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Different actors, different tools? Approaching EU and US democracy promotion in the Mediterranean and the Newly Independent States

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Paper prepared for the European Union Studies Association (EUSA)
Tenth Biennial International Conference, May 17-19, 2007, Montreal, Canada

Abstract

This paper contributes to the research agenda on external democracy promotion by attempting a systematic comparison between the democracy promotion endeavors of two major international actors, the European Union (EU) and the United States of America (US). It first outlines an analytical framework that is then tested for its heuristical value, applying it to EU and US democracy promotion efforts on a global and a regional scale, thus comparing different actors as well as across regions. It concludes by highlighting the differences in design and flexibility of their approaches and relates them to a specificity of EU external relations. While both actors can draw on seemingly similar tool boxes for democracy promotion, the EU tends to limit its own scope of action to a rather cooperative approach due to the emphasis it puts on the standardization and (reciprocal) formalization of relations with third countries, including provisions for democracy promotion.

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I. Introduction

It is no big news anymore to state that democracy promotion has gained a prominent place on the foreign policy agenda of many international actors, or to point out the increasing scholarly interest it has entailed in various disciplines over the last 15 years. Within this ever growing body of research, the United States (US) and the European Union (EU) have attracted particular attention among analysts of US foreign policy and European integration and politics respectively. However, comparative studies are still rare and a transatlantic research community still has to emerge. In addition, there is hardly a consensus about what constitutes the subject matter of a common research agenda. In the midst of countless empirical studies on different actors and aspects in democracy promotion, there are only few proposals for a systematic analysis and even fewer attempts at theorization.

Setting out to develop a systematic comparison between the EU's and the US' efforts to promote democracy, we hope to contribute with our paper to the advancement of the research agenda on international democracy promotion. We will start outlining an analytical framework (II.) that draws on existing conceptualizations of international democracy promotion to identify categories for classification and comparison. This framework is then tested for its heuristical value, applying it to EU and US democracy promotion efforts on a global (III.) and regional scale (IV.), thus comparing different actors as well as across regions. Coming from the studies of the EU's neighborhood policies, we have chosen the countries of the Eastern and Southern dimensions of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), encompassing the Newly Independent States (NIS) and the countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). These countries represent the first real 'hard cases' for an EU democracy promotion strategy beyond enlargement. Therefore, it is particularly interesting to contrast the EU's actual engagement with the US' approaches to promoting democracy in the regions as part of its global engagement.

We will conclude by highlighting the differences in design and flexibility of their approaches that we relate to a specificity of EU external relations. From the outset, the EU and the US can draw on seemingly similar tool boxes for democracy promotion. However, the EU tends to limit its own scope of action to a rather cooperative approach due to the emphasis it puts on the standardization and (reciprocal) formalization of relations with third countries, including provisions for democracy promotion.

II. Setting the stage: a framework for analyzing democracy promotion

Before turning to the EU's and US' efforts to promote democracy, it is necessary to clearly delimit our understanding of the term, to tackle the question of 'strategy' and to develop a framework for the systematic analysis and comparison of democracy promotion. The establishment of 'democracy promotion' as a field of research has sprung from the attention drawn to "international dimensions of democratization" (Whitehead 1996), qualifying the exclusive focus on internal actors and factors to explain the emergence and outcome of democratization processes. Since then, most studies have implicitly chosen an understanding of 'democracy promotion' that implies agency, but have rarely ever specified what exactly falls under this 'activity'. In this study, we conceive (international) democracy promotion as *an external actor's open attempt to directly establish or advance democracy as a regime type in a target country*.

Looking at EU and US efforts to promote democracy, we are, however, not interested in isolated, ad-hoc actions. As both actors are committed to democracy promotion as a general foreign policy goal, all measures taken can be interpreted as attempts to achieve this goal. This common reasoning often gives rise to the question of 'strategy' that, narrowly defined, asks for the actor's clear assumptions about which means lead to the desired end, laid down in a purposefully designed master plan (Burnell 2004, 2005). The question of strategy is usually linked to the issue of consistency which again is discussed as crucial for the chances of success of democracy promotion, e.g. as a necessary condition for credibility and (thus) effectiveness (Hook 2002). However, most studies come to the conclusion that actors usually do not have such a clear strategy in the first place, which makes it difficult to look for consistency in its implementation. In the absence of explicit strategies, we begin with scrutinizing an actor's whole 'universe' of democracy promotion, i.e. the totality of infrastructure, instruments, and measures. The identification of different practices or patterns of democracy promotion can then lead to the ex-post classification of 'strategies'. As pointed out before, these might not be consciously (or explicitly) pursued, but build on unspoken assumptions or arise from randomly implemented activities to promote democracy.

Even if an actor does not develop a fully fledged strategy, his commitment to promote democracy as a foreign policy goal should be the starting point for the analysis of his democracy promotion efforts. Answering a series of questions about the 'who' and 'when' and 'where' and 'what' might allow some insights into the background of democracy promotion. Especially when comparing different actors, it is interesting to see since when democracy

promotion is (officially) part of the foreign policy agenda – and on what level this commitment is made. In addition, motives given and links to or the ranking of different goals might tell a lot about the place given to democracy promotion in the general foreign policy agenda. The commitment might further be more or less specific about the content of democracy promotion, specifying the actor's understanding of democracy, democratization or specific goals and approaches, elements that could after all signify a strategy. Finally, the commitment can be renewed – and changed – over time. In our view, the crucial step is, however, to see how the general commitment translates into practice. Therefore, we now establish some categories that help to systematically describe and analyze what is done to promote democracy and in what ways.

These ways can first of all differ in the amount and kind of resources the actor allocates to the task. In practice, this means foremost to ask which actors are involved in the promotion of democracy and what their responsibilities and competences as well as their resources in budget and staff are. Here, it is interesting to see whether existing structures are used or if specific institutions for democracy promotion are created. This leads to the crucial link between the creation of an infrastructure for democracy promotion and the implementation of actual measures to promote democracy: tools. So the second major difference appears when looking at the tools that are at an actor's disposal and the use he makes of them.

Tools as a category are omnipresent in democracy promotion literature, although different studies identify different sets of “tools” (Carothers 1999: 6), “instruments” (Youngs 2001: 357), “ways” (Burnell 2000: 7), “weapons” (Schraeder 2003: 26) or “types” (Schmitter, Brouwer 1999). The various ‘tool boxes’ presented are never twice the same, but most of them have in common that they place the different tools within a continuum of ‘intrusiveness’ or ‘interference’, ranging from military or coercive intervention over (economic) sanctions and conditionality to traditional diplomacy. Leaving out military interventions as a form of coercion because they openly violate the sovereignty of the target country, we regroup different tools in two broad categories, according to the two traditional channels of (potentially) exerting influence in international politics: ‘diplomacy’ and ‘foreign aid’. We draw a distinction between these two channels on the basis of the respective ‘status’ of the democracy promoter and the target country: In diplomatic relations, the interaction takes place between two – formally – equal actors, whereas foreign aid is provided by a donor to a recipient. We do not limit diplomacy to classical diplomatic relations, but identify several tools to promote democracy that are all managed in this ‘arena’ of international relations. These are (1) Political Dialogue and Negotiations, (2) (unilateral) Declarations, and (3) (negative and positive) Condi-

tionality.¹ Foreign aid, in the form of technical and financial assistance, adds to these the tool of (4) Democracy Assistance. The choice between different tools is maybe the most prominent and obvious one an actor has to make when setting out to promote democracy. In fact, he is confronted with a variety of options of how to promote democracy that are reflected in the choice, design and application of the different tools. These fundamental choices include (a) the domestic actor targeted with the activity, (b) the mechanism of influence to induce change, (c) the inclusion of the target country's regime in defining and realizing the agenda of democracy promotion, and (d) the disturbance of the domestic balance of power. In the following, the components of our tool box are linked to the different choices sketched.

It convenes to start with the actors and mechanisms chosen, as these fundamentally determine or characterize the design of the tools (see Table 1). With regard to possible domestic actors targeted in democracy promotion, the basic distinction is between state and non-state actors. By definition, all the diplomatic tools address state – mostly governmental – actors.² By contrast, Democracy Assistance can be directed both at state and non-state actors. For identifying different mechanisms of influence, we mainly draw on studies of in international relations and especially the compliance literature. To induce domestic change from the outside is a task comparable to countering 'non-compliance'. Depending on the perceived reasons for 'non-compliance', different solutions are offered: A lack of will is addressed by persuasion (socialization approach) or by creating incentives (enforcement approach), whereas support tackles a lack of capacity (management approach) (see e.g. Chayes, Chayes 1993; Checkel 1997; Schimmelfennig, Sedelmeier 2004; Tallberg 2002; Underdal 1998). The different tools for promoting democracy each correspond roughly to one of these mechanisms of influence. However, sometimes it is difficult to know which mechanism is actually at work. Thus, Political Dialogue and Negotiations give room for arguing and bargaining processes that can lead to social learning or manipulate the targets cost-benefit calculations through promises and threats. In Declarations, the democracy promoter can voice his opinion on the domestic situation, including open praise and criticism. Done publicly, this 'naming and shaming' can create reputational costs that function as external – negative – incentive. Positive and negative Conditionality can affect the targets cost-benefit calculation in anticipation –

¹ Notwithstanding the classification as a diplomatic tool, conditionality can relate to the general relations between promoter and target state as well as to decisions over foreign aid.

² Under the heading of "public diplomacy" (e.g. Roberts 2006), examples of government-to-people diplomacy are discussed, especially with regard to broadcasting programs. While these programs are certainly difficult to classify according to our tool box, we subsume them under democracy assistance, as it is governments providing funds for informing or even educating the people of the target country. Other examples of "public diplomacy", such as cultural programs carried out by embassies, should rather be seen as public relations and not democracy promotion efforts.

after promises or threats are advanced – and manifestly in its application when rewards are granted or sanctions imposed. Finally, Democracy Assistance is about capacity building, both with regard to state and non-state actors, usually through providing expertise, financial and material resources.

Table 1: Democracy Promotion Tool Box

Instruments		Influence Mechanisms	Actor
Diplomacy	Political Dialogue & Negotiations	Social Learning & External Incentives (Bargaining)	State
	Unilateral Declarations	Naming & Shaming	
	Positive & Negative Conditionality (on diplomatic relations and aid)	External Incentives (Reducing or Imposing Costs)	
Foreign Aid	Democracy Assistance (TA/FA)	Capacity Building and Socialization	State and non-state

The other two dimensions realized in the different tools are the inclusion of the targeted regime and the disturbance of the domestic balance of power. The diplomatic tools can all be regrouped according to these dimensions (see Table 2). Regarding the inclusiveness, democracy can be promoted interactively, i.e. in bilateral initiatives such as dialogue and negotiations, or in one-sided or unilateral actions like declarations and the setting up and application of conditionality. At the same time, the diplomatic tools vary in the level of disturbance they cause. With the focus on shifts to the detriment of the incumbent regime, political dialogue, but also positive conditionality, might be considered as ‘cost-neutral’ whereas declarations and negative conditionality all inflict ‘costs’ on the regime.

Table 2: Diplomatic Tools for Democracy Promotion

	<i>Influence mechanisms</i>	
	<i>Social Learning</i>	<i>External Incentives</i>
<i>Disturbance of domestic balance of power</i> ↓ low high	Political dialogue and negotiations	Influence through rewards (i.e. the application of positive conditionality – can be linked to foreign assistance)
	Influence through persuasion & social learning	Influence through declarations (naming & shaming)
		Influence through bargaining (including threats and promises)
	<i>Inclusion of Regime</i>	
	←	→
	interactive mode	unilateral mode

In contrast, democracy assistance can in itself vary in these two dimensions (see Table 3). The inclusion of the regime in the promoter’s agenda signifies here, in how far he operates with or

without the approval of the regime. The cooperation with state actors can only happen with approval, but addressing non-state actors, it depends on the external actor’s willingness – and capacity – if he forgoes the approval of the regime. This can range from simply by-passing the regimes (which tolerates the action) to work openly against the disapproval of the regime (that might take countermeasures). The level of disturbance that can be expected of the measures implemented depends very much on the choice of the specific actors targeted: the more politically active and critical of the regime actors are, the more support for them might pose a threat to the regime.³ The perception of threat and the likelihood of open disapproval of by-passing democracy assistance are highly interrelated.

Table 3: Democracy Assistance

		<i>Influence mechanism</i>		
		<i>Capacity Building</i>		
<i>Disturbance of domestic balance of power</i>	low ↓ high	Primary targets: • State institutions • Gongos • Non political NGOs	Primary targets: • State institutions	Primary targets: • State institutions • Gongos • Non political NGOs • Political active NGOs
		• Political active NGOs • Media • Political active NGOs • Political parties • Exclusively opposition parties	• Gongos • Non political NGOs • Political active NGOs • Media • Political active NGOs • Political parties • Exclusively opposition parties	• Media • Political active NGOs • Political parties • Exclusively opposition parties
		<i>With approval</i>	<i>Without approval</i>	<i>Against disapproval</i>
	<i>Inclusion of regime in choosing targets</i>			
		interactive mode	unilateral mode	

Taken together, the four ‘dimensions’ presented reflect the actor’s stance on the – more or less democratic or authoritarian – regime in place. Thus the design and choice of tools for promoting democracy add up to a (rather) cooperative or conflictive approach, viewing the incumbent regime as partner or adversary in the process of democratization. This is interesting with regard to an actor’s interpretation of the principle of non-intervention in international relations and his readiness to risk the reproach of illegitimate interference in domestic affairs.

Another set of analytical categories are the ‘areas’ of intervention or the ‘issues’ tackled in democracy promotion efforts. They should relate to the actor’s understanding of democracy or at least of crucial elements or aspects of a democratic regime, even if the specific

³ What is perceived as a threat depends heavily on the regime type: To an authoritarian regime, support to independent media might already pose a threat, whereas a newly established democracy might only refuse the partial support for oppositional forces. This should also correspond to the legal status (illegality, official recognition, etc.) of non-state actors in a country.

content of ‘democracy’ is not defined as part of an overarching strategy.⁴ In research on democracy promotion, these aspects are often intermingled with the question of which actor is targeted. This is most often the case with regard to democracy assistance to non-state actors, where the actor – e.g. civil society, media, etc. – is equated with the area targeted. Returning to the basic distinction of state and non-state actors, this choice first of all tells a lot about the actor’s understanding of domestic reform processes and the driving forces behind. This can be summarized as a bottom-up or top-down approach to democratization and democracy promotion. However, it does not necessarily correspond to what is seen as the essential element of democracy in question. For example, the objective of an active civil society can be pursued addressing both state and non-state actors, aiming at either the reform of the legal and institutional framework (e.g. laws that guarantee the freedom of association) and the state’s performance in following its own rules, or at the capacity of civil society actors to actively take part in domestic political processes.

III. Approaching the actors: parallel universes of democracy promotion

Approaching democracy promotion empirically requires a close look at the agencies used or specifically created both by the EU and US serving this purpose. While both actors under scrutiny display a general commitment, the way it translates into practice may differ. Examining their specific infrastructure means taking stock of the different agencies, their respective objectives, resources and tools available as well as identifying the different approaches they adopt. The evolution of the different agencies, their application of tools and specific approaches has developed in the two cases with different speeds and often in reaction to a rapid change of the international context. However, we focus on the situation as of today, only taking into account major developments, to infer distinct features of EU and US ‘strategies’ at the global level.

The configuration of EU Democracy Promotion

Today, the EU as an international actor is committed to promote democracy in its relations with third countries. An explicit commitment outside enlargement policies has for the first time appeared in 1986, in the context of development cooperation. It has been enshrined in

⁴ For a systematic analysis of the (different) definitions of democracy underlying international democracy promotion efforts, it is advisable to draw on the abundant democratic theory literature. Here, we content ourselves with opening up a continuum between narrowly defined ‘electoral democracy’ and fully fledged ‘liberal democracy’ (see e.g. Diamond 1999). This corresponds to a varying focus on elections in contrast to other aspects such as the rule of law (human rights and fundamental freedoms, ‘democratic’ – accountable, transparent, participatory, etc. – procedures) and pluralism (active civil society, competition of political parties) in order to avoid ‘façade’ or ‘illiberal’ democracy (Diamond 2002; Zakaria 1997).

the treaties of Maastricht (1992/1993) and was thus transformed from a political commitment into a legal ‘obligation’, at first for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and development cooperation, ten years later also for ‘other’ external cooperation (Nice 2001/2003). It is hence officially included as a foreign policy goal in both first and second pillar politics of the EU and thus concerns all EU institutions involved in external relations in general.⁵ However, the main actors for devising and implementing democracy promotion definitely are the European Commission and the Council of the EU.⁶

Notwithstanding the legal commitment, there is no comprehensive policy or strategy for democracy promotion established. A framework has been roughly sketched in 1991, envisaging a predominantly ‘positive approach’, manifest in the tools of (political) dialogue, positive (aid) conditionality and democracy assistance (‘support’), combined with an option of ‘appropriate responses’ (negative conditionality), targeted at both state and non-state (‘civil society’) actors.⁷ Over time, the Commission and the Council have developed a patchwork of tools and specifications for democracy promotion (European Commission 2001). With regard to our tool box for democracy promotion, the EU has all types of instruments at its disposal, either as general tools of foreign relations or as tools specifically designed for promoting democracy.

Most of the ‘diplomatic’ tools can not be assigned to only one institution and often necessitate the interplay of several actors. Political dialogue can thus be jointly conducted by the Commission and Council in the context of ‘Troika’ missions.⁸ In addition, political dialogues are institutionalized in most multi- and bilateral agreements with third countries and subject to EU “Guidelines on Human Rights Dialogues” (2001).⁹ Beyond dialogue, all EU institutions can issue public statements, be it in speeches, conclusions, or resolutions. The Council of the

⁵ We do not take into account the EU’s member states as individual actors of democracy promotion, but focus on the EU as external actor(s). For a complete picture of ‘European’ democracy promotion, it is of course necessary to consider national democracy promotion efforts as well (see e.g. Youngs 2006).

⁶ Within these two institutions, the commitment to democracy promotion has only to a limited extent resulted in the creation of specific sub-structures. Already in 1987, the Council has created a Working Group on Human Rights (COHOM). Within the Commission, responsibilities for democracy promotion are integrated into the different General Directorates concerned, especially the DG Relex. Of course, the European Council provides general guidelines for external relations and plays a significant role in the CFSP. The European Parliament participates in the EU’s democracy promotion efforts mainly through ‘legislation’ in first pillar politics, e.g. with regard to external cooperation programs, via its budget competence, and as a ‘normative’ authority when issuing reports and resolutions.

⁷ See the European Commission 1991, the Declaration on Human rights, Conclusion of the Luxembourg European Council (Annex V), 28-29 June 1991, and the Resolution of the council and of the member states meeting in the council on human rights, democracy and development, 28 November 1991.

⁸ The Troika comprises the High representative for the CFSP, the foreign minister of the Council presidency, and the Commissioner for external relations (or the presidents of the European Council and the Commission). In addition, the Commission’s delegations in third countries are no official embassies, but they have of course more or less formal contacts to state (and non-state) actors in their host country

⁹ Participants on the EU’s side are usually Commission and Council representatives or senior officials. As the dialogues are usually conducted behind closed doors, there is hardly any information on their actual content.

EU can furthermore use the CFSP's instrument of Common Positions to take a stand on current events. Another provision specifically designed for promoting democracy is the so called "essential element clause", introducing a joint commitment to democracy and human rights to agreements between the EU and third countries (European Commission 1995). It establishes the normative basis for political dialogues, but also for negative conditionality, with a "suspension clause" allowing for 'appropriate measures' to be taken (by either party of the agreement) after consultations. Conditionality with regard to foreign assistance is included in the regulations on the EU's external cooperation programs, but notoriously difficult to monitor. The most prominent example of the EU's use of conditionality are the Copenhagen Criteria, where the ultimate incentive is EU membership.

Democracy assistance has in practice been conducted by the Commission since the early 1990s, as a follow-up to the 1991 Resolution, using existing budget lines in development cooperation. The European Parliament has bundled these budget lines in 1994 under the budget heading of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). In 1999, two regulations on "operations which contribute to the general objective of developing and consolidating democracy" finally set an end to this 'diversion' of funds and created a legal basis for democracy assistance under the EIDHR.¹⁰ Since 2000, the EuropeAid Cooperation Office, a Commission agency, is responsible for programming and implementing projects under the EIDHR, supported by the Commission's delegations in third countries.

The EIDHR is specifically designed to (primarily) address non-state actors and one of its strengths has always been seen in that it "can be used without host government consent, or where the main EC programs are not available for other reasons, such as their having been suspended" (European Commission 2001: 15). However, this aspect has only been explicitly introduced in the preamble of the new European *Instrument* for Democracy and Human Rights for the financial perspective 2007-2013.¹¹ The actors targeted include all kinds public and private sector non-profit organizations and the new Instrument explicitly includes 'parliamentary bodies' and 'natural persons'. The regulations all indicate a 'financial envelope' for their validity period, with the average annual allocation increasing from nearly €70 million in 1999 to more than €160 million from 2007 on. However, the EU's budget does not detail for what purpose and with what partners these funds are spent. This information is scattered in the Commission's programming documents and different reports. The concept of a

¹⁰ Council Regulations (EC) No 975/1999 and No 976/1999 of 29 April 1999.

¹¹ The first paragraph of the preamble claims that the new Instrument is "allowing for assistance independent from the consent of third country governments and other public authorities" (Regulation (EC) No 1889/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006).

limited number of ‘focus countries’ introduced in the 2002 programming and intended to increase the EIDHR’s impact (European Commission 2001) has been abolished again in 2005, after criticism of arbitrary country selection or rather ‘neglect’ by the European Parliament.

In addition to the EIDHR, the objective to promote democracy has also been ‘mainstreamed’ in the cooperation programs since the mid of the 1990s and is also part of the new generation of financing instruments for 2007-2013.¹² In contrast to the EIDHR, the stability and pre-accession instruments focus on democratic institutions and the rule of law, whereas the ENPI also includes civil society actors as partners for democracy promotion. While these instruments all receive much higher appropriations than the EIDHR, it is impossible to distinguish the respective share spent on democracy assistance without going into the details of the individual programming documents at the national and regional levels. Table 4 summarizes the main aspects of the EU’s universe of democracy promotion.

Table 4: The EU ‘universe’ of democracy promotion

Agency	Tools	Actors targeted
European Council	<i>Guidelines for application of all tools</i>	
	Declarations	Government
Council of the EU (CFSP)	Declarations	} Government
	<i>Decision over application:</i> Conditionality	
	Political dialogue	
European Commission/ EuropeAid	<i>Management of contractual relations</i>	
	Declarations	} Government
	<i>Participation in:</i> Political dialogue	
	<i>Suggestion for the application (and implementation) of:</i> Conditionality	
	Democracy Assistance	
<i>Globally:</i> EIDHR <i>Regionally:</i> regional programmes	→ Non-state actors → Mainly state actors	

Taken together, the EU disposes of all instruments included in our tool box and can thus potentially draw on both cooperative and conflictive approaches to democracy promotion. However, considering what can be learned from policy documents and a quick glance at the worldwide application of its tools, it clearly privileges a cooperative over a conflictive approach. This is manifest in its emphasis on political dialogue and joint initiatives in general (even negative conditionality is bilaterally agreed!), its primary reliance on interactions with state actors and the rare instances of sanctions applied. Even the EIDHR that allows in theory a

¹² This is the case for the instruments for development cooperation (DCI), stability (IfS), pre-accession (IPA), and the neighborhood policy (ENPI). The financing instrument for cooperation with industrialized and other high-income countries and territories (ICI) only includes very general references to democracy as one of the EU’s core values.

potentially conflictive approach to bottom-up democracy assistance encounters in practice manifold (bureaucratic) obstacles to working with non-state actors against the disapproval of the host regime.

The configuration of US Democracy Promotion

In contrast to the EU, the US commitment to international democracy promotion dates back to the era of President Wilson and World War I (Hook 2002). However, the US ‘liberal grand strategy’ is often questioned with regard to a ‘gap’ between rhetoric and practice (Ikenberry 2000; Smith 2000). Thus, it is in line with the general ‘resurgence’ of democracy promotion on the international agenda at the end of the Cold War that the US renews its commitment and changes its practices, now pursuing this foreign policy goal with specific tools. While democracy promotion had already been gaining importance under President Clinton (Cox 2000; Hook 2002), its final breakthrough as a priority issue can be seen in the much cited second inaugural speech of President Bush in 2005.

This general commitment to democracy promotion is translated into practice through the typical set of governmental foreign policy institutions. These include (1) the White House or the President respectively, who is responsible for the formulation of the foreign policy agenda and general guidelines, (2) the Department of State as the main foreign affairs agency with the Secretary of State as the main foreign policy adviser to the President and (3) two major aid agencies, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the recently established Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). What might indicate a clear division of responsibilities between these agencies, in particular with regard to diplomacy and aid, is in practice much more complicated. In addition, other actors are involved, with the Congress having a principal say on the way money is spent in foreign policies, and a network of independent foundations that are largely funded by the government (Spence 2005).

In March 2006 the White House has issued the latest National Security Strategy (NSS) that is closely linked to the foreign policy goal of democracy promotion: “It is the policy of the United States to seek and support democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.” (White House 2006: 1). The document sets out guidelines for the application of the whole array of tools that ought to be used for this purpose. In comparison to the NSS of 1998 (White House 1998), democracy promotion has not only gained importance (ranking now first instead of third among the top priorities), but also the pronouncement of different tools has changed. While the NSS of 1998 mentions dialogue on human rights as a tool, the NSS of 2006 does not. At the same time more ‘disturbing’ tools seem to play a more prominent role, with conditionalities being estab-

lished much more explicitly and open commitment to “supporting publicly democratic reformers in repressive regimes” (White House 2006: 6).¹³

The Department of State – the governmental agency that implements these guidelines in US foreign relations on a daily basis – has established in 2006 an Advisory Committee on Democracy Promotion that is made up of (former) officials as well as independent experts from academic institutions and non-governmental organizations. Also since 2006, the general coordination of US democracy assistance is incumbent to the Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance at the level of a Deputy Secretary of State, who is at the same time USAID Administrator. The Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) is the section of utmost importance for issues related to democracy promotion. It regularly issues country reports on human rights practices as well as reports on US efforts to advance democracy in the world.¹⁴ Furthermore, it has the oversight of the Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF), established in 1998, which is a tool for democracy assistance. The amount of money allocated for the HRDF increased from \$7.8 million in 1998 to \$48.1 million in 2005. The list of projects financed by the HRDF indicates that it addresses non-state actors and thus the development of democratic societies rather than state institutions.

The governmental agency of most importance with regard to democracy assistance in the US is, however, USAID (Melia 2005). Since its foundation in 1961, it has been operating relatively independently from the Department of State, although there are currently many changes underway that attempt to improve alignment of diplomacy and aid. USAID is a highly decentralized agency, with about 90 missions world wide and rather small headquarters.¹⁵ At Washington, USAID is divided into four regional and three functional sections, one of which is the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance. The most important subsections regarding democracy assistance are the Offices for Democracy and Governance and Transition Initiatives. Democracy assistance is defined by USAID as the promotion of “the rule of law and human rights, transparent and fair elections coupled with a competitive political process, a free and independent media, stronger civil society and greater citizen participation in government, and governance structures that are efficient, responsive and accountable.”¹⁶ Because of the decentralized organizational structure it is, however, impossible to give a clear account of the resources employed for these purposes. USAID has re-

¹³ This tendency Timothy Garton Ash describes as a combination of Wilsonianism with power (2004: 151).

¹⁴ The State Departments reports on “Supporting Human Rights and Democracy. The U.S. Record” are issued since 2003, following a legal requirement established by the Congress.

¹⁵ According to USAID less than a quarter of the total workforce is situated in Washington. Further, the field missions take responsibility for the design and implementation of programs in a given country; see http://www.usaid.gov/policy/par06/highlights_002.html, May 6, 2007.

¹⁶ http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance, May 6, 2007.

requested a global budget of \$3.4 billion in 2006 for its own programs and additional resources for programs jointly managed with the Department of State or other Departments.¹⁷ The share of democracy assistance is difficult to discern as the resources allocated for the functional offices mentioned above add up to only \$71 million and the resources managed through the regional sections and field offices may be employed for various purposes, democracy assistance being one among many. For comparison, another publication of USAID mentions a total of \$1.2 billion for democracy assistance in 2004 (USAID 2005b: 25). Measures of democracy assistance address both state and non-state actors (USAID 2005a). The relative weight of bottom-up and top-down approaches depends on the country context, in particular with regard to the regime in place. In authoritarian regimes USAID rather targets non-state actors, while state actors seem to be the primary targets in countries engaged in democratization or consolidation processes (USAID 2005a). In the context of autocracies, non-state actors expressly include political parties, media or politically relevant NGOs, whereby USAID is voluntarily risking the “blame [of] ‘outside interference’” by the government in place (USAID 2005b: 25). USAID thus indicates its readiness for a conflictive approach under certain circumstances.

As indicated above, an important part of the US democracy promotion toolbox is conditionality, both applied to general bilateral relations, e.g. economic sanctions, as well as to decisions over foreign aid. With regard to assistance, a set of eligibility criteria establishes the conditions under which countries qualify as recipients. The form and level of assistance is, however, not only subject to these criteria, but can also largely depend on whether a particular country or policy goal is in line with US geo-strategic interests and thus considered of high priority (USAID 2006: 4-5; see also Carothers 1999: 5). After all, only a few criteria are directly related to democracy and democratization and thus qualify as tools for democracy promotion. At the global level of US foreign assistance, there is only one such criterion: in the case of human rights violations, assistance to the government of the respective country may not be provided.¹⁸ Recent efforts of the US government to link foreign assistance more closely to conditionality manifest themselves in the founding of the second major assistance agency in 2004, the Millennium Challenge Corporation. Though not providing democracy assistance as such, a demanding set of conditions must be met by countries for eligibility. With regard to democracy, the respective indicators range from civil liberties and political rights to good governance related criteria. Countries meeting these criteria sign a multi-year agreement and receive substantial funding mainly for economic development. Table 5 summarizes the main aspects of the US universe of governmental democracy promotion.

¹⁷ <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006/administrator.html>, May 6, 2007.

¹⁸ Foreign Assistance Act, §116.

Table 5: The US ‘universe’ of democracy promotion

Agency	Tools	Actors targeted
President/White House	<i>Guidelines for application of all tools</i>	
	Declarations	Government
Department of State	Declarations	} Government
	Conditionality	
	Political dialogue/ negotiations	
	Democracy Assistance	Non-state actors
MCC	Technical Positive Conditionality with regard to Assistance	Government
USAID	Democracy Assistance	State actors and non-state actors

In addition to these governmental agencies, the US foreign policy budget devotes substantial funding for democracy assistance to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The NED is an independent foundation that was established on the initiative of President Reagan in 1983, very much following the example of the German Stiftungen. It receives substantial funding out of the US budget and can thus be seen to complement the democracy assistance efforts of the governmental agencies through measures that are targeting non-state actors, including political (opposition) parties. NED’s ever growing core budget has exceeded \$74 million in 2006.

All in all, the US also disposes of all tools for democracy promotion, allowing the choice between cooperative and conflictive approaches, and equally claims to combine top-down and bottom-up approaches. It is interesting to note that in the State Department, a close institutional link is established between on the one hand official diplomacy and on the other hand a bottom-up and potentially conflictive approach to democracy assistance, both directly through the management of the HRDF and indirectly through funding for the NED.

Comparing the EU and the US: surprising similarity or striking difference?

Comparing the EU’s and US’ approaches to democracy promotion, it is interesting to see that their infrastructures are at first sight surprisingly similar, in that they both have the whole range of diplomatic and assistance tools at their disposal. There are, however, important differences in their emphasis on as well as design and use of the different tools. Overall, the EU democracy promotion is driven by a rather cooperative approach whereas the US more clearly conceives cooperative and conflictive approaches as two real alternatives. For the EU, this clearly relates to its strong commitment to standardized and highly institutionalized relations that preferably build on ‘co-ownership’. In contrast, the US reserves the right to design its relations to other countries on a case-by-case basis, driven by mostly unilateral concerns. This general finding has serious implications for the realities of the top-down and bottom-up approaches that both actors equally claim to follow. Thus, a cooperative approach limits the

scope of action when targeting non-state actors, potentially reducing the EU's efforts to a weak two-track approach within a rather rigid and bureaucratic framework. In comparison, the US appears to be more flexible in handling a real multi-track approach. This applies especially when taking into account the option of delegating potentially conflictive democracy assistance to independent agencies.

IV. Approaching the regions: differently?

After this first attempt at comparing EU and US approaches to democracy promotion on a global scale, we now turn to see in how far they have distinct regional 'strategies'. Here, we are both interested in variance between the global and regional levels and between regions. We assume that the regional level might be of importance in shaping democracy promotion in individual countries as most international actors will build their foreign policies on regionally perceived challenges. It might thus 'filter' the 'global strategy' due to (slightly) different goals and objectives, independently of the specific country context.

As indicated before, we have chosen the Newly Independent States (NIS) and the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as two regions to compare the EU's and the US' efforts to promote democracy. However, coming from the studies of the EU's recent European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), in these two regions we are especially interested in the countries covered by the ENP's Eastern and Southern dimensions.¹⁹ Beyond all their differences, the countries are for the most part not consolidated democracies and largely considered as 'hard cases' for democracy promotion. Furthermore, there are no major global players in the two regions (with the exception of Russia) and in both cases there is a very limited degree of intra-regional integration.

Looking for 'regional strategies', we are asking first how different actors deal differently with the same region before comparing how one actor deals differently with different regions. This includes on the one hand investigating how the actors frame these regions in their foreign policies and if they have specific policy frameworks for the regions in general, on the other hand the analysis of their specific democracy promotion efforts in the regions, looking for a regional commitment, the infrastructure in place and their use of tools to promote democracy.²⁰

¹⁹ These are Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine for the NIS and Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, and Tunisia for the MENA region.

²⁰ While we are of course looking at the whole tool box, it is difficult to analyze the use of declarations as a democracy promotion tool on the regional level. Even general statements would necessitate a comprehensive analysis for each country, considering both declarations issued and domestic developments.

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region

Different actors within the EU and the US have different framings for what we call the 'MENA region'. However, our set of countries is always covered by one region. While this region is sometimes enlarged by the Gulf or even South-East Asian countries, the MENA countries are never regrouped in different regions, e.g. (North) Africa as opposed to the Middle East.

The EU and the MENA region

The EU's policy towards countries in the Middle East and North Africa has evolved since the creation of the EEC in 1957 from purely bilateral contacts to a regional 'Mediterranean' policy (Pierros et al. 1999; Philippart 2003). Euro-Mediterranean relations are marked today by two comprehensive – complementary – frameworks: the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) launched in 1995 with the Barcelona Declaration and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) promulgated in 2003. While the EMP includes a multilateral track, the so-called Barcelona Process, the ENP further develops bilateral relations. In addition, the European Council has set general guidelines with its Common Strategy on the Mediterranean in 2000 (valid until 2006) and the Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East in 2004.²¹ The regional approach to the MENA countries is manifest in the multilateral track of relations, the standardization of bilateral relations in a set of Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements (EMAA) and the Action Plans (AP) under the ENP, as well as in the regionally defined external cooperation program MEDA and its successor ENPI. However, there are some country-specific exceptions with regard to Turkey (as was the case for Cyprus and Malta) as a candidate country, Israel due to its historic, political and socio-economic situation, and Libya against which sanctions based on UN Security Council resolutions were only recently lifted.²² And even more generally, the regional approach goes hand in hand with country-specific variation, e.g. with regard to the timing of EMAA and the levels of funding under MEDA.

The EU is reportedly committed to promote democracy in the MENA countries since 1990 (European Commission 1991: 3). Thus, democracy promotion has been part of the EMP since its beginnings, even though an explicit, open and high-level regional commitment is included for the first time in the Common Strategy of 2000. Already since the early 1990s, the

²¹ Common Strategy (2000/458/CFSP) of the European Council of 19 June 2000 on the Mediterranean region and Presidency Conclusions on a Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East, European Council, 17 and 18 June 2004.

²² In general, the EU tries to treat the Middle East Peace Process outside the general framework of Euro-Mediterranean relations. The Libyan exception becomes even more apparent when considering that the European Commission has established delegations in all Mediterranean countries except Libya.

EU has applied ‘global’ democracy promotion tools and integrated democracy promotion in its regional policy.

The formalized multi- and bilateral political dialogues in the frameworks of the Barcelona Process (Senior Officials) and the EMAA (Association Councils) are all supposed to address issues of democracy and democratization. While there have been efforts to strengthen the multilateral dialogue around 2000, it seems that the Commission now privileges the bilateral contacts and tries to ‘depoliticize’ the issue with the creation of ‘technical’ sub-committees on human rights since about 2003 (European Commission 2003b: 11, 13).²³

Similar to the political dialogue, the EU has institutionalized different forms of democratic conditionality in its relations with Mediterranean countries. Conditions and consequences are either bilaterally ‘agreed’ (EMAA, APs) or unilaterally enshrined in EU policy documents on the ENP and legal instrument (MEDA regulations). The provisions cover negative (implementation of EMAA and external cooperation programs), positive (development or bilateral relations under the ENP), and a sort of ‘dynamic’ conditionality related to programming of foreign assistance. However, the ‘essential element’ clauses have never been invoked by the EU to justify ‘appropriate measures’ nor are funding levels under MEDA openly linked to the political situation in the recipient countries – observers rather see a link to economic reform (Youngs 2002). Moreover, it is questionable whether the degree of cooperation under the ENP really depends on an ‘objectively’ stated progress or also on the political will of the neighbors, e.g. refusing to negotiate Action Plans in the first place.

The EU has two major external cooperation programs to channel democracy assistance to MENA countries: the regional MEDA (I+II) program and its successor ENPI as well as the global EIDHR. The MEDA regulations include a commitment to promote democracy since 1998 that is taken on by the new ENPI. However, there are no official statistics on how much funding is going into democracy-related projects. In programming documents for MEDA II, democracy assistance projects appear under different headings such as ‘rule of law’, ‘institution building’, and ‘civil society’ and mostly target state actors, especially the judiciary, but also non-state actors.²⁴ In any case, MEDA and ENPI projects are subject to framework conventions between the EU and the recipient countries and can thus be considered to be rather ‘inclusive’ or consensual. Here lies the main difference to the EIDHR that explicitly reserves

²³ It is already difficult to obtain any detailed information about the content of these dialogues. However, it is even more difficult to trace potential informal dialogues as part of ‘traditional’ diplomatic relations, i.e. through delegations in the countries or during visits of EU officials in the region. The European Commission has established delegations in all MENA countries except Libya.

²⁴ The share of MEDA funding allocated to democracy assistance projects varies in the National Indicative Programmes 2002-2004 and 2004-2006 between 2-30%.

the right to operate without governmental approval, nevertheless including state-actors as potential recipients. Similar to the MEDA program, however, it is difficult to discern the share of the EIDHR's budget that is reserved for or spent on the MENA region. Different Commission reports only allow the very general observation that it has grown from about €1-2 million per year in the early 1990s to about €10 million per year under the MEDA Democracy Programme (1996-1999) and to about €15 million per year under the second EIDHR regulation after 2001.²⁵

The US and the MENA region

The US might have a much longer history of diplomatic relations with MENA countries, but until recently, it did not have a clear set policy framework for the region as a whole. The only regional issues of interest have been Israel and the Middle East conflict. The US maintains diplomatic relations with all MENA countries, albeit on very different levels. Apart from a variety of sectoral agreements, the US has different kinds of commercial – free trade or investment – agreements with all countries in the region except for Syria and Libya due to their classification as ‘state sponsors of terrorism’.²⁶ This classification also implies ineligibility to US foreign assistance and several other sanctions, reducing diplomatic relations to a very low level. But also for countries eligible to US foreign assistance, levels of funding vary to the degree that two countries, Israel and Egypt, together receive more than 90% of all US foreign assistance provided to the region (Sharp 2006: 7). The US has embassies in all MENA countries, whereas USAID only has missions in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and West Bank/Gaza. Only recently, the US has started some comprehensive initiatives aimed at the (‘broader’) ‘Middle East’. Most prominent is the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) announced by Secretary of State Collin Powell in 2002, which includes four ‘pillars’ of cooperation and receives special funding out of the Economic Support Fund. It is complemented by plans for a US-Middle East Free Trade Area. In 2004, the US also pushed for a multilateral “Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Region of the Broader Middle East and North Africa” that brings together the G-8 and countries of the region for cooperation on political and economic issues.²⁷

The MENA region has always been included in the US global commitment to and efforts at democracy promotion. However, attention to the region's ‘unsatisfactory’ political

²⁵ According to the EIDHR programming document for 2002-2004, focus countries in the region were Algeria, Israel and the West Bank/Gaza Strip, and Tunisia, receiving together about €5 million annually.

²⁶ However, Libya has been taken from the list in late 2006 and negotiations on bilateral agreements have already started. The list of ‘state sponsors of terrorism’ is kept up-to-date by the State Department, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/c14151.htm>.

²⁷ The initiative is usually referred to as the “Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) Initiative”.

situation has increased dramatically after the events of September 2001, establishing democracy promotion in the MENA region as one of the major challenges in the ‘war on terrorism’ (Carothers, Ottaway 2005), not least in a speech by President Bush at the NED in 2003. Thus, both MEPI and the BMENA Initiative are explicitly designed as comprehensive endeavors to promote democracy – and prosperity and security – in the region.

Political dialogue seems to be confined to contacts between US (embassy) officials and their partners in the host country. According to the State Department’s reports on US democracy promotion, this includes not only state actors, but also various non-state actors such as representatives of religious groups, trade unions, and NGOs. Compared to the EU, the US does not have similarly institutionalized forms of political dialogue. Nevertheless, the “Forum for the Future”, the annual ministerial conference and core of the BMENA Initiative, can be considered as a multilateral, high-level dialogue that also addresses political issues.²⁸ In addition, a “Democracy Assistance Dialogue” under the coordination of Italy, Turkey, and Yemen and three partner NGOs has been established in the BMENA framework.

In contrast to the EU, the US does not use bilaterally agreed democratic conditionality, as in the EMEA and AP, but relies instead on extensive rules and criteria for a country’s ‘eligibility’ to agreements and foreign assistance. A specificity regarding aid conditionality can be found in the annual foreign operations appropriations acts concerning Egypt, stipulating that “cash transfer assistance shall be provided with the understanding that Egypt will undertake significant economic and political reforms which are additional to those which were undertaken in previous fiscal years”.²⁹ Since 2005, the MCC mechanism of positive conditionality linked to foreign assistance has gained importance for the MENA countries under scrutiny here. Since then, more and more of them have qualified as candidates (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia), but only few have passed the crucial second test of selection criteria, including that for “just and democratic governance”. Thus, Morocco was eligible in 2005 and 2006, but has not yet managed to negotiate a MC compact.³⁰ Jordan is eligible in 2007 and has already received support in 2006 under the Threshold Program.

There are various sources of democracy assistance to MENA countries that are difficult to assign to specific funds and actors managing and implementing them. The State De-

²⁸ The Forum for the Future brings together representatives of the G-8 and their MENA partners. The first three fora were held in Morocco (2004), Bahrain (2005), and Jordan (2006), co-organized by the host country and the respective G-8 presidency.

²⁹ Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriation Act (FOAA), 2006, Public Law 109-102, November 14, 2005, 119 Stat. 2180; Sharp only remarks in his report that this clause has been included in the FOAA “for years” (2006: 23).

³⁰ The proposed compact previews \$703 million over five years, but has not been signed yet. It is not clear what will happen to the negotiations in the face of Morocco not having passed the eligibility test again for 2007.

partment funds democracy assistance projects in the MENA region under the global HRDF and the regionally specific MEPI. However, part of the HRDF funding is channeled to the NED's Democracy in the Muslim World program and projects under MEPI are in part 'supported' by the USAID. The HRDF funding for projects in MENA countries (individually and regionally) has dramatically increased in absolute figures from \$55,000 in 1998 to over \$7 million in 2004, with its share of total HRDF funding multiplying in 2001/2002.³¹ These projects mainly target non-state actors, focusing on support to democratic activists, women's and human rights NGOs, media, and trade unions, but also on reform of the judiciary, including both legal reform and training of non-state actors. In addition, several projects are concerned with broader information and education of citizens. In the framework of MEPI, the annual budget for democracy assistance projects in the political pillar has been about \$20 million since 2003, counting for about a quarter of the total MEPI budget.³² Here as well, projects mostly target non-state actors ('activists', political parties, NGOs, citizens) in the four "goal areas" of elections and political processes, civil society and reform advocacy, media, and rule of law.

USAID, in turn, can make use of its functional and regional bureaus to provide democracy assistance in the MENA region. Thus, the Office of Transition Initiatives has been active in the West Bank/Gaza on issues of government responsiveness and participation, giving out grants to both governmental and non-governmental actors. Its budget for the West Bank/Gaza has averaged \$1-2 million per year since 2005. With respect to the Office of Democracy and Governance, the share of funding going to the MENA region is not discernible. The Congressional Budget Justification (CBJ) for 2007, for example, does not list single project activities and specific actors or countries are only sometimes mentioned. Finally, the 'democracy and governance' website of the Bureau for Asia and the Near East indicates that there are democracy and governance programs with Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and the West Bank/Gaza.³³ Drawing again on the CBJ for 2007, however, it is only possible to locate the respective country programs and budget appropriations for Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco.³⁴ Projects for democracy assistance are included in different programs, sometimes combined with other objectives of social or economic development, so the relevant budget should be compared according to the 'sector' (democracy and governance) addressed. While

³¹ See <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/c7607.htm>, May 6, 2007.

³² See <http://mepi.state.gov/>, May 6, 2007.

³³ See http://www.usaid.gov/locations/asia_near_east/sectors/dg/, May 6, 2007.

³⁴ There is no USAID mission to Algeria and so there are no country pages. For the West Bank/Gaza strip, the budget justification has been postponed due to the political situation and changes to the US' foreign assistance in general.

Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco all receive democracy assistance funding on a similar scale, varying between \$6 and \$14 million, Egypt has received over \$80 million in 2006 and 2007 respectively. This is in line with another specificity of the FOAA mentioned above, that determines that at least \$50 million of ‘project assistance’ provided “shall be made available for democracy, human rights and governance programs”. In addition, it specifies since 2005 that “with respect to the provision of assistance for Egypt for democracy and governance activities, the organizations implementing such assistance and the specific nature of that assistance shall not be subject to the prior approval by the Government of Egypt” (FOAA 2006: 2180). Democracy assistance managed by the regional bureau has different priority fields of action in different countries, with corruption, elections, civil society, justice, legislative processes and local government being the most common. In most fields, both state and non-state actors are addressed, sometimes focusing on the one or the other.

Finally, the NED is directly involved in US governmental democracy assistance in the MENA countries. As mentioned before, it has a ‘Democracy in the Muslim World’ program that receives HRDF funding. Furthermore, the NED is a partner in implementing MEPI projects. These two examples suggest a close link between the NED and the US Department of State.

Promoting democracy in MENA countries – comparing the EU and the US

Taken together, EU and US efforts to promote democracy in the MENA countries take place in very different regional policy frameworks. The EU has elaborated a regional, ‘Mediterranean’, approach over time that is reflected in highly standardized bilateral relations, strengthened by the ENP, and overarching multilateral framework since 1995. The US has a longer tradition of bilateral relations, but it has only recently – after the events of September 11, 2001 – developed a distinct regional approach with specific programs and multilateral elements. It also seems that the EU has the longer open and strong commitment to promote democracy in the region. It makes systematically use of global formalized democracy promotion tools and complements them with specific regional tools such as the political dialogue in the Barcelona Process. Here, we find the same patterns of standardization and reliance on a cooperative approach as on the global level. Nevertheless, there is significant country-variation in the application of these tools that needs to be checked for consistency against the EU’s explicit claims. The US engagement in the region in general and regarding democracy promotion coincides with and continues pre-existing differences in the treatment of specific countries, especially Israel and Egypt. Interestingly, both actors have the most problematic relations with the same two countries, Syria and Libya. In the case of the US, sanctions applied

correspond to its global provisions on the design of bilateral relations. For the EU, it is a question of inclusion in the regional framework, either fundamentally in the framework as such or in the set of EMAA in particular.

The Newly Independent States

Neither the EU nor the US has a regional framing that exactly corresponds to the NIS. For example, the EU has singled out the Baltic Republics early on in the accession process. Within the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the remaining former Soviet Union succession states are included in 'Europe & Eurasia'. The US Department of State draws a distinction between 'Europe and Eurasia' that covers Russia, the Southern Caucasus states, the Western NIS plus all other European states on the one hand, and 'South and Central Asia' on the other hand. USAID, in turn, also refers to the Central Asian states under the 'Europe and Eurasia' heading.

The EU and the Newly Independent States

The policy of the European Union towards the region has its roots in the dramatic political change in Eastern Europe at the beginning of the 1990s. Shortly prior to the break-up of the Soviet Union the EU had launched an aid package that was supposed to support beginning market reforms, later titled as "Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States" (TACIS).³⁵ In 1991, it still covered the Baltic Republics, albeit they already struggled for independence. Between 1997 and 1999 the relations between the EU and most of the NIS were formalized through the conclusion of relatively standardized Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA).³⁶ Thus, the EU has developed a regional framework similar to that of the Barcelona-Process, only lacking the multilateral track. Further differentiation among the NIS has occurred with the introduction of the ENP. The Eastern dimension of the ENP originally embraced Moldova and Ukraine (and potentially Belarus). In 2004, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia were also included. For all these countries bilaterally negotiated Action Plans have been set up in order to further intensify relations. The Central Asian states up to now lack a comparable advancement, but the current German Presidency of the EU has the development of strategy towards these states on its agenda (Federal Government of Germany 2007:21).

The commitment of the European Union to promote democracy in the NIS has only gradually developed during the 1990s. For example, TACIS had been until 1996 above all

³⁵ Council Regulation No 2157/91 of 15 July 1991.

³⁶ The PCAs display similarities in structure and many important features as regards common institutions or conditionality. The scope of cooperation envisaged however varies from country to country apparently correlating with geopolitical importance and geographic proximity.

targeting “economic reform and recovery” with the idea of “thereby reinforcing democracy”, before the third regulation finally made democratic progress a condition for assistance.³⁷ The growing role of democracy for further developing relations to the NIS has become obvious with the conclusion of the PCAs. In the case of both Belarus and Turkmenistan, PCAs have been signed in the 1990s, but features of authoritarian rule have inhibited ratification up to now. The PCAs in force with the other countries emphasize a regular and institutionalized political dialogue as the central tool for addressing issues linked to democracy and human rights. The recently concluded Action Plans have further boosted democracy and good governance making them top priorities on the commonly agreed agenda. In how far these issues have gained importance in the day to day practice of the bilateral relations remains unclear.

Similar to the EU relations with the MEDA countries, conditionality formally plays an important role in the EU’s policy towards the NIS. All PCAs define respect for democratic principles and human rights as essential elements of the relations and reserve the right to take ‘appropriate measures’ in cases of their serious violations. In practice, however, the EU has only once applied (negative) conditionality invoking this clause, leading to the partial suspension of the PCA with Uzbekistan.³⁸ The PCAs further include an element of positive conditionality, linking technical assistance inter alia with progress of reforms. In the case of Georgia this kind of conditionality was reinforced by an extraordinary Country Strategy Paper in 2003 that recognized lacking commitment for reform on the side of the Georgian government (European Commission 2003a:4). Under the ENP framework positive conditionality has been further strengthened. The APs emphasize that progress in implementing the commonly agreed agenda including those measures linked to common values that will influence the enhancement of future relations and levels of support (European Commission 2006b:4).

With regard to democracy assistance both the global program EIDHR and the regional TACIS (and now ENPI) program can be deployed for the NIS. TACIS, having originally been set up to support economic transition, has gradually enclosed issues related to the improvement of governance and democracy. Since 1999 the program directly addresses the promotion of democracy and the rule of law.³⁹ The share of resources employed for democracy promotion can hardly be determined, as the EU groups the category of ‘Government & Civil Society’ together with Education, Health, and Water under the heading of ‘Social infrastructures’ (European Commission 2006a:52). This sector has accounted for about 40-50% of the total

³⁷ Council Regulation 2053/93 of 19 July 1993 and Council Regulation 1279/96 of 25 June 1996.

³⁸ In 2005 the EU has largely suspended the PCA of Uzbekistan, due to the Andijan massacre and the lacking will of the Uzbek government to permit the incident to be investigated by an independent commission. Further sanctions applied include a visa ban for certain officials.

³⁹ Council Regulation 99/2000 of 29 December 1999, Art.1, Annex II.

budget between 2002 and 2005, but only country-specific project lists can give some indication of the concrete use of TACIS funds. With regard to the actors targeted and the general approach the same conclusions can be drawn as already done for the MENA region. TACIS mainly addresses state actors and follows a rather cooperative approach.

The US and the Newly Independent States

The US has quickly responded to the dissolution of the Soviet Union by recognizing the NIS, establishing bilateral ties to all countries and issuing a major assistance programme covering the whole region except for the Baltic republics. Thus, at the beginning a relatively consistent policy framework seemed to develop. Aside from dealing with the military heritage of the Soviet Union the central objective of the US engagement in the NIS has been the “support of democratic reforms and free markets”.⁴⁰ In the following, bilateral trade and investment agreements have been concluded with most of the countries concerned.⁴¹ Differentiations, however, have developed in the course of the 1990s with regard to the quality of diplomatic relations as well as levels of both military and development assistance.⁴² Recognizing that the pace of political reform and democratization processes in the NIS has not matched those of the former communist countries of Central Eastern Europe, the US Government has relied more and more on a strategy of “selective engagement”.⁴³ With regard to political dialogue, there is no institutionalized forum on the regional level. Bilateral relations are primarily pursued through meetings with US officials and the embassies. Declarations on issues related to democracy and democratization have been likewise mainly issued with regard to specific countries and contexts.

As in the case of the MENA region, the US does not make use of bilaterally agreed conditionality in its relations with the NIS. Rather, the commitment to reform of a particular government is one important factor for the general course of relations. Sanctions have only in the case of Belarus been applied.⁴⁴ Conditionality with regard to assistance has become increasingly important in the US policy towards the NIS. The 1992 Freedom Support Act (FSA), under which the main part of assistance to the NIS has been enacted, includes several con-

⁴⁰ President Bush, Statement on signing the FREEDOM Support Act, October 24, 1992, Washington, Download under: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=21658>, (latest Access: 05/10/07).

⁴¹ Negotiations with both Tajikistan and Turkmenistan over an investment agreement have stalled. In the cases of Belarus and Uzbekistan such agreements have been signed, but have never entered into force due to the economic and political situation and a lack of commitment to reform of both governments.

⁴² These differentiations can be partly explained by the general configuration of US interests towards specific countries as well as by the US perception of the commitment of some governments to democratic change.

⁴³ Originally this term was used with regard to Belarus in combination with allegations of violations of Freedom of Speech and Assembly in 1997 (see <http://minsk.usembassy.gov/utills/eprintpage.html>) and later on extended to the NIS in general.

⁴⁴ The Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 implicated restrictions on loans and investments. After the 2006 presidential election that failed OSCE standards, further sanctions have been imposed.

straints on the deliverance of assistance. With regard to democracy promotion, it requires the President to take into account progress in democratic and economic reform, respect for human rights and international law when deciding on assistance. Furthermore, assistance is prohibited when countries engage “in consistent pattern of human rights violations”.⁴⁵ However, while levels and targets of assistance have changed over time, in no single case this prohibition has taken effect. As described above conditionality is further linked with the Millennium Challenge Account. Three countries of the region, Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine, have so far qualified for Compact Agreements.⁴⁶ The Kyrgyz Republic is eligible for a Threshold Agreement.

Assistance has been a central tool in US democracy promotion efforts towards the NIS. Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union the region has become one of the main target areas for assistance. Between 1992 and 2005 almost \$12 billion FSA funds had been appropriated.⁴⁷ Except for Russia, the biggest recipient has been Ukraine. Armenia, Georgia and the Kyrgyz Republic have also received exceptionally high levels of funding. At the end of the 1990s doubts in the US administration increased whether these high levels of assistance really met the objective of improving the democratic state of affairs. In reaction to the mixed performance of the targeted countries two major conclusions were drawn. First, assistance seemed to be ineffective, if the recipient governments were not committed to reform (FY 2000:1f.).⁴⁸ Second, more assistance ought to be shifted to “grassroots programs such as exchanges, support for non-governmental organizations, independent media, Internet access, and small business” (FY 1999:1). The terrorist attacks of September 11th have somewhat jeopardized a more selective and coherent approach on democracy assistance towards the NIS. Due to the increased relevance of issues linked to the global war on terror, the democratic state of affairs has lost relevance for the pursuit of bilateral relations in general. For instance, in 2000, Uzbekistan has been severely criticised for events in 1999, but the report of 2001 marks Uzbekistan as a “critical ally”. Subsequently, US Assistance to Uzbekistan in 2002 has been nearly five times higher than in 2000. The most recent report shows that between 8 and 40% of the assistance have been devoted to democracy promotion in 2005 in the NIS. High levels of democracy assistance can be observed in ‘hard cases’ such as Belarus or Turkmenistan, while the total amount of assistance for these countries is very low. The increased em-

⁴⁵ Freedom Support Act, Title II.

⁴⁶ Georgia and Armenia have already signed these agreements and are now in the first year of implementation.

⁴⁷ All figures are taken from the State Department’s Reports on Assistance to Eurasia that are available under <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rpt/c10250.htm>.

⁴⁸ The selective engagement approach described above is based on this notion. While high levels of assistance to reform-minded governments ought to persist, assistance to government displaying unwillingness to reform ought to be substantially reduced or diverted (FY 2000:1f.).

phasis on supporting non-governmental political actors has borne some fruits, as the coloured revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and the Kyrgyz Republic indicate. There is, however, growing criticism towards the US impetus on “grassroots revolutions” (USAID 2005b). The main arguments deem this kind of assistance to be unsustainable and counterproductive for US efforts in other countries (Beissinger 2006). The future of democracy assistance in the NIS remains unclear, as the phasing out of FSA support has begun.

Promoting democracy in the NIS – comparing the EU and the US

Comparing the EU’s and the US’ dealings with the NIS, it is noteworthy that the initial position for engagement has been comparable for the two actors. After the end of the Cold War and the break-up of the Soviet Union, both actors have immediately established intensive relations with the NIS. Initially, the US had the stronger regional approach, underlined by the Freedom Support Act of 1992 that immediately included active democracy promotion. The EU seems to have been occupied by its then immediate neighbors and has only by and by introduced its global democracy promotion tools to the countries further to the East. Both actors have significant variation in their bilateral relations. These differences are more pronounced for the US than for the EU that is again relying on an increasingly standardized framework, especially since the creation of the ENP. In contrast, the US has scaled back its regional approach since the late 1990s, turning to ‘selective engagement’. Interestingly, it is the EU that has in 2005 applied sanctions to Uzbekistan. This rupture of cooperative relations is an application of its negative democratic conditionality enshrined in the PCA. In comparison, the EU does not even have a contractual engagement with Belarus, the primary trouble maker for both international actors in the region.

Comparing actors across regions

Comparing the EU’s approaches to the two regions, it has to be taken into account that they represent the Southern and Eastern dimensions of a common policy framework that is especially prone to intensive and highly institutionalized relations. Still, there are differences between the approaches of the EU to the regions both generally and with respect to democracy promotion. Thus, the multilateral dimension is lacking in the NIS, where the ENP is not backed by a pre-existing regional framework. In both regions, the EU draws on the same global tools for democracy promotion and a common regional addition with the APs. Looking into the APs in detail, however, reveals an important difference between the specificity of the commonly agreed objectives and especially the benchmarks for measuring progress. The latter are in fact absent in the Southern APs while the Eastern APs include fairly precise objectives and time frames for their realization. This is an indication that the EU’s own claim at

standardized – consistent and ‘fair’ – relations with third countries has to be thoroughly investigated with regard to the criteria for country-variation.

For the US, it used to be the opposite situation – pursuing a regional approach toward the NIS while focusing on few key partners in the MENA region. Common to both regions seems to be the US’ strong reliance on bilateral relations in line with its own country-specific interests. This has only been disturbed by major global events – in 1989 and 2001 – that have triggered regional responses including regional instruments for cooperation and multilateral initiatives (FSA, MEPI, and BMENA). Especially the events of September 11, 2001, are ambiguous in their impact on the US’ democracy promotion agenda in the two regions: While efforts to promote democracy have been multiplied in the MENA region, the ‘war on terror’ seems to have interfered with the US’ original democracy promotion strategy toward the NIS, as becomes apparent in the case of Uzbekistan.

V. Some Conclusions and Prospects

With this paper, we have aimed at contributing to the systematic analysis of international democracy promotion in general and of the European Union and the United States in particular. This ever growing field of research is still characterized by few comparable – and comparative – studies and even less attempts at theorization. The ultimate goal should be to explain why international democracy promoters are doing what they are doing – and with what effect. On the way to explaining variations in strategy and outcome, we hope the ideas and empirical findings outlined in this paper will add to the general debate on how to achieve these ambitious goals.

Thus, we have first sketched a framework for the analysis of the phenomenon “international democracy promotion”. Instead of looking for explicit, intentionally devised ‘strategies’, we propose to explore an actor’s empirically discernible efforts to promote democracy. In addition to the commitment to promote democracy and the resources allocated to the task, we are especially interested in the tools for democracy promotion, as they are the crucial link between ‘infrastructure’ and ‘measures’. Thus, the design and the implementation of tools reflect different ‘approaches’ to democracy promotion. We have focused on two aspects that in our view fundamentally characterize an actor’s efforts: the choice between targeting state or non-state actors to bring about democratization (top-down vs. bottom-up approach) and the stance taken on the incumbent regime (cooperative vs. conflictive approach).

We have then tested our analytical framework by comparing the EU’s and US’ efforts to promote democracy on a global level and finally across two regions. In general, we found

their respective infrastructures at first sight surprisingly similar, with both actors including all elements of our tool box, combining bottom-up and top-down approaches and providing funds on a comparable level. However, one can see significant differences in the emphasis on as well as the specific design of their tools at hand that alter the actual approaches pursued. With its focus on ‘dialogue’ and a preference for highly institutionalized and ‘co-owned’ relations with third countries, the EU follows a rather cooperative approach that potentially limits its scope of (re)action. In contrast, the US seems to be more flexible in its choice of tools, thus more easily switching between cooperative and conflictive approaches.

The EU’s leaning towards standardizing its external relations and democracy promotion provisions probably has to be linked to the attempt to enhance the legitimacy of its international actorness and actions. Formalization and standardization can be seen as a safeguard against accusations of arbitrariness and abuse of dependencies, boosting the EU’s credibility as a ‘normative’ power. However, this policy of ‘equal treatment’ can also turn against the EU if it is not able to implement it convincingly, falling back behind its own standards. Especially in the inter-regional comparison, significant country-variation in the democracy promotion efforts of both actors has become apparent. Variation in itself need not be a problem for the consistency of an actor’s efforts, as long as it is systematically related to a ‘differentiated’ strategy. With regard to an actor’s claims about his motivations for democracy promotion, however, an analysis of the underlying criteria might be very instructive about its credibility. So, explaining this variation is a major challenge for future research on democracy promotion. The endeavor would be especially fruitful if it succeeded to verify the often established link between the credibility of democracy promotion and its chances of success. In the end, it is to hope that international democracy promotion efforts are not trapped in a vicious circle, due to an incompatibility of democracy promotion’s legitimacy and effectiveness.

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