearly exposed. For this reason, further remarks about conditionality and the EU's democratization effort are called for.

In principle member states are bound by the policies they have collectively agreed at the EU level, meaning that when they agree a development policy for the EU this policy

applies not only to the actions of the Commission, but also to those of the member states. This is an often neglected aspect of the relationship between the Commission and the member states, and one of the reasons why the handling of relationships between the EU and partner countries globally is an ongoing and often delicate political calibration exercise. Adding the European Parliament to this situation as an active player does not simplify the picture.

The differences between the profiles of individual member states in this respect as well as the spread of views in the European Parliament reflect real political views and interests and are part of the continued input of demands about what the EU should accomplish and stand for. For the Commission, the challenge is to formulate policies that make sense and can be applied in practice in partner countries. Often, the challenge is about shielding this policy and its application in specific situations and cases where political demands back in Europe are about reacting strongly, here and now. From time to time is has been necessary to remind member states that the 'C' in CFSP stands for common, not convenient – and certainly not colonial.

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Striking a workable balance in all this is an important task for the Commission. One could say this structure places the Commission in the role of a kind of moderator, cushioning the relationship between the EU and partner countries from the risk of excessive reaction in case of problems, and excessive conditionalities when discussing strategies for cooperation. On the other hand, this also means that when the Commission acts in cases of problems and gives priority to certain democracy- and governance- related elements of the dialogue, it does so with the weight of speaking on behalf of the whole Community.

The moderating character of the role of the Commission is in practice further underscored by the difference in respect of the presence and permanence of the Commission compared to individual EU member states. Even the largest member states are not present on the ground in all developing countries, and the Commission does not have – and does not want – the option of terminating cooperation in a country or picking and choosing where to engage bilaterally. This gives the EU, acting collectively through the Commission, credibility as a long-term partner, which again puts a limit, or has a moderating effect, on the extent and character of political conditionalities.

A look at the US African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and the ongoing negotiations about Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the EU and the different regions of the ACP countries demonstrates the differences in thinking between the USA and the EU. The AGOA is more or less a catalogue of specific conditions that an African country must agree to in order to be accepted as a participant in the programme. The EPAs were thoroughly negotiated as part of the 2000 Cotonou Agreement and are now in the process of being finalized in negotiations with the different regions.

In sum, the important questions to ask about conditionalities are: Do they make sense? Are they decent? Are they a result of real negotiations between the two sides of the partnership? Are they unilaterally imposed by the donor? Is there ownership and a real role for the partner country in the implementation of the measures contained in

the conditionalities? If there are, they are legitimate elements in the partnership. If not, conditionalities represent a problematic and old fashioned colonial type of power projection that will poison the relationship.

The Instruments

In broad terms, four main instruments are prominent in EU efforts to promote democracy. First, there is the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), which has annual average funding of EUR 160 million and a budget of EUR 1.1 billion for the years 2007–2013. This is the most explicit and direct instrument, but not necessarily the one with the biggest impact over the longer term. The amount is not big seen against the background of the number of years and the global scope of its coverage. Rather than being integrated into the long-term strategies of the partner countries, and thus agreed by them, the activities supported are typically smaller projects that reflect the priorities set by the EU in support of democracy and human rights. The value of this initiative is to a large extent its flexibility and the relative speed of decision making as well as the high visibility of the EU effort – both at home and abroad.

The second instrument is the development cooperation with 47 countries in Latin America, Asia and Central Asia, the Gulf Region and Southern Africa based on country strategy papers with a five-year perspective. As a result of the reforms of the Commission's handling of development cooperation carried out in 1999–2004, these country strategies must be in line with the overall development policy of the EU and must be negotiated in an inclusive manner with each partner country. Democratization and human rights are essential elements in these strategies, which indicates that these issues form part of the ongoing dialogue between the partners, unlike the projects carried out under the EIDHR. Average annual funding is EUR 1.4 billion and the budget for 2007–2013 is EUR 10,057 billion.

The share of the total allocation for each country related to democratization and human rights in a broad sense will vary quite a lot, based on the specific situation in each country. The broad range of countries, which includes middle income countries, leads to very different profiles in the country programmes. Political conditions also vary a lot in regard to the acceptability of, and the space given by the partner country to, larger or more direct interventions aimed at democratization and human rights protection.

The third programme is the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, which covers 17 countries in the Middle East and the ring of countries surrounding the EU. Its average level of annual funding is EUR 1.6 billion and EUR 11,181 billion was available for 2007–2013.

The funding for these three instruments comes from the regular budget of the EU. This gives the European Parliament more direct influence than it has over the European Development Fund for the ACP countries, which is covered by the Cotonou Agreement. The EDF is negotiated separately from the EU budget and is also the result of negotiations between the EU and the ACP countries. It is also worth noting that the Development Committee of the European Parliament deals almost exclusively with the 79 ACP countries as well as the more general cross-cutting issues of development policy and humanitarian aid, whereas the External Relations Committee deals with the rest of the world, and with the External Relations Commissioner

rather than the Commissioner for Development. In the Commission, the fact that implementation over all geographic areas and of all the different instruments is carried out by the EuropeAid Cooperation Office (AIDCO) helps to create some level of consistency and efficiency.

The fourth instrument is the cooperation with 79 countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific under the Cotonou Agreement. Average annual funding is EUR 3.7 billion and EUR 22.7 billion has been made available for 2007–2013. The EU-ACP partnership is unique in its scope. It comprises a structured political dialogue at the ministerial level between the two sides and in the Joint Parliamentary Assembly, massive development cooperation, and special trade relations and agreements and it has a time horizon of 20 years. It is also unique in the sense that it was thoroughly negotiated by the two sides in a long process before the conclusion of the Cotonou Agreement in the spring of 2000 and again when updated in 2005. There was discussion about whether to write the principles of democracy, human rights, and so on, directly into the agreement or to express support for existing United Nations declarations. The decision was to do both, reflecting the political reality that the vast majority of the ACP countries wanted to use this agreement with the EU as a way of strengthening the democratization and human rights agenda in practice.

There was even more discussion about opening direct support from the EU Commission to civil society organizations in the ACP countries. This was to be managed by the EU Delegations at country level and, although the government was naturally to be kept fully informed about the projects and beneficiaries, some of the less democratically advanced ACP countries saw this as an infringement of their national sovereignty. In the end, however, they all accepted it, and in just four years between five and ten per cent of the country envelopes was being devoted to civil society support. This has stimulated women's organizations and trade unions as well as a wide range of human rights, social and environmental NGOs in these countries, had a directly or indirectly positive effect on the process of democratization and helped to legitimize pluralism in these societies.

The Cotonou Agreement is also unique because it has instituted political dialogue as an element of the normal, ongoing functioning of the partnership and has a mechanism (article 96) to deal with the problems that arise when essential elements of the agreement concerning democratic principles, the rule of law and respect for human rights are violated, or in cases of serious corruption. Procedures for consultations involving the ACP side with representatives of countries in the region are set out to facilitate mediation efforts, and for drawing up a road map that might bring the country in question back on track. Applying sanctions such as reducing the level of cooperation or ultimately ceasing it for a period of time are measures of last resort in this process. These cases are always difficult, but the basic permanence of the partnerships is never questioned, and in most cases it has been possible to enhance countries' efforts to restore democracy after conflict, coup d'etats, rigged elections or corruption scandals. Rather than being a punitive instrument, article 96, and its practical application, has in fact been a successful tool in the protection and promotion of democracy, governance and human rights. Returning to the discussion above about conditionality, the Cotonou Agreement demonstrates the value of basing cooperation on a partnership that allows for real ownership and real negotiations on guiding principles.

This spirit of partnership is also the reason why the working relationship between the EU Commission and the AU Commission has been given such high priority, which is perhaps most notable in the creation of the African Peace Facility in 2004 which has enabled the AU to play a crucial role in peacekeeping in Africa.

These four instruments do not make up the totality of EU external aid, and for the purpose of presenting instruments with a direct relevance to the democratization effort the funding of non-state development actors and local authorities should be included. The average annual funding is EUR 230 million and the available funding for 2007–2013 is EUR 1.6 billion. Administratively, this instrument – often referred to as the NGO envelope – looks much like the EIDHR, but in substance it is more development-oriented. A lot of the activity supported through NGOs and local authorities overlaps with what the other instruments are trying to achieve. The qualitative aspect of involving NGOs is typically seen as the mobilization of civil society and the enhancement of independent voices in the public discourse. In addition, the task of countering corruption by acting as a watchdog has been mentioned by NGOs as one of their important functions. All this is true, but one has to be careful not to be tempted to do what is easiest rather than what is the most important. It is easy to fund NGOs but difficult to support and sustain a pluralist political system with a parliament in which the opposition and the backbenchers of the governing party also play meaningful roles, or to reform the judiciary in a country trying to turn its back on a past dominated by human rights violations or widespread corruption.

It probably makes good sense to have this many different instruments. They complement each other and offer a variety of options – for both the EU and the partner countries – and facilitate adaptation to the specific situation at hand.

The conclusion of these observations is that it probably makes good sense to have this many different instruments. They complement each other and offer a variety of options – for both the EU and the partner countries – and facilitate adaptation to the specific situation at hand, ranging from a standalone pinpointed action implemented by the Commission in a failed state or in a post-conflict situation to a structured long term programme for judicial reform carried out in close collaboration with the partner country's government being in the driver's seat.

6. Conclusions

When examining the conditions for ambitious integration schemes around the world and comparing them with the European experience, the most striking difference is that European integration started against the background of a clearly perceived need to do something about the structural problems of coal and steel, and as a condition set by a donor – the US Marshall Plan. In ASEAN, Mercosur and the African Union – and in most other more or less prominent cases – these elements and strong incentives are missing. It is more the other way round – that engaging in an integration project holds some promise and, from most analytical observations, represents the best strategy for securing prosperity and political stability in the region. This, however, is not the same as addressing a recognized problem that cannot be resolved unless it is resolved collectively. The long political overtures that accompany such regional efforts testify that integration is a wish more than a compelling necessity. As is noted above, however, more and more problems are emerging and being understood as problems that require an integrated and authoritative approach. Furthermore, the economic case for the

need for Economic Partnership Agreements, with their strong dimension of regional liberalization and integration, to be finalized between the EU and the ACP regions, is increasingly perceived as the only realistic way to secure the smooth integration of the ACP countries and region into the global economy.

The link between the accumulated experience of integration processes as a way of resolving problems and enhancing regional cooperation and political stability, on the one hand, and the endeavour of strengthening democracy, on the other, is undoubtedly a positive one. The achievements of the African Union in recent years testify to this fact. For the EU, continuing its support for democratization through all its instruments is both meaningful and important, but the decisive contribution will come from the EU's own behaviour globally. That is what determines the credibility of the actions undertaken under the banner of promoting democracy.

About the Author

Professor Poul Nielson was born in Copenhagen. He was appointed Adjunct Professor at the University of Aalborg in 2005, teaching European Policy and Development Studies. He was a member of parliament in 1971–73, 1977–1984 and 1986–1999, was Head of Section in the ministry of foreign affairs in 1974–1977 and 1984–1986, Minister for Energy in 1979–1982 and Minister for Development Cooperation in 1994–1999. He was Managing Director of LD Energi from 1986 to 1994 and a member of the board of directors of the Danish wind turbine manufacturer, Vestas, in 1986–1994. Professor Nielson was a member of the EU Commission from 1999 to 2004, responsible for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid. He was a member of the High Level Panel advising the African Development Bank in 2005–2007. He has been a member of the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation since 2004, and Chairman of the Danish Social Democratic Party International Committee since 2009.