Conference Report

The EU as an External Democracy Promoter: East and Central Europe (incl. former Soviet Union), the Mediterranean, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Pacific (ACP) in Comparison

International Conference, chaired by Prof. Dr. Michèle Knodt (University of Darmstadt) and Prof. Dr. Annette Jünemann (Helmut-Schmidt University Hamburg), Darmstadt November 18/19, 2005

The EU as an aspect of its external governance the EU exports its view of legitimate democratic governance of nation-states to third countries and acts there as an external promoter of democracy. In doing so, the EU utilizes various – positive and negative - instruments, based on her manifold capabilities as a trade power. These instruments were presented in a critical assessment by Susan Stewart (University of Mannheim). The EU’s declared intention to promote democracy worldwide can be found in the EU-treaty as well as in every agreement with a third country; this is what is called “democracy mainstreaming”. However, if one compares the EU’s policy in different countries, there seem to big differences in the choice of instruments (positive and/or negative) and in the implementation of the chosen instruments (strict, slack or not at all).

The participants of the international and interdisciplinary conference, all regional experts and/or experts on the EU, presented case studies on the specific approaches of EU-democracy promotion in their respective country or region. In a comparative perspective, the discussion focussed on the analytical question, how to explain why the EU chooses different instruments and different implementation strategies in different countries. What are the explanatory variables? To structure the discussion, Michele Knodt and Annette Jünemann suggested three factors to be relevant:

(i) the Multi-Level System of the EU which has to do a lot with its potential to act;
(ii) the structure of resonance in third states and
(iii) resource relations between the EU and the third country.

The participants took these suggestions as a starting point for the development and discussion of five hypothesizes:
H₁: The more bilateral relations between a third state and at least one of the EU member-states exist, the less the EUs potential to act – which means a lack of support for “negative” political instruments.

H₂: The higher the economical potential of a country in relation to the EU and the more alternative opportunities exist for this country, the more reluctant the EU will be to choose “negative” instruments.

H₃: The more important the security paradigm is within the relationship to a third state – especially the neighbourhood -, the more the EU tries to insist on its catalog of values and tends to use negative instruments to implement its own values.

H₄: The more insecure a country, the more the EU will choose “positive” (as listed above) political instruments and avoid any action that might destabilize the third country.

H₅: Paradigmatic shifts in the international security environment, as was the case due to the terror attacks of September 11 2001, may result in a reduction of EU efforts to promote democracy and an increased focus on the stabilisation of third countries.

Siegmar Schmidt (University of Landau), Stefan Brüne (German Overseas Institute, Hamburg) and Gordon Crawford (University of Leeds) opened the conference with case studies on EU democracy promotion in South Africa and Congo, in Ethiopia and in Ghana. Although all three referees reported on African countries, the differences could not be bigger, thus confirming H₁ and H₃. In other words: Not all African countries have the same impact on European security interests and not all African countries are in the focus of the national interest of one or more EU-member states. Other results could be drawn from the panel on Asia. Florian Kühn (Helmut- Schmidt- University Hamburg) explained the lack of EU democratisation policy in a conflict ridden country like Afghanistan, referring to H₄, whereas Franco Algieri (Center for Applied Policy research, Munich) compared the high profile of EU-democracy promotion in poor and weak Myanmar on the one hand and the low profile of EU-democracy promotion in the emerging economic and political power China (H₂). A similar case to China is Russia, as Katrin Bastian (Humboldt University, Berlin) explained. Vis à vis Russia the profile of EU-democracy promotion is also extremely low. According to Susanne Gratius (SWP-Berlin/ FRIDE Madrid) who conceptualized case studies on Columbia, Cuba and Venezuela, and to Rainer Rothfuß (University of Tübingen) who presented a case study on European-Latin American City Networks, Latin America seems to be of rather marginal interest to Europe. Low interest is another explanation for a rather low profile of democracy.
promotion in a country or region, which indirectly also confirms $H_3$. On the contrary to EU-policies in Latin America, the EU-New Neighbourhood policy has a strong focus on the promotion of democracy, human rights, rule of law and good governance. However, not all of the – old and new – neighbours enjoy the prospect of EU-membership. Experiences with the Central and Eastern European countries proved that accession is the EU’s most efficient instrument of external democracy promotion. In this context Iris Kempe (Center for Applied Policy research, Munich) warned that countries like the Ukraine might fall back in their reform efforts if they are not offered an accession perspective. In his analysis of the EU’s New Neighbourhood Policy Arkady Moshes (Finish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA), Helsinki) also came to the result that without a perspective of EU-membership none of the new neighbours will voluntarily adopt European norms. Elena Baracani (Università degli studi di Firenze) confirmed the argument of the other two speakers by comparing reform processes in a country with (Turkey) and a country without (Morocco) the perspective of EU-membership. In the final panel on the Mediterranean region and the Middle East, Annette Jünemann (Helmut- Schmidt- University Hamburg), Richard Youngs (FRIDE, Madrid) and Marc Schade-Poulsen (Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, Copenhagen) all came to the result that democracy promotion in this region has been subordinated to the prior aim of security and stability. This tendency has overshadowed the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership right from its beginnings in 1995, but has increased since the terror attacks of September 11.

All in all the Mediterranean region is full of examples that confirm the last three hypotheses which focus on the impact of the security paradigm.

As usual, more questions were raised than answered, so that the conference can be understood as a starting point for further research. To help trigger of a new academic discourse on EU-democracy promotion, the results of this conference will be published in a book. To prepare the publication, an editorial meeting between Annette Jünemann and Michele Knodt already took place in Darmstadt (December 9 2005).