

The EU, Member States and the promotion of a democratic norm in Africa

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ABSTRACT

Both the EU institutions and the Member States have been pushing for the introduction of democratic practices in African countries. This democratic promotion has in most cases been multi-tracked and uses incentives as well as sanctions. In fact, the democracy that is being promoted by Europe as a global actor has been shaped by the history of the European continent and its past experience. Similarly, the multi-level institutional framework is also reflected in the way norms are being promoted from Europe. This paper studies the way in which a specific democratic norm has been constructed by the EU and the Member States and how it is currently promoted on the African continent. In particular, this paper focuses on how a particular understanding of what ‘democracy’ is (or should be) has been constructed by the EU and Member States and secondly on the tools and methods used in order to promote this norm in African countries which is illustrated by drawing from the cases of Zimbabwe and Ethiopia.

The EU, Member States and the promotion of a democratic norm in Africa

In 2006 was established the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) so as to provide the European Union (EU) with a financial instrument through which it could promote Democracy and Human Rights worldwide. A year later, in the lead up to the December 2007 EU-Africa summit in Lisbon a disputed issue regarded the participation or not of Zimbabwean leaders to the conference. In retaliation to the presence member of the Zimbabwean government, the British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, decided to boycott the Summit and only sending a junior member of his cabinet. Nevertheless, Britain stood out as the only member state that refused to send a senior official as a response to the human rights violations and lack of democratic principles in Zimbabwe. This somewhat of a contradiction between the willingness to promote democracy on the one hand and the lack of unity in regard to the treatment awarded to undemocratic regimes shows quite eloquently some of the problems encountered by the European Union and by the member states in their attempts to promote democracy in other part of the world.

Back during the Cold War the support given by the EU and its member states only marginally focused on the type of regime and on the democratic credential of the states it was dealing with. The emphasis had been, at that time, much more on the geo-strategic importance of a given foreign state. The extremely weak support in favor of a democratization of autocratic regimes was counterbalanced by the support given to authoritarian leaders such as General Pinochet in Chile, Bokassa in Central African Republic, Idi Amin in Uganda, Mobutu in Zaïre or the apartheid regime in South Africa. Nevertheless, a gradual change occurred in the 1980s and even more in the 1990s as the democratic and human right credential of foreign state gained some importance in the eyes of the EU and of its member states. An important landmark was attained when in 1989 a political element was included for the first time into the Lomé IV partnership agreement between the EU and ACP countries (Crawford, 2005:575). Between 1989 and the establishment of the EIDHR in 2006, the EU has gone a long way in regard to what it feels is its responsibility to promote democracy outside of its own borders.

What this paper aims at studying is not the way the instruments of democracy promotion have evolved since the 1980s. There is already an extensive literature that exists on this same subject and analysis in depth the various mechanisms through which the EU and its member state try to advance democracy in foreign states. Our attention will here be devoted to the way a specific understanding of what ‘democracy’ is (or should be) has been constructed by the various European institutions and the different member states. Rather than taking ‘democracy’ as a given it is important to understand how a norm was developed in its regard and what exactly is understood by ‘democracy’. The hypothesis here is that the ‘democracy’ that is being promoted by Europe as a global actor has been shaped by the history of the European continent and its past experience. Similarly, the multi-level institutional framework of the EU is also reflected in the way norms are being promoted from Europe to the outside world.

For that purpose, the first part of this paper will be dedicated to the way democracy was introduced to the European level. This will include an in depth look at two particularly important elements: the democratic identity of the member states and how it was passed

onto the EU, the democratization of the EU. The second part of the paper will focus on the normative construction of 'democracy' in Europe and the international theoretical and ideological environment that has fed substance to the European democratic norm. The third part will focus on the 'promotion' of 'democracy'. First, the past experience of democracy promotion will be looked at before shifting the attention to the way some particular instruments are being used to promote democracy worldwide. The fourth and last part of this paper will then constitute a test case of the European 'democracy promotion' attempts. Two different African states, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, will be briefly looked at in order to draw conclusions on how 'democracy promotion' happens 'on the ground' and why there is a difference in the way Europe handles cases of violation of democratic principles.

The introduction of "democracy" at the European Level

When the process of European integration was officially launched in 1957 with the signing of the treaty of Rome, there was very little interest given to the democratic credential of the newly established institution. The European Economic Community (EEC) had mainly set up in order to better manage some specific issue. On the one hand the aim was to improve the co-operation of the six member states in the field of atomic energy. On the other hand the newly established commission was tasked with establishing a custom union between the founding member states. At that time, only very little amount of policy issues were to be tackled at the European level rather than the national one. Therefore the democratic credential was mainly focused on the member states themselves and not on the supranational organization. This is not to say that the democratic legitimacy was weaker then, but rather that the measurement of 'democracy' ought not to give to much importance to the multilevel features it would later adopt.

Nevertheless, even at that time the "democratic" aspect of the European integration process can be said to have been important in the very definition of what was to be the European identity. Despite the fact that the question of the democratic aspect of leadership was then limited to the level of national governance the founding member states were all democratic regimes and so were the three other members that joined the Community in 1973. It is of course true that the type of democracy that could be found in the member states was also very diverse. Some even underwent important transformation in the waking years of the EEC such as France which shifted from a parliamentary regime to a semi-presidential type of democracy in 1958 following the establishment of the 5th republic. This episode of the history of France, sometimes called the 'coup d'etat démocratique" (Nick, 1998) already shows that the democratic legitimacy of the ruling regime was of the highest importance.

It is through a slow and gradual process that this democratic legitimacy would come to be seen as one of the necessary feature of the European integration process. One of the very first strong signs going in that direction is the European Council Declaration on Democracy (European Council, 1978). It was soon followed by the decision to change the modality of election of the members of the European parliament (MEPs). The 1979 decision to elect the MEPs on the basis of a direct universal suffrage also marks the first attempt to transfer some aspect of the democratic legitimacy of the EEC (Thomassen,

2002:15). The direct election of the MEPs marks an important shift as it clearly puts the European integration process on the path of democracy rather than any other type of governance and regime.

This aspect would be even further strengthened with the following enlargements when Greece joined in 1981 and Spain and Portugal followed suit in 1986. All the three countries had been ruled by autocratic regimes up until a few years before their accession to the status of member state. Their transition to more democratic type of regime was already seen at that time as a crucial feature they needed to have in order to be allowed to join the Community¹. Already at that time a strong belief existed that incorporating these newly democratized states would enhance the democratic legitimacy of the whole EEC. Margaret Thatcher the British Prime Minister at that time clearly states it “I had earlier stressed to President Mitterrand just how vital it was to get Spain and Portugal in quickly and not let short-time selfish considerations stand in the way of what must be done *to strengthen democracy in Europe.*” (1993:545-546) [emphasis mine] This statement clearly shows that ‘democracy’ was no longer limited to the national level but had extended to the other level of European governance as well.

The enlargement to the Eastern European states will follow the same path and actively influence the democratic identity of what was to become the European Union. While the enlargements to the Southern European countries had not seen explicit mentioning of the democratic characteristic in regard to the European level, the context of the latest enlargements has been very different as references to democracy started to appear in official European documents. Von Bogdandy clearly shows how, even from a legalistic point of view, European democratic legitimacy was first applied in regard to the member states before trying to apply similar principles and values to the supranational European level (2007:34). It is also interesting to note through the case of both the Southern and Eastern enlargements that the democratic identity of the European institutions and the member states were defined vis-à-vis external partners. It is first when it faced external actors that were potential future member states that the reflexion on the democratic characteristic of the European integration process started appearing and that there was a need to underline its democratic identity and legitimacy. In fact, it is even possible to say that one of the main entry points of the question of a legitimate European democratic characteristic was the need for an identity in the external relations of the European institutions and the member states. Far from constructing its democratic identity in regard to itself, Europe started by stressing how highly it regarded democratic values and most importantly how it considered these values as being linked to the image of Europe in the eyes of the outside world. It is very clear that the first documents mentioning the importance to democratise were not legal text governing the internal European affairs but rather those giving the direction of European external policies and positioning. In the views of Jüneman and Knodt “[The] connection between the democratic self-image of the EC and the normative orientation within external relations [is] articulately expressed in the document on ‘European Identity’ authored by the EC-Foreign Ministers in 1973” (2007:13). But whereas the relationship with, say for example, the ACP countries only

¹ « Le retour de la Grèce à la démocratie, son développement économique, ses choix politiques rendaient cette éventualité à la fois possible et souhaitable. » Speech made by M. Jean François-Poncet, French Foreign Minister, to the national Assembly (5 Decembre 1979), in *La politique étrangère de la France*. 4e trimestre 1979, p. 157-162.

marginally questioned the internal democratic legitimacy of Europe, the challenge to rethink its own self was much stronger with the looming enlargement to ten new countries from Eastern Europe.

Even if its external identity has been essential in regard to the European attachment to democratic values, the understanding of what it meant to be democratic was also strongly shaped from within. Since the end of the 1980s', European institutions had been extensively challenged in regard to the 'democratic deficit' resulting from the integration process. Criticisms emanating from the academic world, civil society and even government officials have repetitively denounced the absence of democratic characteristic in the way the supranational European institutions exercise their governing powers (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger, 2007:1). The 1980s and 1990s had witnessed an increasing empowerment of European institutions to which new responsibilities were attributed and substantial amount of sovereignty were transferred. In the eyes of many, this phenomenon increased the distance separating European citizens from the decision makers and the power centres. Therefore, the democratic character of the member state was no longer deemed sufficient to respond to the democratic deficit of European institutions (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger, 2007:1-2). However, a fundamental problem also appeared as the concept of democracy was said to be absent not from a sovereign state but from an international and supranational institution. The debate on how the ideal of democracy could be applied to the supranational European level has been very lively and enriching (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger, 2007). Nevertheless, it has not been possible to find a common answer that would suit everyone. In fact, European officials and the member states themselves have been unable to reach a common understanding on the question and to give a definition of 'democracy' that would allow it to be used in regard to a multi-level framework such as the European integration process. "As it is stated in Article 6 [of the TCE], 'democracy' carries no definition. On the European level, the meaning of the principle of democracy is yet to be determined" (Von Bogdandy, 2007:35).

The normative construction of "democracy"

The solution that was found in order to address this lack of definition while at the same time finding a way to address the 'democratic deficit' of European institutions has been to maintain 'democracy' as a value and at the same time address the institutional problems through the concept of governance. The concept of governance according to the European Commission means "rules, processes and behaviour that affect the way in which powers are exercised at European level, particularly as regards openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence" (European Commission, 2001a: p8 ft.). The concept of governance is nothing new and has even been in use by various international organisations. According to Martin Doornbos, the very fact that 'governance' could come to encompass any aspect of the administrative and political life is the reason why it gained so much interest internationally. "It was broad enough to comprise public management as well as political dimensions, while at the same time vague enough to allow a fair measure of discretion and flexibility in interpretation as to what 'good' governance would or would not condone"(2003:7). It is particularly

interesting to note that the Commission explicitly pushed forward the idea of improving the governance of the EU in order to address its democratic deficit. The White Paper on governance published by the Commission in 2001 clearly states that improving governance is an answer to the difficulty met in the attempts to transpose democratic characteristic at the supranational level (European Commission, 2001a:8). In the same document, the commission also attempts to demonstrate how the five main principles it attaches to the concept of governance “underpin democracy and the rule of law in the Member States, but they apply to all levels of government – global, European, national, regional and local” (European Commission, 2001a:10).

The five principles of good governance adopted by the Commission are also useful indicators in what the institution perceives as being good instruments to (re-)connect Europe with its citizens and at the same time facilitate the adoption of relevant policies (European Commission, 2001a:3). The first principle of good governance is openness or in other words the endeavour to make the EU’s functioning and policies more understandable to the general public. Openness is thus linked to the second principle: Participation. Through the White Paper the Commission makes a clear appeal for the inclusion of external (i.e. non-EU institutions) expertise in the process of policy making and policy implementation. The third principle is Accountability as it is expected that “Each of the EU institutions must explain and take responsibility for what it does in Europe” (European Commission, 2001a:8). The next identified principle is the Effectiveness in the sense that the European institutions must pay great attention to what, how and when they deliver. The last of the five principles is Coherence which translates into an appeal for a rationalisation of the policies and actions undertaken by the European levels. The White Paper also stresses the importance of another transversal principle which is closely linked to the multi-level governance characteristic of the European integration model. It is the principle of proportionality and subsidiarity according to which the level at which an action is undertaken has to be chosen by taking into account the objective pursued and the most effective way to reach it.

This vision of what good governance should resemble is particularly instructive as it demonstrates what the Commission views as useful instrument to respond to a case of democratic deficit. While European institutions have refused to explicitly take side in the debate about what democracy is, the Commission has managed to give some substance to what the concept of democracy should encompass. The five (or six if we include subsidiarity) principles of good governance clearly show that the Commission has moved closer to a notion of democracy that deliberation rather than participation through voting. Through the concept of governance, the primary value of democracy no longer rests on electoral consultations alone. Participation entails more than casting a ballot at regular intervals. It is rather redefined as being better expressed in the form of direct communication and regular contacts and exchange between the public sphere and the civil society or other interested groups or experts. The White Paper on governance even goes as far as saying that for the EU, “its legitimacy depends on involvement and participation [...] based on feedback, networks and involvement from policy creation to implementation at all levels”².

² European Commission, European Governance. A White Paper , Brussels, 2001 COM(2001)428final footnote on p11

If the European Union was able to embark on a foreign policy that stressed the importance of democracy worldwide, it has also to do with a paradigmatic change in the foreign policy of the member states (Donnelly, 1998). Or at least in the rhetoric the EU member states have used in regard to their newly found interest of their external relations. “The transformation of the democratic entitlement from moral prescription to international legal obligation has evolved gradually. In the past decade, however, the tendency has accelerated. Most remarkable is the extent to which an international law-based is now urged by government themselves.” (Franck, 1992:47) As the Cold War and the bipolar competition that had characterised the world since the Second World War disappeared an increasing importance was given to the ethical dimension of international relations. The United Nations, under the guidance of its Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali was also at the forefront of this change as it started reflecting on its moral obligations as an international organisation (Weis, Forsythe and Coate, 2004:47). European states also gave in to a similar shift in their foreign policy by awarding more importance to ethical issues and would no longer turn a blind eye to the abuses perpetrated in a foreign country with which they maintained a relationship. The speech delivered by the French president, François Mitterrand, at La Baule in June 1990 in which it called African states to democratise marked a stark contrast with the traditional stance France had adopted in regard to the sovereign exercise of power by its African partners (Chafer, 2002). The rhetorical change was even more plainly evident in the case of Great Britain foreign policy as Tony Blair’s accession to power was accompanied by the will to engage in an ‘ethical foreign policy’ (Wheeler and Dunne, 1998). Other member states of lesser importance on the international scene had also adopted similar principles. In some cases, the shift towards ethical consideration encompassing the respect of democracy, human rights and good governance had already been adopted for quite some years before the end of the cold war.

This ‘ethical’ approach of foreign policy was reproduced at the supranational level. In fact, European institutions were particularly eager to embark on such a vision of its international responsibility as the safe keeper of certain values since it offered them a window of opportunity to address international issues other than relations based on trade and development aid. EU’s institutions had long been playing a role in international affairs but had been constrained by the mandate the member states had designed for the supranational institutions. Matters such as trade or development aid had been delegated to the European level while other aspects of international relations remained the sovereignty of the member states. The supranational European institutions were particularly eager to play a more important and influential role in the realm of international affairs. As such, adopting a particular stance to promote European values in the outside world has enabled Europe to portray itself as being more than an ‘economic giant but a political dwarf’. The idea of Europe as an Ethical power “has come about as a depiction of the growing strategic role the EU wants to play in the world by acquiring a broader spectrum of power capabilities” (Aggestam, 2008:1). The consequence has been a slow process of politicization of the various fields in which the European institutions were already engaged in on the international arena and the involvement in new areas were it was believed that the EU could play a positive role by promoting its own values and principles (Smith, 1998).

The European institutions still had to overcome the problem of coherence between the stances adopted by its many components. The division of labour in regard to the European involvement in international affairs has been the source of much confusion for both the Europeans and the outside world (Smith, 2001). Even within the sole European Commission at least four different commissions have responsibilities that are clearly directed towards the international scene and therefore play an active role in the framing of the EU's foreign policy. DG Trade, DG Development, DG External Relations and DG Enlargement all have mandates that lead them to engage in contacts with foreign countries on a regular basis. (Petiteville, 2003:135) Yet other institutions also attempts to take part in the EU's external relations. The European Parliament, despite not having been attributed a specific mandate on foreign policy, it has managed to empower itself on international issues by debating a variety of questions linked to the EU's role in the world (Costa, 2001:169). One example is the adoption by the members of the European Parliament (MEPs) of resolutions on human rights violation including in countries that are not EU member states. Through these resolutions the European Parliament is also attempting to make its voice heard and influence the overall positioning of the EU in international affairs. MEPs also play a more active role in the European Democracy promotion efforts. The election monitoring missions dispatched by the EU throughout the world offer the opportunity for MEPs to be directly involved in matters concerning non-member states. It should however be noted that the reports published by the election observation missions only serve an advisory role and only marginally influence the stance of other European institutions. It in fact appears that the European Parliament has a more idealistic vision while the commission, the council and the member states have a more realist approach. The EU continuously attempts to resolve the problems linked to its internal coherence also by adopting Common Positions that are expected to be followed by the various European institutions. Such a Common Position was for example adopted in 1998 concerning human rights, democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance in Africa (European Council, 1998).

Such a vision of what good governance, and by extension democracy, is expected to cover is not a construction independently framed by EU officials. In fact, such an approach of democratic legitimacy is deeply rooted in the neo-liberal vision of democracy (Crawford, 2005:590-591). The rise of neo-liberal theory in the 1970s first concerned the management of the economy. Nevertheless, the theory soon expanded so as to encompass the domain of political sciences and introduce new approaches to the way social life and the exercise of power ought to be organised (Leftwich, 1994:368 and Munck, 1994:35). One of the striking features of the neo-liberal democracy is the importance that is given to deliberation through the usage of expertise. In this vision of decision making, citizens should make their positions and preferences known not only by the mean of electoral suffrage but also, and much more, by entertaining regular contacts with the public sphere and decision makers. The conception of representation is thus shifted from elected officials, who become mere political technicians, and in favour of aggregated groups representing a variety of interests. This approach clearly puts the emphasis on the capacity of the institutions to deliver. The participation of civil society and other forms of organised interest to the process of decision making and policy implementation is in fact meant to improve the very capacity of the institutions to deliver appropriate and timely policies. "The integrative concept [...] subscribes to the idea that

civil society's function is to both control the state and to enhance the latter's legitimacy through civic participation" (Jünemann and Knodt, 2007:17). The legitimacy of democracy thus rests on the ability of the institutions to come up with adequate policies that best serves the interests of the citizens. In other words, this to say that what becomes important is the last part of Abraham Lincoln description of democracy. Even though 'a government of the people, by the people' still counts, it is somehow underwritten for the primacy of having a government 'for the people'. This approach of democracy has of course repercussions on the type of government that should be ruling. The composition of the government needs less to be the exact representation of the composition of the electorate but should most importantly be judged on its efficiency to adopt the right policies. It is no longer the political affiliation or the national identity that matters but the capacity of those holding office to conduct policies. When the commission in its White Paper stresses the importance of transparency, accountability and effectiveness it is a clear indication that the performance of its officials is of more importance than their background and individual identity³. Even the principle of subsidiarity can be tied to the concept of decentralisation as it emphasizes the need to facilitate participation and communication through the reduction of the distance separating the rulers from the ruled.

The development of Democracy promotion instruments

Just as the vision of democracy and good governance has been shaped by the international intellectual and theoretical context, the way Europe would shape its democracy promotion instruments has been heavily influenced by the previous historical experiments in democratic transition. In the case of democracy promotion, the conception of how it can be materialized draws from the cases of the transitions that occurred in Latin America and in Eastern Europe. This is to say that the first states undergoing the so-called 'third wave' of democratisation have offered a model that the EU is trying to replicate in other parts of the world and most particularly in Africa. The Latin American continent had, since the Second World War, been marked by the emergence of autocratic regimes which in some cases even overthrew well established democracies. A conjunction of various elements would nevertheless put the Latin American states on the path of democratisation during the 1980s. The whole process of transition to a democratic type of regime raised important amount of interest from academicians and policy makers keen on understanding and developing a new field of study: 'transitology' (Schmitter, 1995). These analysts would attempt to demonstrate which particular variables were needed in order for a country to democratise its political system. Two particularly important features needs to be underlined as the result of assessing the Latin American model of democratisation. Firstly, the whole democratic transition process took a long time and was instigated by the ruling regime. Far from resulting from a popular uprising, the Latin American democratic transition saw an important involvement of the ruling political elite all along the democratisation process (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986:48). In Chile, for example, General Pinochet eventually allowed the opening up of the

³ Quite understandably it is so also because of the international nature of the EU. The EU institutions have to draw their officials from a more diversified field than have to do the national governments.

political space to the opposition while at the same time ensuring some safeguards so as to avoid prosecution in the latter years. This does not mean that citizens in the Latin American states were passive actors. Quite to the contrary, and this is the second major feature, they also actively participated but not so much independently as through the formation of civil society organisations (Alvarez et. al., 1998). These organisations representing a great variety of interests became an essential actor that facilitated the transmission of demands to the higher level of governments through exchanges and negotiations (Garreton, 2002). A particularly telling example in this sense is the one offered by the Brazilian democratisation process. The new constitution adopted in 1988 included many of the demands expressed by civil society organisations, trade unions and other organised groups (Power, 2000:19). For those analysing studying 'transitology' it thus appeared that the transition to a democratic type of regime needed on the one hand to happen under the framework of the already existing state apparatus and ruling regime, and on the other hand that civil society was a key element through which the public could make its voice heard.

The lessons drawn from the study of the Latin American cases would soon be tested, improved and enriched with the democratisation process sweeping Eastern Europe following the disappearance of the soviet bloc. The geographical proximity of the Eastern European states represented a major challenge for the EU (Rye Olsen, 2000). Encouraging and sustaining a democratic type of government in these states soon became essential for the EU and its member states. Moreover, as it became evident that the Eastern European states would apply for EU membership Europe was pressured to strengthen its democratic identity including through the usage of particular instruments to foster change in the candidate countries (Fuchs and Klingemann, 2002). The idea that the EU should promote democracy received such an enthusiastic response from member states that it was even included in the Maastricht Treaty that development aid provided by the European Community would be conditioned to the respect of some democratic principles and basic human rights (European Community, 1992:Art.130u). This conditional strategy has been used towards the countries of Eastern Europe. In fact, the accession to the EU soon was presented as the goal countries from Central and Eastern Europe should strive for. The EU made it abundantly clear that in order to be part of the regional body, a certain number of criteria should be met by the candidates. "Under this strategy, the EU pays the reward if the target government complies with the conditions and withdraws its rewards if it fails to comply" (Shimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, 2004:663).

The success of this pattern of democracy promotion through conditionality also encouraged the EU to apply a similar strategy towards other parts of the world. But while it was possible to use the enlargement option as the 'carrot' encouraging the Eastern European states to democratise, the leverage is not as strong for other parts of the world (Hazelzet, 2007). Nevertheless, the necessity of reforming the governance of the developing states became a prerequisite of EU's foreign policy including for very instrumental reasons (Rye Olsen, 1998; Spanger and Wolff, 2007). This marked the appearance of what has been termed 'second generation conditionality' that focus on resolving 'governance' issues rather than solely ensure the respect of some strict economic principles as it had been the case with the 'first generation'. The second generation conditionalities, by linking aid to the respect of 'good governance' thus gave

an important leverage to the aid providers to change some fundamental aspects in the politics of the target countries (Santiso, 2001).

But conditionality was not the only instrument being implemented by Europe to advance democracy. Series of programmes and projects were designed in order to encourage the democratisation processes in foreign countries. The instruments essentially being implemented through the development aid framework used cover a wide range of activities and are set up to target many different actors (Youngs, 2006). Nevertheless, it is possible to distinguish categories in which they can be framed according to what their purpose is. Thus the four categories are: support of the electoral process, civil society empowerment, decentralisation and governmental capacity building⁴. The first one 'support of the electoral process' is the most evident one as the EU and member states try to get involved at the time when elections are being held. The involvement is not limited to election observation, which in fact only constitutes the tip of the iceberg, but mostly focuses on technical cooperation to allow the target state to hold elections in the most adequate manner (Clark, 1999 and Santiso). The second category stands out from the other as it does not concern the state or the government but focuses on civil society organisations. The rationale behind the support given to these organisations is the belief that they will facilitate the participation of the population to the political decision making process. It is thus expected that the civil society organisations can become advocacy groups with relevant expertise that can hold the government accountable and serve as counter-balance to state power (Crawford, 2005:593). The third category of instruments focuses on decentralisation. These instruments form part of the democratic promotion conundrum since the purpose of decentralisation is clearly to reduce the distance separating the centre of power from the citizens (Bardhan, 2002). The programmes and projects focussing on the capacity building of civil servants make up the last category. By offering specific training to various government officials the development agencies of the EU and the member states aim to improve the governance in the target states by increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil servants (Sandbrook and Oelbaum, 1997).

These instruments in use for the promotion of democracy once again demonstrate the particular approach to democracy and governance that has been integrated by the EU and the member states. It is even possible to say that the five principles of governance identified by the Commission's 2001 White Paper on governance can find their equivalents translated in the language of development aid. Thus the principle of 'Openness' and 'Accountability' are reflected under the call for greater 'transparency' in the target state. The principle of 'Participation' (along with 'Accountability') finds its equivalent in the support of civil society organisations, while the endeavour to attain the principles of 'Effectiveness' and 'Coherence' can be found under the new heading of 'capacity building'. Even 'Proportionality and Subsidiarity' is somehow reflected in the push for a greater decentralisation of power in developing states.

⁴ These categories are adapted from the indications by the Commission in regard to its priority to strengthen democratization, good governance and the rule of law (European Commission, 2001b:16)

Two test case of democracy promotion: Ethiopia and Zimbabwe

After having reviewed how Europe managed to construct a particular understanding of democracy and how it designed specific instruments to promote this new norm to the outside world, we can now turn our attention to two test cases, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, to understand how it operates on the ground. The choice of these two countries is of course not innocent. Ethiopia has been, for many decades already, one of the major recipient countries of European development aid. Meanwhile, Zimbabwe has been drawing attention because of clear misconducts by its government that has led the international community to denounce its democratic credentials. It is therefore interesting to contrast one of the aid 'darlings' with one of the aid 'orphans' of European development aid (Marysse, Ansoms and Cassimon, 2007).

To understand this differentiation a little background information about these two African states is necessary. Ethiopia embarked on the path of democratisation in 1995 when its current constitution entered into force and the first elections were held. This important political change was the direct result of the overthrowing of the *Derg* regime in 1991 by a conglomerate of various rebel groups. At the forefront of this military victory was the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition of various smaller rebel political organisations based on ethnical affiliation and headed by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). The drafting of the new constitution was largely dominated by this same political party which managed to incorporate large parts of its political programme into the constitution (Merera, 2003). The constitution adopted in 1995 allowed for multiparty elections and ballots were organised in 1995, in 2000 and in 2005. The first two suffrages suffered from the abstention and boycott of the opposition parties which denounced the absence of a level playing field with the ruling party (Pausewang and Tronvoll, 2000). The 2005 elections on the contrary saw the participation of credible opposition parties which in fact made considerable gains. However, the 2005 electoral process soon turned sour as the government engaged in a violent campaign of repression targeting the leaders of the opposition parties and their supporters (Abbink, 2006). This repressive and authoritarian attitude drew criticism from a variety of international observers, including the European election monitoring team (EU-EOM, 2005). Despite these condemnations, the Ethiopian government was able to bypass any kind of strong sanctions even from the EU and managed to resume its 'business as usual' (Abbink, 2006:191). The lack of sanctions targeting the Ethiopian government marks a stark contrast with the attitude that has been adopted in regard to the Zimbabwean government. Zimbabwe saw its democratic credentials disappear following a socio-political and economic crisis that was rooted in the unresolved land-ownership issue. Ever since Zimbabwe had gained its independence in 1981, the question of land had remained a contentious issue with important political and economic repercussion in the country (Chan, 2003:75). In the late 1990s', in order to pre-empt the expiry of a special provision that allowed the state to appropriate land, the Mugabe government, under the popular pressure of the war veterans launched a policy of farm seizure and land acquisition (Chan, 2003). The Zimbabwean president was at the same time facing one of its most important electoral challenge as the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) developed as a credible challenger to the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union –

Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). Eventually, the presidential elections held in 2000 gave the victory to the ruling party but were denounced by the international community as not being free and fair leading to the imposition of sanctions targeting members of the Zimbabwean government (Sithole, 2001). Nevertheless, President Mugabe refused to back down and was soon engaged in a nasty war of words with Britain (Taylor and Williams, 2002). The EU also initiated a 'political dialogue' to resolve the Zimbabwean issue and eventually also imposed sanctions targeting Zimbabwean government officials (European Commission, 2001c).

Many different elements can be found to explain why, despite gross violation of basic democratic principles, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe have not been treated similarly by Europe. In fact, what the study of the sanctioning (or lack of sanction) shows is that the European commitment on the ground is dependent on the presence of certain of its democratic or governance principle. What this translates into is that even if a state may maintain some particularly autocratic features the presence of some governance principles may be sufficient for the EU and the member states to maintain a working relationship with that state rather than imposing sanctions (Alesina and Dollar, 2000). This is evident when comparing the cases of Ethiopia and Zimbabwe. The later has seen criticism being directed to it not only because it engaged in a campaign of repression against the opposition, but also because its government has been unable to adopt economic policies that fitted into the expectations of the major international donors. "The late 1990s saw Zimbabwe move into increasing conflict with this donor strategy on both economic and political fronts" (Brown, 2002:187) Given the new ideology on development that ties economic growth with political freedom and democracy; the economic performance of the developing countries also became an indicator of the respect of principles of good governance. In the case of Zimbabwe, the economic crisis it underwent since 2000 soon became a proof of the inability of its government to properly manage the country. Meanwhile, Ethiopia had managed to transform its economy in such a manner that it had become a success story used by international development agencies to illustrate the benefits of their policies. In other words, the governance principle of effectiveness attained an overriding status that had the possibility to curtail other components of democracy. The ability of the target governments to deliver appropriate policies became more important than, for example, the existence of multiparty competition⁵. Gordon Crawford even concludes that "the limited democracy promotion measures undertaken, notably support for decentralisation and public sector reform as well as the concentration of civil society assistance on professionalised NGOs, are intended to challenge and limit state power rather than seeking the extension of popular control over decision making" (2005:595-596)

Another important element that explains the differentiated treatment being applied to Ethiopia and Zimbabwe has to do with the responsiveness of these states to the European discourses on democracy and development. The study of these two African states clearly shows that the EU and the member states are much more lenient towards the states that adopt the same stance as Europe and shows, at least rhetorically, a commitment to the values and principles promoted by Europe (Abrahamsen, 2000:21). In our two test cases, Ethiopia has seen its government adopt a discourse on development and democracy that

⁵ The best example in this case would be Uganda who from 1986 onwards benefited from extensive support from the EU and member states even though it only allowed multipartism in 2005.

mirrors the expectations and beliefs of the major international donors. “Donor country diplomats, especially, are charmed by this formal façade of Ethiopian politics and always place high hopes in the promises offered by the political leadership” (Abbink, 2006:52). Zimbabwe on the other hand has refuted and denounced the European involvement in its political scene. President Mugabe was even personally accusing Europe and more specifically the United Kingdom of conducting neo-colonial and imperialist policies in Africa (Taylor and Williams, 2002). This lack of responsiveness from Zimbabwean leaders cost them dearly as it would push the EU to condemn and even demonise the Zimbabwean leadership. It therefore seems that the responsiveness of the target country is an essential element of the perception of Europe of its democratic credential (Keller, 2005). This is also apparent in the way Europe assesses the democratic need of the target country. In the case of Ethiopia for example there was a consensus shared by the Ethiopian government and the major donors that the democratisation process had already been initiated in the early 1990s and that it was nowadays more important to consolidate and sustain a fragile democracy. On the contrary, for Zimbabwe, the official stance that the country had democratised immediately as it gained its independence in 1981 has not been accepted by most European states. In fact, it is still believed by the outside world that Zimbabwe still needs to undergo a ‘real’ democratic transition period that will reform its leadership (Kriger, 2005).

It would also be wrong to assume that other more realistic interests do not overcome the European will to promote democracy. Thus in the cases of Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, it is clearly evident that the European Commission⁶ and the member states gave a great importance to the geo-strategic importance of the target countries. In that sense maintaining stability in Ethiopia was seen as being an essential prerequisite for the stability of the entire Horn of Africa sub-region. As such, sanctioning the Ethiopian government could have meant losing a key ally (even more so after 9/11) in a region that is prone to instability and violent conflicts (Rye Olsen, 2006). The existence of a typical case of failed state in Somalia also provided a close reminder of what were the risks of a feeble Ethiopian government. In contrast, the geo-strategic importance of Zimbabwe was perceived as being very low. In the eyes of Europe, the major actor in the southern Africa region is South Africa which is believed to be the main economic, political and military powerhouse in the region. The Zimbabwean intervention in the conflict in DR-Congo was thus condemned as being an unnecessary military operation that would further destabilise the region. This contrasts with the absence of any clear condemnation of the Ethiopian intervention in Somalia.

Conclusion

In the more than 50 years of European integration, the European institutions and the member states have witnessed important paradigmatic changes. One of these major changes concerns the vision of what is the role of the European supranational institutions including in regard to the outside world. The integration process has called for a (re-

⁶ The European Commission rather than the EU as a whole since, in regard to Ethiopia, the European Parliament distanced itself from the EC decision and was more actively pushing for sanctions.

)evaluation of what the identity of Europe is. As such, 'Democracy' seems to hold a particularly important place in the views of both the supranational institutions and the member states. Through a gradual process Europe has managed to present itself as sharing the same ideal of democracy and has incorporated the idea that it ought to promote this value to other parts of the world. However, the democracy that was conceived by Europe is not neutral and has been heavily influenced by the institutional, ideological and theoretical context in which it was constructed. One of the major elements has been the identification of the concept of governance as a remedy to resolve the problem of the European democratic deficit. The view of what exactly governance corresponds to was then clarified by the publication of the Commission's White Paper on governance. This White Paper thus identified some principles leaning towards a more deliberative EU through more collaboration with civil society and aiming at more effective policy making that would allow European institutions to reclaim some democratic credentials. Meanwhile, the world had evolved towards a global order where ethical issues had acquired an important role to which the European institutions were eager to participate. All in all this has pushed Europe to take a pro-active role in the promotion of democracy throughout the world.

The strategies used by Europe to promote democracy were also shaped by past experience. The analysis of how Latin American transition to democracy had occurred offered a rich theoretical background while the efforts to democratise Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin wall provided good opportunities to shape and improve the instruments of democracy promotion. This has allowed the European actors to introduce series of projects and programmes aiming at improving the democratic credential of foreign states mainly through development assistance addressing problems of governance. The instruments thus deployed by the EU reflect the conception of democracy and governance that was identified by the Commission in its White Paper. The reality on the ground of the European endeavour to promote democracy in Africa, nevertheless, shows some important discrepancies in the treatment of states violating democratic principles. The two cases of Ethiopia, which escaped sanctions, and of Zimbabwe, which has been heavily sanctioned, demonstrate that in the end the way democracy is envisioned by Europe shapes its relationship with third countries. The importance given to the sustaining of some, but not all, democratic principles has allowed Ethiopia to getaway without being sanctioned. The fact that Ethiopia is believed to have a greater geo-strategic importance than Zimbabwe is not the only explanation for such a differentiated treatment. It appears that in regard to the values and norms being promoted by Europe, Ethiopian governments have been able to 'feed' Europe's expectation whether it concerns its economic performances or its rhetorical acceptance of European values. On the other hand, Zimbabwe has seen its relationship with Europe and its member states turn sour following its economic meltdown and most importantly, after it refuted the principles coming from Europe.

What this study of European endeavour to promote democracy has tried to demonstrate is that the democratic norm that has been constructed by Europe is far from being neutral. Quite to the contrary it is heavily influenced and leans toward a particular view of what it means to be democratic. This ideological charge not only shapes the way Europe considers other states but also how these states eventually consider Europe. The case of

Zimbabwe offers a clear example of how a dispute on the values and norms Europe tries to export can disrupt diplomatic relations.

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