DEMOCRATIC REALISM OR DEMOCRATIC MISSION?
THE EU'S DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN ITS MEDITERRANEAN NEIGHBORHOOD

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Paper prepared for the 2011 Annual Convention of the Italian Political Science Association in Palermo
(Draft. Please don’t cite without permission. Comments to: daniela.huber@mail.huji.ac.il)

Abstract: Since the end of the Cold War, democracy promotion has turned into a global script for Western foreign policy being portrayed as the 'panacea for all global ills', including security threats like terrorism. But what exactly encourages and constrains democracies to promote democracy abroad? Examining the case of EU democracy promotion in its Mediterranean neighborhood, this paper finds that in the early 1990s, the onset of EU democracy promotion was a response to the third wave of democratization – democracy promotion was represented as a democratic mission. In the early 2000s, however, it turned into a democratic realism: In wake of the successful democratizations of the accession countries, the EU’s democratic identity received a boost and a diversion from democracy promotion would have been too costly considering the importance of this foreign policy goal for a common democratic European identity. In this context democracy promotion was framed as a strategic foreign policy serving the EU security agenda in its Mediterranean neighborhood. When in the wake of victories of Islamic movements in relatively open elections in the Middle East the autocratic regimes reversed the cautious reform process and became more rigid again, this approach became untenable and the EU diverted from democracy promotion. Its future in face of the Arab Spring remains to be seen.

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1 Introduction

With the 2011 ‘Arab Spring’, the third wave of democratizations might have also reached Europe’s Mediterranean neighborhood. This renews the research interest in the EU’s democracy building agenda in the region. It has been criticized by a whole branch of literature that the EU’s democracy promotion approach is only rhetorical. While this perception might partially stem from the EU’s preference to promote democracy by positive conditionality, which is difficult to maintain in face of the resistance of locked-in autocracies, it is also true that the EU’s democratization agenda in its neighborhood has gone through ups and downs: It was only initiated with the end of the Cold War, received a push in the early 2000s, but then suffered a setback, taking the back seat of EU foreign policy from 2007 onwards. This represents a puzzling variance in the role which democracy promotion plays in EU foreign policy.

Democracy promotion is indeed a curious phenomenon of foreign policy and comprehensive theorization on it is underdeveloped. Literature on democracy promotion usually deals with its effectiveness (Pevehouse 2002; Knack 2004; Scott and Steele 2005; Finkel et al. 2006; Nils Peter Gleditsch, Christiansen, and Havard Hegre 2004; Meirmik 1996; Pickering and Kisangani 2006; Hermann and Kegley 1998), compares EU and US strategies (Magen, Risse, and McFaul 2009), or examines the nature of EU (Pace 2007; Khasson, Vasilyan, and Vos 2008; Seeberg 2009; Youngs 2009) or US (Smith 1994; Cox et al. 2000) democracy promotion. The only notable exception to this lacuna is Robinson’s (1996) work “Promoting Polyarchy” which relies on critical theorizing. In the face of this theoretical underdevelopment the puzzling variance in the role which democracy promotion played in the EU’s foreign policy since the end of the Cold War, can serve as a point of departure. How can this be explained? What encourages and pushes, and what constrains democracies to promote democracy?

Proceeding from an examination of this issue in light of leading International Relations (IR) theories, this paper argues that a salient democratic identity and a growth of democracy as an international norm can encourage and even push for a foreign policy practice of democracy promotion, while threat perceptions restrain it. However, threat perceptions are less likely to shape

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1 Panebianco for example claimed that “the EU’s promotion of HRD (Human Rights and Democracy) seems more part of political discourse than a priority of international action” (Panebianco 2006, 150). Michelle Pace criticized the European Mediterranean policy as a “label providing soothing self-identification” (Pace 2007, 671); Seeberg (2009) called the EU a “realist actor in normative clothes;” and Youngs said that in “the southern Mediterranean, the EU is driven by a security agenda that is judged to be best served by a stabilizing liberalization of still-autocratic regimes” (Youngs 2009, 913).

2 See also Hüllen and Stahn (2009, 130). Biscop argues that “(a)dmittedly, ‘positive conditionality’ requires an extremely difficult balancing act, especially vis-à-vis countries with authoritarian regimes … maintaining partnerships and being sufficiently critical at the same time” (Biscop 2010, 76).
and shove foreign policy if democracy promotion already constitutes an established foreign policy practice, as such a practice leads to a feedback loop on the normative and identitive environment of the democracy promoter.

This article starts out with a discussion of democracy promotion in the light of IR theories and the presentation of the argument of this paper. It will then turn to an examination of EU democracy promotion in its Mediterranean neighborhood, before it will analyze this with regards to the argument.

2 IR Theory and the Phenomenon of Democracy Promotion

Democracy promotion is a foreign policy which aims at initiating democratization, supporting democratization or strengthening democracy\(^3\) in foreign states and their societies by different means. Democracy promotion aims at what Wolfers (1965) has called milieu goals, i.e. shaping the conditions in the international environment (as opposed to possession goals), or what Keukeleire and MacNaughtan refer to as structural foreign policy, i.e. a policy that “seeks to influence or shape sustainable political, legal, socio-economic, security and mental structures (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008, 25). Which classes of phenomena belong to democracy promotion? Influenced by the US intervention in Iraq, democracy promotion is often assumed to be a coercive foreign policy. However, this instrument is only one out of the pool of means available to democracies. There are also utilitarian instruments, i.e. democracy assistance and negative/positive conditionality, and identitive instruments, i.e. naming and shaming or communication through classic diplomacy or platforms of dialogue.\(^4\) As elaborated above, not much theory on the varying role of democracy promotion in foreign policy exists. Thus IR theories will now be reviewed to identify possible factors which encourage or constrain democracy promotion and explain variance in the role democracy promotion plays in foreign policy.

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\(^3\) Democracy is defined here according to Dahl’s concept of Polyarchy which centers on contestation and participation, and stresses the competitive character of democracy, individual rights, as well as the deliberation of the citizens and the “strong principle of equality” (Dahl 1989, 97). Democracy is reached once the following conditions are fulfilled: when all citizens have equal opportunities for expressing their preferences, for setting the agenda and deciding on different outcomes (effective participation), all citizens have the equal opportunity to express a choice (voting equality at the decisive stage), all citizens have equal opportunity for discovering and validating (enlightened understanding), the people have the exclusive opportunity to decide how matters are placed on the agenda (control of the agenda), and equality extends to all citizens within the state (inclusiveness) (Dahl 1989, 106 et sqq.).

\(^4\) The denominations of the three types of democracy promotion are borrowed from Etzioni’s three types of integrating power (Etzioni 2001).
Structural and Neo-Classical Realism

Realism deals with states as rational, unitary actors in an anarchic environment, in which they seek to acquire power to defend their pre-given national interests. Structural realists – as suggested by Waltz (1996) – deal with international politics rather than foreign policy and can therefore hardly explain concrete foreign policies such as democracy promotion. Motivational neo-classical realists, who incorporate some domestic factors like the democratic constitution of a state in their analysis, can thus serve as a better basis for the development of a realist argument to answer the research question. First of all, neo-classical explanations of the democratic peace (the observation that democracies do not wage wars against each other) point to reasons, why it is a rational long-term policy for democracies to promote democracy abroad and why, in general, democracy promotion can be seen as a perfectly realist foreign policy. Democracies are perceived as “sheep in sheep’s clothing” (Kydd 1997), i.e. as security seekers. Their transparency enables them to send reliable signals and thus alleviate the security dilemma, which is the reason for the lack of trust and cooperation in the international system (Kydd 1997; Schweller 2000). In face of this reasoning, it seems puzzling why democracy has not always been promoted by democracies. This can be attributed to the democracy dilemma: in the long term, democracy promotion might be a security policy to bring about a stable environment. This, however, does not apply to the short term and puts the democracy promoter in a dilemma: transition states are the most war-prone states with several power centers complicating reliable signaling. Transition states are volatile, unpredictable and might bring actors to power, which are perceived as threatening and can possible defect from alliances. So when democracy promotion is applied toward allied states, it is a risky policy in the short term. In a highly threatening environment, democracies will be risk-averse and pursue short-term oriented security policies. In other words, they will refrain from a risky policy of democracy promotion. Thus, if threat perceptions increase, we might expect that the scope of democracy promotion will decrease.

Liberalism

Liberalism opened the ‘black box’ of the state. While utilitarian liberalism like realism assumes actors to be rational, its objects of studies are not states as actors, but individuals and groups within states. Preferences are not given, but endogenized. How could utilitarian liberalism explain variance in the scope of democracy promotion? In the logic of commercial liberalism, companies could have

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an interest in promoting democracy abroad in order to reach certain preconditions for investment in other countries and to lobby for such a foreign policy. However democratizing countries are too volatile for investment and companies might actually be interested in lobbying against democracy promotion if they either directly deal with autocrats or if they prefer stable autocracies which provide for rule of law and thus predictability for business. So, utilitarian liberalism does not provide convincing explanations for variance in the scope of democracy promotion.

Constructivism

While constructivism is a meta-theory, there is nonetheless a broad and ever growing array of empirical research (Adler 2002, 103). Constructivism for example leads the research areas on identity and norms and their influence on state’s interests or state behavior. We can expect that such an “idealistic” policy as democracy promotion is deeply connected to the democratic identity, as well as to an international norm of democracy. Thus, in the following, these two concepts and their meaning for a foreign policy of democracy promotion will be discussed.

Regarding identity, Wendt introduced a useful typology for this study: he distinguishes four types of identities: corporate identity, i.e. the material base of an identity such as the body in the case of the person or the territory in the case of states; type identity, which Wendt relates to the regime type of a collective; role-identity, which refers to the conception of the self through the eyes of the other; and collective identity, which means the identification between the self and the other (Wendt 1999, 224-33). The identity, which I am interested in, is the democratic type identity of a state; it relates to the self-understanding of a democracy and is at base an intrinsically generated identity. Wendt clarifies that “(o)n the one hand, forms of state are constituted by internal principles of political legitimacy … A state can be democratic all by self” (Wendt 1999, 226). However, also a democratic type identity is defined against the “other”: Hobson, for example, shows, that democracy as civilization “does not make sense without its other – barbarism – with which it is compared, and against which it is defined. These two counter-concepts are co-constitutive. In reflecting each other they help to define themselves” (Hobson 2008, 79).

How does such an identity relate to foreign policy? Firstly, it might bias choice in foreign policy towards democracy promotion. Lebow argues that identities “once established give leaders strong incentives to act consistently with them, or at least to defend their policies with reference to them” (Lebow 2009, 26). But even more than this, a democratic identity can also inform action more directly; it can serve as a guide to action. Charles Taylor suggested that identities “provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or
what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose (Taylor 1989, 27). Aggestam pointed out that “ideas about who ‘we’ are serve as a guide to political action” (Aggestam 1999). In complex situations, such guides can make decision easier, but also make people feel well about themselves, as they followed a ‘right’ course.6

So, while a democratic identity is a necessary factor for promoting democracy abroad, this study is searching for explanations of a rise (or decline) in promoting democracy, and so we should also look for variation in identity which can explain this. While identities are always in flux, some scholars argue that there can be times at which they are “settled and stable enough that we can almost treat them as social facts” (Risse 2010, 29).7 In these times, we can hardly expect that identity leads to variance in democracy promotion. This is different, however, when the democratic type identity is salient.8 This can trigger the following three mechanisms which might push for democracy promotion: Firstly, if basic democratic values are contested, foreign policy might actually be an internal policy – serving to anchor internal values through foreign policy performance. Democracy promotion fosters an internal democratic identity and makes it difficult for future politicians to divert from it. This could be called the anchoring mechanism. Secondly, if a community is explicitly aware of democratic deficits, there is a dissonance between identity and “reality”. In this scenario, democracy promotion might actually serve as a 'democracy substitute'. It projects an image of – as Hobson terms it - “democraticness” (Hobson 2008, 77) at home and abroad. It serves to gloss over internal problems with democracy and furthers a certain narrative of being a distinct democracy with a mission to bring these supposedly “superior” values to others. This could be referred to as the identity-boost mechanism. Thirdly, if new values are seen as essential for the democratic identity, this also has an effect on foreign policy. If, for example, the idea of 'equality of gender' strengthens in the educational field, the sensibility towards remaining gender inequalities in other fields might strengthen, too (this is referred to as the Tocqueville Paradox in Sociology, see Geissler and Meyer (2006, 300)) – and foreign policy can be such a field as well. As a result concepts like 'gender mainstreaming' can become a policy in domestic, as well as foreign policies. Thus, a value-reorientation can be triggered in one area and spill over into

6 Fearon points out that human beings “want to think well of themselves” (Fearon 1999, 24) as much as they want others to think well of themselves.
7 See also Abdelal et al. (2009, 27-29) and Klotz and Lynch (2007, 70). Both argue for an empirical approach.
8 In this study, salience refers to 1) the contestation of the norms and values, as well as their specific meaning for a community (for example which kind of democracy do we want and which values are basic for our democracy, which deficiencies are we willing to accept?), and 2) actual identity change when new constitutive norms or founding values become predominant.
another. This mechanism could be referred to as the isomorphism mechanism. In sum, if democratic type identity becomes positively salient, we can expect a push for democracy promotion.

*Norms* are defined as “collective expectations about proper behavior for a given identity” (Jepperson et al 1996, 54). Like any other state, democracies are socialized into the existing environment of international norms and those norms have diverse effects. As was shown above, they can be regulative, as well as constitutive. Ruggie points out that regulative rules “are intended to have causal effects”, while constitutive rules “define the set of practices that make up a particular class of consciously organized social activity – that is to say, they specify what counts as that activity” (Ruggie 1998, 871). An advancing norm of democracy does not only have constitutive, but can also have causal effects on foreign policy. Again, three mechanisms can be thought of, all of which show that norms do not only affect the internal policy of states who are non-compliers, but also on the foreign policy of states, who are actually norm-compliers, that is democracies. First, there is a confidence pull of a growing norm of democracy. When democracy as a norm grows internationally, a democracy will be increasingly confident that its system of government is a desirable form of government also for other people. This confidence pull persuades a democracy to do the right thing by promoting democracy abroad. In other words, the democracy received a boosting push for its internal identity, and its intrinsic democratic values. Therefore, the confidence pull is a constitutive effect of an international norm on the internal identity of norm-complying state. Second, there is an indirect compliance pull on norm-complying states. Norm-compliers feel a responsibility to speak up for suppressed people and to demand compliance with international norms. This often works through civil society actors in non-complying states who call on the public of norm-complying states for help. In this case, the norm has a regulatory effect on norm-complying states. It triggers a role conception of becoming the “leader” of such norms. This role conception is further increased by a third, strategic pull of norms. If for example human rights grow as international norms, it increases one’s soft power (Nye 1990) to take the lead of such a wave and assume the role of “leader of human rights.” In this case, norms are neither regulatory nor constitutive, but provide a concrete incentive for democracies to get involved.

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9 Note that in all three scenarios, salience was positively associated with more democracy, while it can in theory also be negatively associated and thus decelerate democracy promotion.

10 See Risse and Sikkink (1999).
The Argument

In the discussion of democracy promotion in the light of IR theories, three explanatory factors were identified for providing explanations for the de- or increase of democracy promotion in foreign policy: threat perceptions, a salient democratic identity and an internationally growing norm of democracy. It was shown that the latter two can encourage and even push for a foreign policy practice of democracy promotion, while threat perceptions might restrain it. This applies for clear-cut scenarios: when the democratic identity becomes salient and democratic norms increase at constant threat perceptions or when threat perceptions increase at a stable democratic identity and constant democratic norms. But what happens when they accelerate at the same time? Which one takes preference in influencing action? Regarding democratic norms and identity, they are mutually reinforcing. Regarding norms and threat perceptions, it is likely that a wave of democratizations (which represents a growth of the norm democracy) alleviates the democracy dilemma and thus also threat perceptions. So what about the factors democratic identity and threat perceptions?

It is hardly possible to answer this question definitely, as threat perceptions are interdependent with identity and as this – consequently - depends on the internal interpretation process which will establish “the relevance and binding character” (Sjursen 2006, 174) of democratic values and interests. At the same time, we can set up some expectations, especially when we do not look at this in a static way, but bring in the time dimension and the effects of a chosen foreign policy practice. Hence, in this part, we are looking at the feedback of practice for identity. In Dewey's words, we perceive the self as something, who “is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action” (Dewey 2007, 283). If democracy promotion is an established foreign policy practice and hardly contested anymore, it is unlikely that threat perceptions influence the foreign policy practice of democracy promotion. First of all, because a continued practice of democracy promotion has an impact on the normative environment: the number of democracies might possibly grow. This now, in turn feeds back to the democracy promoter: it increases the confidence of the democracy promoter in the possibility of democratizations and thus at the same time decreases the perception of the democracy dilemma: democracy promotion does not seem all too risky anymore, when it turned out successful in other cases. In addition, foreign policy practice re-enforces an identity. Sedelmeier notes that “actual policy practice, including discursive practices … might make important aspects of … identity more explicit and more specific, for example, by giving norm-based justifications for common actions. In this way, policy practice might strengthen identity-based arguments and thus affect subsequent policy behavior” (Sedelmeier 2003, 15). Democratic foreign policy values can become increasingly internalized and democracy promotion a
deeply engrained and institutionalized practice. It becomes part of identity: as Max Weber argued, “the meaning of the conduct does not lie in the achievement of some goal ulterior to it, but in engaging in the specific type of behavior for its own sake” (Weber 1962, 60). The abandoning of this practice can then be connected to higher costs than the ones connected to democracy promotion under threat perceptions. Mitzen suggested that identities are “anchored in routines with significant others, and actors – even corporate actors such as states – become attached to or invested in these routines. This is because routines give individuals an important form of security, which, following Anthony Giddens (1991), I call ‘ontological security’” (Mitzen 2006a, 271). Diverting from such routines is costly. So, democracy promotion does not only have an influence on the recipient country and the institutional environment, but also on the democracy promoter itself.

In sum, two arguments were made here. The first argument relates to the growth of democracy as an international norm and a salient democratic identity, which increase the likelihood of democracy promotion to grow, while increasing threat perceptions lead to a possible decrease of democracy promotion in the foreign policy agenda. The second argument follows the feedback loop of foreign policy practice on the democracy promoter itself and claims that the likelihood of threat perceptions to influence foreign policy decreases the more democracy promotion represents an established foreign policy practice. These arguments will now be tested with the case of EU democracy promotion in its Mediterranean neighborhood.

3 EU Democracy Promotion in the Mediterranean Neighborhood

The EU’s democracy building agenda in the Mediterranean began in 1995 with two initiatives: the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), and the political reform component of the Barcelona Process. With the breakdown of the peace process in the Middle East, the outbreak of the second Intifada, and stalling reform processes in the Mediterranean partner countries, the Barcelona Process was increasingly perceived as a failure and the EU started to reconsider its democracy promotion approach. At the same time the comprehensive 2004 enlargement was leading to a new neighborhood for the EU and High Representative Javier Solana and Commissioner for External Relations Chris Patten proposed the “Wider Europe” Initiative, from which the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) developed. Like the Barcelona Process, it is not only an initiative for political reform, but also deals with other issues such as terrorism or migration and works with the partner governments directly. In contrast to the Barcelona Process, the ENP in its entire set-up puts much more stress on democracy. It was clearly a sign that the EU
started to give political and economic reform priority over the multilateral dimension,\textsuperscript{11} which had been one of the central aims of the Barcelona Process.\textsuperscript{12} After 2003, also the human rights and democracy subcommittees were introduced to make democracy promotion by persuasion more effective, as the Commission had found that the political dialogue in the frame of the association council meetings did “not lead to a discussion of substance. On the contrary, it can serve as a pretext to avoid serious discussion” (European Commission 2003a, 13). In 2006, also a governance facility was set up to reward the front runners in terms of political reform with an initial budget of 300 million Euros (see European Commission 2006b).\textsuperscript{13} The mere introduction of the ENP, the subcommittees and the governance facility meant both a push to the democracy promotion agenda.

In contrast to this, the establishment of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in 2008 represented a setback for it: the UfM was launched to substitute the Barcelona Process at the initiative of the French President Nicolas Sarkozy. It improved the institutional structure of the Barcelona Process,\textsuperscript{14} but so far could neither re-energize the multilateral dimension of the Barcelona Process,\textsuperscript{15} nor the political reform process. In fact, the latter does not play a major role in it. Rather, the UfM seeks to foster Mediterranean cooperation the apparent lack of will to reform notwithstanding. The logic of the initiative does not include political conditionality and focuses on topics of high interest for the EU, such as energy, migration, or infrastructure. This gave a sign to the autocracies in the neighborhood that the EU was willing to turn a blind eye on lack of reform for the sake of fostering its own interest.

This might have changed again in 2011 in the wake of the ‘Arab Spring’ when EU Commissioner for Enlargement – Stefan Füle –admitted that “Europe was not vocal enough in defending human rights and local democratic forces in the region” (Füle 2011). The EU proposed a new “Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity”. It also increased the levels of humanitarian assistance, as well as the ceiling of the European Investment Bank for the Mediterranean countries and is

\textsuperscript{11} See Pace (2007).
\textsuperscript{12} See Adler and Crawford (2006) on region-building in the EMP. Del Sarto and Schumacher (2005) argue that the multilateral dimension became difficult to pursue with the breakdown of the peace process and argue that the ENP is based on “differentiated bilateralism”.
\textsuperscript{13} Tocci and Cassarino (2011, 18) criticize that this is a comparatively small amount, as the ENPI funds amount to 11.2 billion Euros. However, the set-up of the facility itself was already a step to acknowledge the growing importance of the democracy agenda and countries which receive assistance under it, do not only receive money, but also the status of a front runner.
\textsuperscript{14} It introduced for example a co-owned presidency of one EU and one partner country for two years and the Secretariat in Barcelona which oversees the initiative. A further new institution is the Euro-Mediterranean regional and local assembly, somewhat following the model of the EU committee of the regions, which also brings in regional and local representatives and met for the first time in 2010.
\textsuperscript{15} The heads of state/government are supposed to meet every two years, but following the Gaza War in December 2008, no high level political meetings have been taken place anymore and its future remains to be seen.
discussing the establishment of a European Endowment for Democracy. Nonetheless, the partner countries see these EU measurements as negligible support in the face of the tasks which are ahead of them.\(^{16}\)

With this broad picture in mind, the analysis will now go into the details. It will first observe the democracy assistance policy which is carried out mainly through EIDHR, but also through the financial instruments of the Barcelona Process (MEDA I and II) and of the ENP (the European Neighborhood Policy Instrument (ENPI)). The analysis will then turn to the political conditionality of the Barcelona Process and the ENP.

**Democracy Assistance**

Regarding EU democracy aid specifically, the EU’s principal program for this is EIDHR. In contrast to EIDHR, MEDA and ENPI finance not only democracy or human rights related projects. Regarding MEDA II, only 8% of the budget went to governance and political dialogue (European Commission 2009) and also for ENPI between 2007-13 8% of the budget were indicated for democracy and human rights.\(^{17}\) If we compare the budget of the bottom-up program EIDHR with the top-down program ENP, the budget for the first amounts to 1.1 million Euros between 2007 and 2013 (European Commission 2010c), while ENPI scales up to 12 billion Euros in the same time period. Thus, the EU spends much less money for grassroots democracy building than for promoting this through working with partner governments directly. This can also be seen in the following graph, which compares the funding for EIDHR with the MEDA II\(^{18}\) and the European Neighborhood Policy Instrument (ENPI). In the year 2006, from MEDA II to ENPI, there seems to be a big jump in aid. The reason for this is that ENPI replaced not only MEDA (the program for the South), but also TACIS (the program for the East).

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\(^{16}\) For Tunisia, Ashton announced emergency aid of 17 euro million for democracy building – a relatively minor account, interpreted by Tunisian minister of Industry as ridiculous in face of the unfolding events (The Economist 2011).

\(^{17}\) This analysis is based on a calculation of the author of the national indicative programs of Algeria (European Commission 2007a; 2010a), Egypt (European Commission 2007b; 2010b), Jordan (European Commission 2007c; 2010c), Lebanon (European Commission 2007d; 2010d), Morocco (European Commission 2007e; 2010e), Tunisia (European Commission 2007f; 2010f) and Syria (European Commission 2007g; 2010g).

\(^{18}\) MEDA II covered the period of 2000-2006 with 5.4 billion Euros, MEDA I the years 1995-1999 with 3.4 billion Euros.
Democracy assistance is a constant, consolidated and growing part of the EU’s foreign aid policy even though it is outrun by aid to socio-economic structures. So, regarding democracy assistance, we can find that it is a consolidated part of EU’s aid policy since the early 1990s, but there is not much variance in it. This differs, when we deal with political conditionality.

**Political Conditionality**

Negative conditionality has hardly been part of the EU’s democracy promotion agenda. Paragraph two of the association agreements of the Barcelona Process – the human rights and democracy clause – has never been invoked in the Mediterranean region. There are only exceptional cases of negative conditionality, the most interesting of them maybe being the policy towards the Palestinian Authority (PA), as the PA is highly dependent on the EU being its key financial provider for the functioning of the state and the provision of common goods. This structural context makes local politicians accountable to the EU and increases its leverage: its ‘shadow of hierarchy’ (Scharpf 1997; Börzel 2009) is huge and comparable to its shadow of hierarchy over EU accession states. With the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, the EU was at first willing to tolerate authoritarian rule in the belief that this would keep the peace process alive. This changed, however, in 2001/02 when the second Intifada began and it was obvious that this policy had failed. The EU set out to limit Arafat's authority by urging the PA to introduce the office of a prime minister. Another policy area, in which the EU pressured for reform, was the rule of law with an independent judiciary and the call for an abolishment of the infamous state security courts. Almost all security services were brought under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior. Furthermore, in order to fight corruption within the PA, the EU successfully applied pressure for the placing of all revenues...
under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance and the introduction of internal auditing and control mechanisms. An external auditing institution was established. Finally, the EU also sought to enhance the oversight capacity of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) and supported free and fair elections. This approach, however, changed again with the 2006 parliamentary elections, which were won by Hamas. The EU reacted by freezing its funding and setting up external conditions for accepting Hamas, namely to renounce violence, recognize Israel and abide by existing agreements between Israel and the Palestinians. It made a U-turn with the distribution of funding to the President's office; this supported the concentration of power in the hands of the president, which the EU had sought to diminish before.

Positive conditionality is an important part of the EU’s strategy at promoting democracy. One of the reasons why the neighborhood policy was introduced was that the negative conditionality of the Barcelona Process was never applied. The EU looked for new ways how to foster reform and formulated an approach which somewhat mirrors the enlargement process: in the Action Plans of the ENP bench marks are set and if the countries fulfill them, they are bound closer to the EU. The action plans of the ENP drew much critique in terms of being vague in the bench marks and rewards. These problems notwithstanding, the positive conditionality logic does work in “grosso modo”:

If we look at the status of freedom of the Mediterranean countries according to Freedom House, in the years 2000-2009, Morocco, Lebanon and Jordan represent the front runners; then there is a middle group of the Palestinian Authority, Algeria, Egypt and Tunisia; and there is the stringent autocracies Syria and Libya. Accordingly, if the logic of positive conditionality really functions, we should expect Morocco, Lebanon and Jordan to be bound closer to the EU and to receive the highest amounts of aid; the middle group in the middle of receiving aid; and Syria and Libya as the least recipients, being not bound closer to the EU.

19 Pace for example argues that it “is notable that ENP Action Plans lack clear strategies, procedures and timetables required to entice these governments to develop domestic institutions and their own will and commitment towards the enhancement of their peoples’ economic, social and political lives” (Pace 2007, 663). On a similar critique see Del Sarto et al (2007). Gordon and Sasse found that the ENP is based on “conditionality without clear commitments and rewards” (Gordon and Sasse 2008, 301-03). Especially the rewards are vague and Whitman and Wolff maintain that the main problem of the ENP is that it “lacks any substantial incentives” (Whitman and Wolff 2010, 13). Casier criticized that the partner countries “find themselves in a strong position of dependence” (Casier 2010, 103). Tocci and Cassarino think that the EU does not liberalize the agriculture markets or the free movement of persons, which are most important for the neighboring countries (Tocci and Cassarino 2011, 15), even though the EU currently does negotiate with Tunisia and Morocco to liberalize for agricultural and fishery products.
Regarding the distribution of aid, the following two figures show this for the MEDA II (2000-2006) and ENPI (2007-2013) funds in total and per capita. While the funding in total does not correspond to the willingness to reform politically, the per capita funding clearly does. The front runners Morocco, Jordan, and Lebanon received the highest amounts of per capita funding (as did Tunisia due to its high progress in economic reform and the Palestinian Authority due to the EU’s commitment to build up the institutions of the Palestinian quasi-state as envisaged in the Oslo Peace Accords). Egypt, Algeria, and Syria, in contrast, received considerably smaller amounts of aid measured per capita.

**Figure II: MEDA II by country 2000-2006**

![Graph](image1)

Source: European Commission (2009). For the per capita calculation, the population estimations of the World Fact book (CIA 2011) were used.

**Figure III: ENPI by recipients 2007-2013**

![Graph](image2)

Sources: National Indicative Programs of Algeria (European Commission 2007a; 2010a), Egypt (European Commission 2007b; 2010b), Jordan (European Commission 2007c; 2010c), Lebanon (European Commission 2007d; 2010d), Morocco (European Commission 2007e; 2010e), Tunisia (European Commission 2007f; 2010f) and Syria (European

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20 The ENP homepage does not include a National Indicative Program for the Palestinian Authority and thus, it is not included in the graph.
The status of association with the EU as another important instrument of positive conditionality is portrayed in the next figure. It shows the years in which countries signed the association agreements or action plans or received an advanced partnership status (it also includes the year, when they agreed on establishing a human rights and democracy subcommittee which had been mentioned above).

**Figure IV: Status of Association with EU**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Association Agreement and Association Council Meetings since</th>
<th>Human Rights Subcommittee since</th>
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Clearly, there are two front runners (Morocco and Jordan; Lebanon is not a front runner here), two outsiders (Syria and Libya), as well as a middle group which is led by Tunisia and the Palestinian Authority, while Egypt and Algeria are rather reluctant to accept EU influence.\(^{21}\) Thus, in general, we can see a positive conditionality approach not only in distribution of funding, but also in binding front runners closer to the EU.

In conclusion, this section found that democracy promotion does play a role in EU foreign policy, but not a consistent one. The following general turning points could be identified: In the early 1990s, democracy promotion advanced for the first time as an important foreign policy component towards the Mediterranean neighborhood. Between 2002 and 2006, the democracy promotion agenda of the EU was thriving. The EU introduced the European Neighborhood Policy with its much more active approach at promoting democracy, as well as the governance facility to reward front runners. It increased its capacity to promote democracy through discourse by establishing the human rights and democracy subcommittees. In the same period, the EU also started to pursue a

\(^{21}\) Algeria and Egypt are both relatively independent of the EU; Algeria due to its richness in oil and Egypt because of its close alignment with the United States.
more coherent democracy promotion policy towards single regimes, notably towards the Palestinian Authority. In the years 2007 through 2011, the EU democracy promotion agenda declined. The EU established the Union for the Mediterranean and sought closer cooperation with the authoritarian regimes despite an obvious lack in reform will.

4 Explaining Variance of Democracy Promotion in EU Foreign Policy
How can this variance be explained? The following section will now analyze the influence of European democratic identity, international democracy norms, threat perceptions, and the feedback loop of foreign policy practice.

European Democratic Identity
Democracy was not an established value from the very beginning in the European Community (EC); it became one through a political process, as Thomas (2006) has shown. The EC consciously represented democracy as a shared value with the 1970 Luxembourg Report, which declared that membership in the European Community was only open to democracies, and with the EC's document on European Identity, in which the nine foreign ministers stated that principles of representative democracy, of the rule of law, of social justice and of respect for human rights “are fundamental elements of the European Identity” (European Council 1973). With the end of the Cold War, democracy as a founding value of the EU started to find cascading reference in EU treaties and declarations.

As a result, this core value informs the EU's foreign policy agenda in general. The EU, in the words of former High Representative Javier Solana, sees values such as democracy or human rights as a “compass that helps guide our external relations” (Solana 2002a) and action on the international stage as “a function of your identity – of how you define yourself and the values you seek to promote abroad” (Solana 2007a, 9). So, its democratic identity enables the EU to promote democracy in the first place. But does it also explain variance in it? Even though democracy is a founding value of the EU and thus a central part of its identity, it is called into question by two developments: the EU's internal democratic deficit, which could lead the EU to promote democracy abroad to project a democratic image internally; and the victory of ultra right-wing parties in European states, whose political program contests basic democratic values of the EU, potentially leading the EU to promote democracy to anchor it as a value internally.
The democratic deficit has been discussed for two decades. It refers to “deficiencies in representation, representativeness, accountability, transparency and support” (Eriksen and Fossum 2002, 401).\(^{22}\) Besides these categories, the recent academic centered on the discussion of a European public sphere, based on a deliberative concept of democracy.\(^{23}\) While the exact nature and extend of the democracy deficit might be contested, a deficit does exist. In face of this, many researchers are puzzled by the “wide discrepancy between internal union practice and external policy objectives (Smith 2003, 123).\(^{24}\) This indeed seems puzzling at first, but it could exactly be the reason for democracy promotion. It could be used as a substitute for democracy to project a democratic image externally, but more importantly also internally to generate support for the EU.\(^{25}\) It furthers the narrative of being democratic, can thus also serve to engender support among skeptics of the EU and to strengthen legitimacy in face of a lack of identification. Through foreign policy, as Lucarelli has pointed out, EU citizens “experience the proclaimed common values and principles applied; … see the image of Europe that the rest of the world sees, through which communities recognize themselves both for the similarities and the differences with respect to significant

\(^{22}\) Regarding the lack of representation, it is argued that the EU is “legitimated not as a government of citizens, but as a government of governments” (Scharpf 2009, 3). The European parliament does not have decision making capabilities, but mainly serves as a monitoring body and the EU also curtails the power of nationally elected parliaments (Andersen and Burns 1996; Raunio 1999). In respect to representativeness, it has been maintained that European parliamentary elections are actually not “European”, as they are not only about EU topics, but rather serve as proxy elections for national topics (Hix 1999; Marks, Wilson, and Ray 2002). Furthermore, citizens do not have the means to hold politicians accountable. The EU is also not transparent. It has turned into a “technocratic super-state” (Risse and Kleine 2007, 70-71) with the Commission holding considerable power which is not checked by elected representatives. Besides, there is an identity deficit meaning that about 44 percent of Europeans “never think of themselves as European” (Fligstein 2008, 4); a number of people, among whom the EU needs to generate more support.

\(^{23}\) Schlesinger and Fossum, for example argue that “it has become increasingly – and pressingly – relevant to discuss whether there could be a European public sphere wherein citizens might simultaneously address common issues across state borders and see themselves as the authors of the EU laws they have to abide by” (Schlesinger and Fossum 2009, 2). Many researchers doubt that a European public sphere is emerging; Zielonka for example believes that “(p)olitical discourses are largely confined to national public spaces with little sign of a truly European public space emerging with the progress of European integration” (Zielonka 2006, 133). Risse, however, rejects that and argues that “we can observe the Europeeanization of public spheres whenever European issues are debated” (Risse 2010, 5).

\(^{24}\) This could actually hinder the effectiveness of EU democracy promotion. Ferreira-Pereira points out that the EU “needs to be a ‘model power’ that others emulate in a consistent way, at the international level. This is of enormous relevance since it is through what the Union does, especially through the perception of positive consequences that follow from its behavior and from its interaction with other actors, that the EU is able to stimulate observation and imitative learning” (Ferreira-Pereira 2010, 299).

\(^{25}\) Also Olsen has argued that “the promotion of democracy as a prominent theme in the foreign policy of the EC/EU could contribute to creating a ‘European’ identity and thus further the European integration process”(Olsen 2000, 144). Democracy as a foreign policy goal generates consensus and, as Keohane pointed out, it reinforces common European values, makes “Europeans feel good about themselves and the EU’s role in the world,” and serves “as the moral equivalent of nationalism, reinforcing internal cohesion and a sense of European self-esteem” (Keohane 2002, 746). Similar arguments were also made by Mitzen who argues that “EU foreign policy is not only ‘inter-action’ with outsiders but also always ‘intra-action’, and this makes all the difference” (Mitzen 2006b, 281), and by Keukeleire and MacNaughtan who argued that “the EU’s foreign policy and specific foreign policy actions do not always aim to influence the external world (external objectives), but could have the management of internal EU relations as their principal goal. … Thus, in some instances, member states do not measure the effectiveness of an EU policy initiative against its external impact, but rather against its internal impact” (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008, 13).
'others'.” (Lucarelli 2006, 13). Democracy promotion makes Europeans feel better about their own democracy and projects the image of being a democratic abroad. In this scenario, we could expect pushes for democracy promotion especially when discussions of the democracy deficit became virulent: in 1992, when the Maastricht Treaty was rejected in Denmark and almost in France; in the early 2000s during the debate on European integration, which displayed fears of even less democracy in face of the upcoming 'big bang' enlargement; and in 2005, when the Constitutional Treaty was rejected in France and the Netherlands.

Furthermore, in the early 2000s, the EU's democratic identity construction was also called into question by the appearance, victory and even inclusion into European governments of far right politicians such as Jörg Haider in Austria, Jean-Marie Le Pen in France or Umberto Bossi in Italy in the early 2000s. Especially the Haider case was a showdown of EU identity politics, and the Europe-wide deliberation on it can be seen as representative for an internal European identity struggle between different conceptions of “Europe”: the ‘beacon of modernity’ vs. ‘exclusionary fortress’, to use concepts introduced by Risse. He finds that on “the one hand, there is a modern EU Europe ... embracing modern, democratic and humanistic values …. On the other hand, there is a Europe of white Christian peoples that sees itself as a distinct civilization (Risse 2010, 6). In this case, democracy promotion could serve as an anchor of the identity construction “beacon of modernity”. In a time, when the democratic nature of the identity of the European political community looked contested, democracy promotion could have been a policy to anchor democratic values internally.

In conclusion, the European democratic identity seemed salient in the early 1990s and 2000s, which does correlate with the pushes for democracy promotion. However, in the early 1990s, we do not find any reference in speech to the idea that democracy promotion could boost a European democratic identity. Only in the early 2000s do such ideas appear. In 2001, the Council argues that the “image of a democratic and globally engaged Europe admirably matches citizens’ wishes” (European Council 2001, 20). In the same year a White Paper published by the aiming at improving democratic governance within the Union proposed that

26 Nicolaidis and Howse (2002) argue that the EU seeks to project a “EUtopia” instead of what it really is.

27 Checkel and Katzenstein argued that during “the last decade ... debates concerning a possible European constitution and controversies surrounding the process of enlargement have created a deeply politicized environment where the future of European identity looks anything but settled” (Checkel & Katzenstein 2009, p.13).

28 See Merlingen et al. (2001) and Leconte (2005).
The objectives of peace, growth, employment and social justice pursued within the Union must also be promoted outside for them to be effectively attained at both European and global level. This responds to citizens’ expectations for a powerful Union on a world stage. Successful international action reinforces European identity and the importance of shared values within the Union.

(European Commission 2001b, 27)

In 2002, the High Representative Javier Solana argues that “CFSP is the EU policy with the highest popular support ... Europeans may differ on a lot of things, but not on the strong conviction that Europe has to be the safe haven of democracy and peace” (Solana 2002b, 4) and in 2007 he claims that “acting together on the world stage is also a way to progressively shape and enhance a common identity. ... So the more we act together; the more our reflexes will converge; the more this idea of a European identity will firm up and become less elusive” (Solana 2007a, 9).

In conclusion, there is evidence that from the early 2000s on, democracy promotion is perceived as a foreign policy to boost and anchor a democratic European identity. The interpretation of these findings in this study is that in the early 1990s, there was another factor which pushed for democracy promotion. In the 2000s, democracy promotion was also seen as an internal policy, which helps to lock in a European democratic identity. So, it plays an important role for the European integration project and thus, a diversion from the democracy promotion agenda is too costly, even when threat perceptions are rising, as will be seen later on.

**The Growth of Democracy**

With the end of the Cold War, Europe celebrated the “historic importance of the ending of the division of the European continent” (European Union 1992) and the “‘tectonic' changes in the geopolitical environment: the fall of communism; the dissolution of the Soviet bloc; a transformation of Central and Eastern Europe; the imminent re-unification of Europe” (Solana 2002c, 2). The breakdown of Communism and the cascading “third wave” (Huntington 1991) of democratization made democracy a 'zeitgeist' (Diamond 2008, 6): “While the overall number of democracies more or less stabilized after 1995, the birth of more than ninety democracies in this period represents the greatest transformation of the way states are governed in the history of the world” (Diamond 2008, 6). The Western democracies were ‘triumphing’ and some even celebrated the “end of history” (Fukuyama 1989) - the idea that all states were to become democratic and that an era of democratic
peace was due to begin. Even though not everyone was so utopian, this 'great transformation' left an important mark on the foreign policy of democracies. Especially in the early and mid 1990s, it led to a democracy euphoria.

The following two figures portray the growth of democracy according to the Freedom House and Polity IV indices, which both show that democracy passed the 30% threshold in 1989 (Freedom House) or overtook autocracy in 1989 (Polity IV). It reached the tipping point in 1989 and still is in a phase of norm cascade. A clear rise of freedom and fall of autocracies can be seen in the early 1990s.

**Figure V: Free States Worldwide Freedom House / Polity IV**

These graphs, however, do not show another trend: While the third wave was still in full momentum in the late 1990s and while even in the Arab world there was a cautious liberalization trend in the early 2000s, there appeared to be a stalemate from the mid 2000s onwards. Many researchers like Diamond even started to speak of a “recession” of the third wave, especially as democracy “had been overthrown or gradually stifled in a number of key states, including Nigeria, Russia, Thailand, Venezuela, and, most recently, Bangladesh and the Philippines” (Diamond 2008). China and Russia, two of the world’s most important states, are firm autocracies. Many new democracies performed bad, and although they are in general better performers than autocracies, they are nonetheless outrun economically and in terms of welfare by a few successful autocracies such as Singapore or Malaysia (Saxer 2009, 3), making these states another model to follow. Furthermore, in the Arab world, which was by some perceived as a “bastion of autocracies”, the period of cautious liberalizations came to an end, when Islamic forces were increasingly successful in relatively democratic elections and governments such as Egypt or Jordan firmed their grip on the opposition. At the same time, following the US war in Iraq, democracy promotion lost legitimacy. It
became associated with occupation and war and received a negative connotation. The EU even tried to dissociate its way of promoting democracy from the US’ way by pointing out that its initiatives are based on partnership with the region.

With the 2011 ‘Arab Spring’ the third wave might again revive. Based on largely non-violent people power revolutions (a key feature of the third wave), demonstrations for liberty spilled over from one state to the other: starting from the successful ousting of President Ben Ali in Tunisia, to the fall of President Mubarak in Egypt, demonstrations reached virtually all Arab states from Morocco to Yemen, and even continued despite brutal suppression like in Libya or Syria, but also Yemen and Bahrain. It is unclear where these revolutions are heading to, even though at the time of writing they seem to have lost in momentum (see Diamond 2011). Egypt plays a central role for the success of the revolutions in the whole region, but the military is firming its grip on the country. Nonetheless, these calls for freedom forcefully counter the argument of Huntington that “individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist or Orthodox cultures” (Huntington 1993, 40). Smith argues that until the 1980s, democracy seemed to be a Western phenomenon and – in contrast to human rights – not of universal nature (Smith 2003, 126). The third wave of democratizations, however, “reinforced the view that respect for human rights and democratic principles was not an exclusively Western phenomenon and could and should be promoted abroad” (Smith 2001, 188). This perception received a renewed input with the Arab Spring.

In conclusion, several landmarks have been identified: the fall of Communism in 1989 and the wave of democratization cascading in Eastern Europe (as well as Africa and Asia) during the 1990s, which might have given a push to democracy promotion. The third wave, however, stalled in the mid 2000s and in addition to this, democracy promotion was increasingly perceived as illegitimate, especially in the Arab World. These trends could have dampened democracy promotion. With the 2011 ‘Arab Spring’, it might receive a new push. These developments correspond with the push for

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29 A poll conducted in six Arab nations in November 2006 from Zogby International found that US democracy promotion was perceived very negatively: between 80% of the respondents in Morocco to 42% in Egypt said that worsened their overall opinion of the US (Zogby International 2006).
30 When the US for example proposed its Greater (later Broader) Middle East Initiative, European governments were afraid that this would spoil its ongoing efforts in the neighborhood and one of their central demands was to base the initiative more on partnership instead of imposition.
31 On this issue, see Barro (1999), Karatnyky (2002) and Perthes (2008). The Arab Barometer has shown that an average of 90% of the respondents said that it would be good to have a democratic system of governance in their country, and an average of 86% of the respondents found that democracy is the best system of governance despite drawbacks (on the numbers by country, see Jamal and Tessler 2005, 98)
democracy promotion in the early 1990s and with the decrease of democracy promotion from 2007 onwards. But can we also find evidence for this in speech?

In the early 1990s, there is continued reference to a duty to promote democracy. The 1991 Luxembourg Council for example welcomes “the advances in democracy in Europe and throughout the world” and argues that in face of violations of human rights the “Community and its member States undertake to pursue their policy of promoting and safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the world. This is the legitimate and permanent duty of the world community and of all States acting individually and collectively” (European Council 1991). Similarly in the resolution of the Council on human rights, democracy and development in November 1991, it states that “human rights have a universal nature and it is the duty of all states to promote them” (quoted in Hill and Smith 2000, 444). Also the Parliament argues in its resolution on human rights in the world in 1989/90 that “human rights are universal … and governments have a duty to promote them beyond as well as inside their own frontiers” (European Parliament 1991, 166). So, in the early 1990s, we can clearly see an indirect compliance pull – the EU voices a duty to promote human rights and democratic freedoms. The growing human rights norms also gave an input to the EU's identity. In 1995, the Commission states that in “an international environment in which the universal nature of human rights is increasingly emphasized, the European Union has gradually come to define itself in terms of the promotion of those rights and democratic freedoms” (European Commission 1995, 7). Besides, the EU sought to overtake a leadership role. The Council asks: “Does Europe not … have a leading role to play in a new world order, that of a power able both to play a stabilizing role worldwide and to point the way ahead for many countries and peoples? … Europe needs to shoulder its responsibilities in the governance of globalization” (European Council 2001, 21).

In contrast to this, from 2007 on, there is a new tone regarding the norms of democracy and human rights. Solana argues: “Let us think about the global extension of human rights and democracy. Until a very short time ago, no-one would have questioned that trend. Someone even managed to speak of the end of the story. But it has not ended. The story is still being written, at breakneck speed. And unfortunately not along the lines that we expected” (Solana 2007b, 3). In another speech in 2007, he says that “not all our values are universally shared. And not all we hold dear is universally admired. … It would not be credible if our foreign policy were not based on our own values. But it would not be wise to ignore the fact that projecting our values may pose problems abroad. We cannot take it for granted that the rest of the world, that is to say the greater part of
humanity, regards our values as theirs too” (Solana 2007c, 5). It seems that the stalemate of the third wave influenced the perceptions of the High Representative here. This, however, changes again in 2011. High Representative Catherin Ashton states that “the European Union is sometimes accused of trying to "export" so-called European values to other countries. I reject that accusation. The rights to free speech, freedom of assembly, justice and equality are not European rights: they are universal rights. We must never fall into the trap of believing that people in Africa, Asia or Latin America are less passionate about their rights” (Ashton 2011c).

So, in the early 1990s, it clearly seems that the push to integrate democracy promotion in EU foreign policy emerged due to the growth of democracies. Democracy promotion was perceived as a mission. In 2007, there is for the first time argumentation that democracy is not a universal value, which mirrors the feeling of weariness in face of the stalling third wave – especially in the European Mediterranean neighborhood where the majority of the autocratic regimes appeared resistant to liberalizations.

**Threat Perceptions**

First of all, as discussed in the theoretical section, threat perceptions hinder democracy promotion due to the democracy dilemma. So, before threat perceptions will be further discussed, it should be mentioned that Europeans, as in deed the West in general, have been and are afraid of Islamists gaining in power through democratic elections. In fact, authoritarian regimes used this fear to justify illiberal policies. Historically speaking, Islam was (and, as the discussions regarding Turkey's accession to the EU show, still is) the “other” for many Europeans. A problem for the EU is that Islamists have a possibly different concept of democracy. They often do not share the liberal

32 Lia argued that “by focusing on the ‘terrorist threats’, southern regimes have been very successful in branding all manifestations of opposition – violent and non-violent – as a threat to the stability of the region” (Lia 1999, 49-50). Also Joffé claims that the regimes were successful to securitize this topic in Europe. He points out that this is a case of “externalization-in-reverse” with the partner-state promoting the view that transnational terrorism was an “emanation of the violence they claimed was inherent in political Islam” (Joffé 2008, 155).

33 Hettne and Söderbaum argue that Islam has been the “other” for Europeans, “first through the Arabs, then through the Ottoman Empire. This has shaped the Christian element in European identity leading to a tension between, on the one hand, an essentialist and static and, on the other, a more inclusive and dynamic understanding of European identity” (Hettne and Söderbaum 2005, 536). Bayat points out that the West holds a monolithic perception of the Islamist and is constructing a homogeneous Muslim entity – a worldview that “has been perpetuated in part by some Muslim groups (mainly Islamists) who themselves construct a unitary Islamic landscape” (Bayat 2007, 2).

34 Pace et al suggested that “Islamists who accept democratic procedures aim to build a significantly different type of nation-state, which might challenge what European policy-makers would consider to be democratically acceptable” (Pace, Seeberg, and Cavatorta 2009, 4). Norris and Inglehart have pointed out that “support for democracy is surprisingly widespread among Islamic publics, even among those that live in authoritarian societies. The most basic
values of the EU and so the EU seems to prefer to deal with the party that appears more liberal (but less democratic) than the party that appears more democratic (and less liberal). As a result of these perceptions, Pace finds that while democracy is valued “as an unquestionable good in and of itself, the EU’s discourse actually has an embedded sense of fear, insecurity, and threat vis-à-vis the ME [Middle East]” (Pace 2010, 614). While the dilemma to promote democracy on this background was continually existent in the observed time period, it became especially virulent in the 2005/06 period. Starting in 2005, there was a wave of electoral gains by Islamic movements: after the 2005 parliamentary elections, Hezbollah entered in the Lebanese government (even though it won only 14 of the 128 parliamentary seats); in the same year in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood won 85 seats in the parliamentary elections for the lower house; and the 2006 Hamas won a landslide victory in the Palestinian parliamentary elections.

To turn to threat perceptions specifically, the European security strategy (Solana 2003) lists as the key threats to the EU: terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflict, state failure, and organized crime, the latter including drug trafficking and illegal migration. Further urging concerns for the EU present its energy dependence on the Gulf, Russia, and North Africa, ecological disasters like global warming, unsafe nuclear plants, as well as threats to health security like the avian influenza. In respect to these key threats, the Middle East is the geo-strategic area for the EU. Longo argues that from “the perspective of EU foreign policy, the Mediterranean is one of the hottest areas of global politics and one of the largest sources of conflict” and that “the Mediterranean is perceived as a source of threat because it is the world’s greatest producer and exporter of oil, terrorism, and migration” (Longo 2010, 78).

Europe tries to build up a stronghold against illegal immigration from the Mediterranean neighborhood. The two principal migrant routes are to the Canaries and to Lampedusa/Malta (Rees 2011, 229). The EU experienced several migration crises, the one in 2006, when the number of migrants from West Africa on the Spanish Canary Islands suddenly multiplicated, maybe being the gravest.³⁵ In principle, the EU seeks to prevent this immigration through Frontex – the European agency for border security in operation since 2005. However, to prevent illegal immigration the EU

³⁵ Keukeleire and MacNaughtan estimated a six fold increase in 2005/06 (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008, 231). A new wave of migrants occurred in 2011 on the Italian island Lampedusa in wake of the revolutions in North Africa and the war in Libya.
is highly dependent on cooperation of the North African neighbor states. The EU, in fact, obligated the neighbor countries to sign readmission agreements. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks which had been partially planned in Europe, migrants were increasingly securitized and seen as “transmission trains of violent ideologies of conflict” (Joffé 2008, 159). Solana, for example, pointed out that “the Middle East is increasingly present in our city centre, not just on the other side of the Mediterranean. Violence and instability in the Middle East has knock-on effects on the streets of Europe” (Solana 2005a, 2).

Threat perceptions in Europe became especially pronounced after 9/11 and with the bombings in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005, and when instability in the Middle East heightened with the onset of the second Intifada, the US’ war on terror, as well as the Israel-Lebanon (2006) and Israel-Gaza war (2008/09). We can also witness these accelerating threat perceptions in speech. In 2001, the European Council concludes that

Terrorism is a real challenge to the world and to Europe. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, it looked briefly as though we would for a long while be living in a stable world order, free from conflict, founded upon human rights. Just a few years later, however, there is no such certainty. The eleventh of September has brought a rude awakening. The opposing forces have not gone away: religious fanaticism, ethnic nationalism, racism and terrorism are on the increase, and regional conflicts, poverty and underdevelopment still provide a constant seedbed for them.

(European Council 2001, 21)

Furthermore, in 2008, High Representative Solana in his report on the European Security Strategy (ESS) notes that proliferation by states and terrorist, which the ESS saw as the potentially greatest threat to EU security “has increased in the last five years” (Solana 2008, 3) and that “(t)errorism … remains a major threat to our livelihoods” (Solana 2008, 4). He further notes that “(c)oncerns about

36 Rees argues that the “EU has placed an increased burden on countries less able than its own members to bear the strain of repatriating migrants. For an organization that claims to act ethically, based upon human rights considerations, this appears to be in conflict with its stated values. Only with the start of the Stockholm Programme in 2010 has the Union committed itself to finding a better balance between the objectives of freedom and justice for third countries” (Rees 2011, 244).

37 On the constructions of migration groups as threats, see also Tränhardt (1996).

38 In this respect, The EU considers the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as crucial. Marc Otte, the EU’s special representative to the Middle East peace process, argues that the “Israeli–Palestinian conflict lies at the heart of the problems in the region as a whole and must be resolved in order to bring about a comprehensive Middle East peace. This is vital not only for the region but also for us. We, in the European Union, are close neighbors, on the doorstep of the Middle East” (Otte 2003).

39 After the September 11 attacks in New York, 82 percent of Europeans named terrorism as their number one fear in 2002 (European Commission 2003b, 3).
energy dependence have increased over the last five years. Declining production inside Europe means that by 2030 up to 75% of our oil and gas will have to be imported” (Solana 2008, 5). So, from 2001 on, there is a clear acceleration of threat perceptions. Thus, we should expect a decrease in democracy promotion after 2001. This was, however, not the case. To the contrary, from 2001 until 2006, we witness an acceleration of democracy promotion. This is a puzzling finding. It can be partially explained by the finding above, that a diversion from democracy promotion would be too costly in face of its importance for anchoring a European, democratic identity. But this only clarifies why the EU did not divert from the promotion of democracy in face of accelerating threat perceptions. It does not account for the boost for this policy agenda, which will be explained in the next section.

The Feedback Loop of Democracy Promotion as an Established Foreign Policy Practice

Above it was demonstrated that democracy had become an internal value of the EU by 1973. However, it was not yet on the EU’s foreign policy agenda. This emerged only towards the end of the Cold War. In the 1991 declaration on human rights, democracy and development, democracy was made an explicit component of development policy. In the Maastricht Treaty, the EU - as Risse and Börzel point out - legally obliged itself to “contribute to developing and consolidating democracy, human rights and the rule of law in its relations with third countries” (Risse & Börzel 2009, p.46). Since Maastricht, democracy promotion is an established foreign policy principle of the EU and is central to the EU’s foreign policy identity – the outward-looking pendant of its internal, democratic identity. By making democracy a central foreign policy value, the EU is constructing a specific foreign policy identity, which seeks to project its democratic self-image abroad. The EU's external identity construction has in academia often been described by the concept

40 Also the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997, the Nice Treaty of 2000 and the Lisbon Treaty of 2007 further elaborated on democracy as a founding principle, as a principle for the functioning of the European Union itself, and as a general objective of foreign policy. The Lisbon treaty states that the “Union’s action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law” (European Union 2007, 14). But not only does democracy promotion represent a consensus among European politicians; it is also shared by the European population. A 2005 survey of the German Marshall Fund found that “(a)sked if it should be the role of the EU to help establish democracy in other countries, an overwhelming majority of European (74%) agreed” (The German Marshall Fund of the United States 2005, 13) – in contrast to only 51% of Americans.

41 Smith claims that “the objectives and values that the EU promotes internationally – its international identity – are inherently linked to the internal dynamics of the Union itself” (Smith 2003, 17).
of “normative power Europe”, which was a concept readily adopted by European politicians. \( ^{42} \) Aggestam (2004) shows how in the end of the 1990s a consensus had emerged among France, Britain and Germany that the EU should be an “ethical” power and European politicians like former President of the Commission Romano Prodi referred to the EU as a “global civil power” (Prodi 2000) or as “a new form of power. A force for good around the world” (Solana 2006). \( ^{44} \)

This foreign policy identity received a significant boost with the enlargement euphoria surrounding the successful democratizations of the accession countries. Waever argued that the European integration process was “a powerful form of interaction that shapes identity” (Waever 1995, 422). Similarly, Sedelmeier maintained that the “EU’s enlargement policy practice contributed to this role conception [as a democracy promoter] primarily through inducing a certain path-dependence into European foreign policy. In the discourse underpinning the EU’s accession conditionality and related treaty changes, the member states and EU institutions explicitly and collectively ascribed a certain role to the EU” (Sedelmeier 2006, 126). \( ^{45} \) This role, in fact, was also perceived as such by the new member states, which after accession expected the EU to continue following this path. \( ^{46} \)

Connected to this, the enlargement euphoria also had implications on how solutions for perceived threats were found. With the successfully managed transitions in Eastern Europe, the EU was confident that democratization processes could also lead to a secure and stable neighborhood. When the EU, in the wake of the 9/11 terror attack, set up its own security strategy, it believed that the “best protection for our security is a world of well-governed democratic states” (Solana 2003, 11). The idea behind this is that democracies are stable, prosperous and peaceful and hence, democracy promotion can solve the conflicts in the region and thus also ameliorate the problem of illegal migration. This idea is informed by the democratic peace thesis, which seems to have become a

\( ^{42} \) Manners argued that because “of its particular historical evolution, its hybrid polity, and its constitutional configuration, the EU has a normatively different basis for its relations with the world. ... (N)ot only is the EU constructed on a normative basis, but importantly ... this predisposes it to act in a normative way in world politics” (Manners 2002, 252).

\( ^{43} \) Pace and Diez suggested that the concept “is better seen as a discursive self-construction imbuing the integration project with new force and establishing an EU identity against Others, rather than an objective analytical concept” (Pace and Diez 2007, 1).

\( ^{44} \) Thus, the EU chose to set up this identity. It is not a democracy promoter “by accident” in contrast to the US (as argued by Baracani 2010, 304), but actually a democracy promoter by choice like the US.

\( ^{45} \) Risse et al suggested that “(a) path-dependent process is one in which positive feedback loops lead to increasing returns. An institutional decision in a certain direction made at a ‘critical juncture’ offering several possible choices subsequently changes the parameters in such a way that the next decision is likely to move in the same direct, etc. Path dependent processes continue irrespective of whether the initial decision still makes sense, and explain why actors often ‘stick to their guns’ even though their short-term instrumental interests might have changed” (Risse et al. 1999, 153).

\( ^{46} \) MacNaughtan and Keukeleire point out that the “new member states have increased pressure on the EU to make more assertive use of its potential power and to move the EU more towards a US model of funding pro-democracy movements and organizations” (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008, 227).
political conviction in the Western world today. Ish-Shalom (2006) has shown how this theoretical construction was transformed into a political conviction that informed and justified foreign policy for the case of the American neo-conservatives. The EU, alike the US follows “a world cultural script according to which democracy is good for international security and development” (Risse, Thomas and Börzel 2009, 35).

In sum, EU democracy promotion in Eastern Europe gave a push to democracy promotion by boosting the EU’s identity as a normative power. Similarly to the argument of Tonra that “the self-regard and beliefs of the state actors evolve and have an impact upon the construction of the 'interests' that they pursue” (Tonra 2010, 55), this gave ground to the conviction that through democratization of the neighborhood, the EU’s security problems could be tackled. Thus, when threat perceptions accelerated after 9/11, this conviction pushed for democracy promotion. However, this entered into problems when Islamic movements gained in relatively open elections. The incumbent regimes became more resistant to reform and democracy promotion as an approach to tackle the EU’s security in the region became untenable. It became clear that – as Tocci and Cassarino argued – “the paradigm for Eastern Europe was applied, with little in-depth thinking, to the south. In the east, from the Central and Eastern European countries to the colored revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia, opposition to authoritarian regimes was largely liberal and pro-Western in nature” (Tocci and Cassarino 2011, 5).

Evidence for this in speech is manifold. In 2002, Romano Prodi, then President of the European Commission, stated that

the current enlargement is the greatest contribution to sustainable stability and security on the European continent that the EU ever made. It is one of the most successful and impressive political transformations of the twentieth century. And all this has been achieved in less than a decade. I want to see a ring of friend surrounding the Union and its closest European neighbors, from Morocco to Russia and the Black Sea.

(Prodi 2002)

Following this statement he outlines that this model informed the neighborhood policy. Solana repeatedly referred to the belief that the European Union “has transformed the relations between our states, and the lives of our citizens. … (A)uthoritarian regimes have changed into secure, stable and

47 On the harms caused by misinterpreting and politicizing the democratic peace thesis for the case of the American democracy promotion, see Ish-Shalom (2008).
dynamic democracies” (Solana 2003, 2). In face of this “amazing success story”, he points out that democracy promotion is “voluntary, cost-effective and extraordinarily successful” (Solana 2005b, 1). But even more than this, it also became a strong part of the European identity: “The second rationale for the European project is to spread this zone of peace, democracy and prosperity to all corners of our continent” (Solana 2005c, 2).

Also then Commissioner for Enlargement Günther Verheugen pointed out that “(d)uring the past fifty years the European Union contributed decisively to transform a large part of our continent, previously raged by devastating wars and nationalist divisions, into an area of peace, freedom, integration and prosperity” (Verheugen 2003, 3). Inspired by this “greatest success story in the second part of the 20th century”, he proposed to expand this “area of stability and prosperity” to the neighborhood by “promoting our shared values, including those of rule of law, democracy and human rights” (Verheugen 2003, 4). The enlargement process had given input to the conviction that peace, stability and security could be fostered by exporting European values to the neighborhood.

This conviction was further spurred by developments in the Middle East. The outbreak of the second Intifada and the failure of the Oslo peace process, led the EU conclude that the previous policy of accepting authoritarian rule had failed.48 It became conviction that “the quality of international society depends on the quality of the governments” (Solana 2003, 10) and that – as the European Security Strategy argues - the “best protection for our security is a world of well-governed democratic states. Spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law and protecting human rights are the best means of strengthening international order” (Solana 2003, 11).49 With democracy promotion, the EU planned to tackle the root causes of conflict: “Democracy, pluralism, respect for human rights, civil liberties, the rule of law and core labor standards are all essential prerequisites for political stability, as well as for peaceful and sustained social and economic development” (European Commission 2003c). After the year 2005, however, the euphoria ebbed away and EU politicians speak about the problems of democracy promotion. Solana argues in 2007 that the EU has to

48 This conviction was also shared by the US administration. Condoleezza Rice for example stated in 2005 in a speech at the American University in Cairo that “(f)or 60 years, the United States pursued stability at the expense of democracy in the Middle East – and we achieved neither. Now, we are taking a different course. We are supporting the democratic aspirations of all people” (US Department of State 2005).

49 This conviction can be found in many other EU documents. European Commissioner for External Relations Ferrero-Waldner, for example, also relied to the importance of social reform for stability in the Mediterranean, when she said in 2006 that the “ENP has enabled us to tackle some of our citizens’ most pressing concerns, like energy supplies, migration, security, and stability. ENP also promotes economic and social reform, both for reasons of solidarity, but also because we want stability in our neighborhood and thus added security for ourselves” (Ferrero-Waldner 2006).
rethink and redefine the external projection of our values. ... It would … be irresponsible to ignore the fact that problems arise when we project those values into the outside world. .... I had occasion to become aware of certain issues related to human rights and fundamental freedoms. Firstly, we cannot take it for granted that the rest of humanity, i.e. the majority, consider them to be universal. Secondly, we must be aware that it is very rash to try to impose them.
(Solana 2007b, 10)

This argumentation has changed again with the Arab Spring in 2011, when High Representative Catherin Ashton referred again to democratic freedoms as “universal rights” (Ashton 2011c).

5 Conclusions
EU democracy promotion went through some puzzling variance: In the early 1990s, it became an important part of foreign policy and received a second push in the early 2000s. In 2007, it somewhat diminished. The explanatory part of this paper showed that in the early 1990s, democracy promotion was enabled by the EU’s democratic identity and by low threat perceptions; the decisive push for democracy promotion, however, was a result of democracy becoming the spirit of the time. The third wave cascaded in Eastern Europe and the EU perceived a duty to promote democracy abroad.

In the early 2000s, threat perceptions increased with 9/11 and terror attacks in Europe, as well as with a growing turmoil in the Middle East: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict accelerated and the US’ led a ‘War on Terror’ in the region. Surprisingly, this increase in threat perceptions did not lead to a decrease of democracy promotion. This paper maintains that the push for democracy promotion came through the successful enlargement, which had boosted the EU’s normative foreign policy identity. Also, democracy promotion plays an important role for fostering a common democratic identity in the EU and it would have been too costly for the integration project to divert from the policy agenda of democracy promotion. As a result, identity and security interests were streamlined: it became a conviction that democracy promotion was a foreign policy which serves the EU security agenda in its Mediterranean neighborhood.

This conviction entered into problems with the victory of Islamic movements in relatively open elections in Egypt and Palestine and their entrance into the Lebanese government. Several Arab regimes reversed their very cautious reform course and sought to lock in their rule instead. Without
their cooperation, the EU’s democracy promotion approach cannot achieve and so democracy promotion as a security policy seemed a failure. In addition, the third wave stalled and democracy was at times not seen as a universal value anymore. Taken together, these factors led to a deceleration of democracy promotion.

To come back to the title of this paper, it seems that the incorporation of democracy promotion into the EU’s foreign policy agenda in the 1990s mirrors a democratic mission – the EU voiced a duty to promote democracy in face of the cascading third wave of democratizations. In the early 2000s, however, democracy promotion became a democratic realism: a policy to tackle the EU’s security interests. With the Arab Spring, democracy seems more than before a universal value, and so we can expect that it might give a push to the EU’s democracy promotion agenda.
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