

Chapter Nine

Constructing the EU as a Global Actor: A Critical Analysis of European Democracy Promotion¹

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The debate over the EU's actorness—especially its global actorness—has dominated European Foreign Policy Research (EFPR) for years. While some scholars underlined the EU's "international presence"² (rather than referring to it as an actor), some others have preferred to name it as "a global actor."³ The first draft of the European Security Strategy, presented at the Thessaloniki European Council (June 20, 2003) by Javier Solana, reads as follows: "the European Union is, like it or not, a *global actor*; it should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security."⁴ The main text of European Security Strategy, finally adopted on December 12, 2003 stated, instead: "the European Union is inevitably a *global player* [...] it should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world."⁵ This difference in the wording of the two texts, by itself, is quite telling about the contested nature of the European Union (EU). It also shows the importance of language in the creation of a European identity and gives a hint as to how certain knowledge about the Union is produced and reproduced.

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2. David Allen and Michael Smith, "Western Europe's Presence in the Contemporary International Arena", *Review of International Studies*, vol. 16, no.1 (1990), pp. 19-37.

3. Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

4. Council of the European Union, "A Secure Europe in a Better World." 10881/03 COSEC 3, Brussels, 25 June 2003, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/03/st10/st10881.en03.pdf> (10 Nov. 2009).

5. Council of the European Union, "A Secure Europe in a Better World—European Security Strategy," Brussels, 12 December 2003, <http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf> (12 Apr. 2009).

This chapter is based on the argument that the knowledge produced about the EU's global actorness is a positive one. In other words, the EU is constructed as "a *positive force* in world politics"⁶—i.e. "an ideal power."⁷ This construction is mainly made through underlining the EU's *difference* as an actor in the world, which is post-modern and post-sovereign, which constitutes a model in terms of successful regional integration and promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and which acts as a normative power.

The EU's democracy promotion, on the other hand, constitutes an important part of its global actorness. Through its various tools, such as enlargement and trade conditionality, political dialogue, etc., it pursues its efforts at democratization in the world. Surely, the EU's image as a post-sovereign, post-modern entity, a model of peaceful integration and democracy, and a normative power, nurtures and legitimizes its democracy promotion efforts. In turn, these efforts add to and reproduce its representations that make it an "ideal power."

This chapter attempts to look into how the EU's identity in global politics is constructed in a specific way—both as a global actor and an ideal power; how such construction legitimizes its democracy promotion activities; and how the latter feed into such construction in turn. Its major argument is that despite the diversity in their approaches, both EFP analysts and practitioners help the construction of the EU as an ideal power, which legitimizes the Union's actions in global politics in general and its democracy promotion efforts in the world, in particular.

This study offers an analysis of European foreign policy through a discussion based on the "'ideal power Europe' meta-narrative" argument developed by the author in a former article.⁸ The "ideal power Europe" meta-narrative is a concept used by the author to underline the power-knowledge relations behind the construction of the EU's identity as ideal. This conceptual framework is employed to reveal how the EFP researchers and practitioners convey the EU's story in a positive way and how such a positive depiction of the Union legitimizes its acts in global

6. Thomas Diez, "Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering 'Normative Power Europe'," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, vol. 33, no.3 (2005), p. 613. Emphasis added.

7. Münevver Cebeci, "European Foreign Policy Research Reconsidered: Constructing an 'Ideal Power Europe' Through Theory?," *Millennium—Journal of International Studies*, vol. 40, no. 3 (2012), pp. 563-583.

8. *Ibid.*

politics. In such an endeavour, three major epistemological practices used by the EFP researchers and practitioners to convey a positive image of the EU are scrutinized: the discourse on post-sovereign/postmodern EU, the EU-as-a-model discourse and the normative power EU discourse. This chapter also makes a second reading of these three representations of the EU in such a way to reveal how the EU's actorness in global politics in general and its democracy promotion in particular are constructed. It attempts to elaborate on such construction critically and through a poststructuralist interpretation. The chapter starts with a definition of the conceptual framework adopted in this study. Then it looks into the three epistemological practices through which the EU's global actorness is conveyed in world politics as listed above. Finally, it provides an analysis of the EU's global actorness and its democracy promotion.

Actorness, Foreign Policy and Identity

Poststructuralist analyses of foreign policy claim that there is an open link between “foreign policy” and “identity” as the former is the major practice of creating an inside and an outside.⁹ Foreign policy refers to the set of discourses and practices (institutions, procedures and processes) that constitute an actor's relations with its ‘others’. In (re)turn, it is an actor's identity that legitimizes its foreign policy. Hansen argues that “identities and policies are constitutively or performatively linked.”¹⁰ This means that identity and foreign policy “are ontologically bound to each other.”¹¹

Similarly, “actorness,” which is seen as “the ability to function actively and deliberately in relations to other actors in the international system,”¹² is closely related with identity construction. This is because actorness cannot be solely defined by technical criteria relating to the self (autonomy, capabilities, purposeful action, etc.) but it also finds meaning within the self's relations with the others, i.e., through communication, interaction, and recognition.

9. David Campbell, *Writing Security—United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, (Revised Edition), (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

10. Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice—Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 10-11.

11. Cebeci, *op. cit.*, p. 565.

12. Gunnar Sjöstedt, *The External Role of the European Community*, (Farnborough: Saxon House, 1977), p. 15.

On the other hand, foreign policy researchers act as agents who convey certain knowledge about identities and policies of international actors. “Through articulating foreign policies and identities in a specific way,” they serve “to legitimize foreign policies and [reinforce] their reproduction.”¹³ This is exactly the point, which shows their agency in creating the specific identities of international actors against their others. There is also a link between the knowledge provided by foreign policy researchers and by policy-makers (practitioners) as the latter use the knowledge produced by the former to legitimize their acts and in (re)turn the practitioners’ discourse and acts feed into foreign policy research. This chapter looks into how an ‘ideal’ European identity is constructed by both EFP researchers and practitioners. The European discourse and practice on democracy promotion also adds to the construction of such an identity.

Marking the EU’s Difference: The EU as a Postmodern/Post-Sovereign Actor Discourse

The definition of the EU as “distinctive actor”¹⁴ marks its identity in global politics. The Union is regarded as a “unique”¹⁵ actor and a “hybrid polity.”¹⁶ The claim that the EU is unique is the most important way of referring to its *difference* from all other actors. Because the EU “is not directly analogous to any one of” the international actors, it “may therefore be considered a unique type”¹⁷ which is “more than an intergovernmental organization, less than a state”¹⁸. One of the major discourses that marks the EU’s *difference* from other actors revolves around its postmodern/post-sovereign/post-Westphalian nature.¹⁹

13. Cebeci, *op. cit.*, 565.

14. Karen E. Smith, “The European Union: A Distinctive Actor in International Relations,” *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, vol. 9, no. 2 (Winter/ Spring 2003), pp. 103-113.

15. See for example, Brian White, *Understanding European Foreign Policy*, (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 24.

16. See for example, Ian Manners, “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?,” *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 40, no. 2 (2002), p. 241. Also see: Bretherton and Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor*, 21 and 58-59.

17. White, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

18. Bretherton and Vogler, *op. cit.*, 21-22.

19. The EU is regarded by EFP researchers and policy-makers as postmodern and post-sovereign because it has supranational characteristics and its member states have thus transferred some part of sovereignty to the Union level. See, for example, James A Caporaso, “The European Union and Forms of State: Westphalian, Regulatory or Post-Modern?,” *Journal of*

Manners and Whitman even claim that the international identity of the EU is “one which exists in contrast to the Westphalian norms of sovereignty and territoriality.”²⁰ It is this underlined *difference* of the EU, which mostly legitimizes its acts in world politics. Manners argues that the EU “exists as being different to pre-existing political forms and that this particular difference pre-disposes it to act in a normative way.” This statement also manifests how the knowledge produced and reproduced about the EU’s *difference* as an actor gives it enhanced legitimacy to promote democracy in the world.

The EU’s representation as a post-modern entity has become a theme of wide resonance in European studies, expanding upon a European practitioner’s, Robert Cooper’s²¹, definition, which referred to the European state as post-modern and as “more pluralist, more complex, less centralised than the bureaucratic modern state but not at all chaotic, unlike the pre-modern.”²² Building on his arguments, many European studies scholars compared and contrasted the EU with its modern/pre-modern others such as the U.S., Russia and the Middle East;²³ underlining the “political incompatibility”²⁴ between them; establishing the EU’s difference against its pre-modern, modern, and conflictual others; portraying it as “ideal” and legitimizing its intervention (implicit or explicit) in its others’ domestic and international affairs.²⁵

Common Market Studies, vol. 34, no. 1, (March 1996), pp. 45-48; William Wallace, “Europe after the Cold War: interstate order or post-sovereign regional system?,” *Review of International Studies*, vol. 25, (1999), p. 222.

20. Ian Manners and Richard G. Whitman, “The ‘difference engine’: constructing and representing the international identity of the European Union,” *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 10, no. 3 (2003), p. 382.

21. Cooper has worked for the EU at several different positions.

22. Robert Cooper, *The Post-Modern State and the World Order*, (London: Demos, 1996). p. 31.

23. See for example, Nicolai Wenzel, “Postmodernism and Its Discontents: Whither Constitutionalism After God and Reason?,” *New Perspectives on Political Economy*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2008): 173-174 http://pcpe.libinst.cz/nppe/4_2/nppe4_2_4.pdf (3 February 2012); Martin Ortega (2003). “The Achilles Heel of Transatlantic Relations,” in *Shift or Rift—Assessing US-EU Relations after Iraq*, ed. Gustav Lindstrom, Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, p. 162; and Ivan Krastev, “Russia as the ‘Other Europe’,” *Russia in Global Affairs* 4, October-December 2007, http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_9779 (3 February 2012).

24. Krastev, *op. cit.*

25. Cf. Diez, *op. cit.*, p. 629. Surely this is not the case with the US. However, in the case of the US, the EU is compared and contrasted with it in terms of the latter’s multilateralist and soft approach to democratization and crisis management and the former’s unilateralist and military approach. See, e.g., Thomas Diez and Ian Manners, “Reflecting on Normative Power Europe”, in Felix Berenskoetter and M.J. Williams, eds., *Power in World Politics*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 180–3.

On the other hand, a second reading suggests that the EU's post-sovereign/postmodern nature does not represent a total break with the modern state, although Manners and Whitman claim that the international identity of the EU is "one which exists in contrast to the Westphalian norms of sovereignty and territoriality."²⁶ For example, Waever sees the post-sovereign EU as an entity, which exists besides the sovereign state—without "contesting state sovereignty."²⁷ This becomes all the more important for the EU's democracy promotion in the world. Haine argues: "The foundation of a 'post-modern' Europe is a competent and controlling State rather than a vigorous civil society. After all, the integration process was an elite-driven mechanism in which people had few if no say."²⁸ This statement explains the EU's technocratic approach to democracy promotion, and reveals how the European model of democracy, which is presented as 'ideal', cannot be successfully applied everywhere.

All in all, it can be argued that naming the EU as postmodern and post-sovereign goes beyond the practice of understanding the "nature of the beast."²⁹ It underlines and enhances the EU's difference from its "Others"; representing the European self as democratic, civilised, and peaceful (if not superior) and its others as undemocratic, conflictual, and uncivilised (if not inferior). Furthermore, it legitimizes the EU's actions in global politics in general, and its democracy promotion efforts in particular. The EU's actions in this regard are mostly based on an asymmetrical relationship, where the EU sets the standards of democracy, decides on the conditions to be applied on the target countries/societies, and expects them to follow suit. This can be regarded as "the dominant dimension of European foreign policy that arises from the EU's exercise of post-sovereign normative power."³⁰

26. Manners and Whitman, *op. cit.*, p. 382.

27. Ole Waever, "Identity, Integration and Security—Solving the Sovereignty Puzzle in E.U. Studies," *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 48, no.2 (1995), pp. 389-481.

28. Jean Yves Haine, "The European Crisis of Liberal Internationalism", paper presented at the 7th Biennial Conference of the European Community Studies Association—Canada, "The Maturing European Union", Edmonton, AB, 25-27 September 2008, 12. http://www.ecsa-c.ca/biennial2008/Conference%20Program_files/Haine.pdf (14.10.2015)

29. Bretherton and Vogler, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-61.

30. Michael Merlingen, "Everything is dangerous: A Critique of 'Normative Power Europe'," *Security Dialogue* vol. 38, no. 4, (2007), p. 438.

Projecting the European Model: The Discourse of Leading by Virtuous Example

Many EFP analysts and practitioners argue that the EU leads by *virtuous* example.³¹ It is not only seen as a model of peaceful regional integration but it is also regarded as a model in promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Solana, for example, lists the characteristics of the European model as: “compassion with those who suffer; peace and reconciliation through integration; a strong attachment to human rights, democracy and the rule of law; a spirit of compromise, plus a commitment to promote, in a pragmatic way, an international system based on rules.”³² There are also analysts who name the EU as a model in terms of having the best practices with regard to socio-economic and environmental policies.³³

The EU-as-a-model discourse does not only help European practitioners legitimize their policies, but it also empowers the Union. In a critical article on NPE, Forsberg argues that viewing the Union as a *virtuous* example “points to the idea that the EU has power when it simply stands as a model for others to follow.”³⁴ On the other hand, regarding the Union as a model also brings about the idea that the others are expected to imitate this model³⁵ and copy the EU’s *best practices*.³⁶ It is through such discourse that the Union and its model are again portrayed as the ideal/ peaceful/ democratic/ civilized against its imperfect/ conflictual/ undemocratic/ uncivilized others.

Representation of the EU as a model can be read in various ways. Such a representation surely adds to the Union’s international presence

31. See, e.g., Manners, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

32. Javier Solana, ‘Identity and Foreign Policy’, ESDP Newsletter, no. 3 (2007), p. 9.

33. See, e.g., Dominique Strauss-Kahn, “Building a Political Europe: 50 proposals for tomorrow’s Europe”, Rapporteur, Olivier Ferrand, April 2004, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/policy_advisers/archives/experts_groups/docs/rapport_europe_strauss_kahn_en.pdf; and, Maria Joao Rodrigues, “The Influence of the European Socio-economic Model in the Global Economy,” in Mario Telo, ed., *The European Union and Global Governance*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 104–27.

34. Tuomas Forsberg, “Normative Power Europe, Once Again: A Conceptual Analysis of an Ideal Type,” *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol.49, no. 6 (2011), p. 1197.

35. This is what Börzel and Risse refer to as “emulation”. Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse, “Diffusing (Inter-) Regionalism—The EU as a Model of Regional Integration,” *KFG The Transformative Power of Europe Working Paper 7*, (Berlin: Freie Universität, 2009). Note that Forsberg also cites Börzel and Risse: Forsberg, *op. cit.*, 1198.

36. Forsberg, *op. cit.*, p. 1198.

and visibility, empowering it against others. This surely contributes to the Union's relevance in the world.³⁷ Furthermore, it gives the legitimacy to the EU to apply conditionality on those countries that seek closer relations with the Union in order to get a share from its welfare and peace. In other words, it legitimizes the EU's asymmetrical approach in its enlargement, neighbourhood and trade policies, where the EU determines the content and the conditions of the relationship and the target countries are expected to accept such relationship, only with a symbolic say regarding the its pace rather than its content.

The EU usually asks the countries in other regions to adopt a one-size-fits-all model, especially in its democracy promotion efforts. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is the most important example of such a one-size-fits-all approach that does not take into account particular social, cultural, political and economic characteristics of target societies.³⁸ Despite the recent change in the rhetoric of a 'one-size-fits-all model' after the Arab uprisings—that “[t]he EU does not seek to impose a model or a ready-made recipe for political reform”—the Union still attempts to promote its own notion of “deep democracy” in its revised ENP.³⁹

The EU-as-a-virtuous-example discourse brings about and nurtures the Union's claim that it represents the *best practices*. The EU's self-declared best practices also provide it with the power to set the rules of democratization. This legitimizes its asymmetrical approach towards third countries and regions. The problem with the imposition of the Union's best practices is that while doing so, the EU overlooks the specific characteristics of the target countries/societies and falls short of addressing grassroots needs. This encourages mimicry on the part of the target societies, inevitably reproducing the colonial practice.⁴⁰

37. Roy Ginsberg, *Demystifying the European Union—The Enduring Logic of Regional Integration*, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), p. 2.

38. See: Rafaella A. Del Sarto and Tobias Schumacher, 'From EMP to ENP: What's at Stake with the European Neighbourhood Policy towards the Southern Mediterranean?', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol.10, (2005), p. 17-38.

39. European Commission and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, “A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood—A Review of European Neighbourhood Policy”, COM(2011) 303 final, Brussels, 25 May 2011. For more on the EU's rhetorical change in the revised ENP and its reflections in practice, see: Münevver Cebeci, “Deconstructing the ‘Ideal Power Europe’ Meta-Narrative in the European Neighbourhood Policy”, in *The Revised European Neighbourhood Policy*, eds Tobias Schumacher and Dimitris Bouris, (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, pp. n/a.

40. Cebeci, “European Foreign Policy Research Reconsidered”, p. 572.

The EU as a Specific Type of Actor: The Normative Power Europe Discourse and Its Discontents

Niemann and Bretherton contend that “approaches such as those on civilian and normative power Europe (NPE) are built on the assumption that the EU possesses sufficient actorness.”⁴¹ Manners also argues that one of the meanings of normative power is “as a characterization of a type of actor and its international identity.”⁴² The NPE discourse is based on the EU’s “normative difference”⁴³ which is marked by its post-sovereign/postmodern presence, its virtuous example, and its promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law not only in Europe but also in the world. It is this difference which enables the EU to define what is ‘normal’ for other countries.⁴⁴

Defining what is normal for others is problematic as it refers to a disciplinary and asymmetrical relationship. The “normative power Europe” discourse legitimizes the Union’s imposition of a “silent disciplining power”⁴⁵ on other countries. This does not only reflect the “dominative dimension of European foreign policy”⁴⁶ and how EFP researchers contribute to it, but it also puts the EU in a superior position vis-a-vis those countries that are expected to fulfill EU conditionality if they want to have closer relations with the Union. Those countries are inevitably portrayed as the imperfect/undemocratic others (as those which can improve their situation only with the Union’s help) whereas the EU’s ideal characteristics are produced and reproduced through such discourse and practice.

Another problem with the NPE discourse is about the dichotomy between norms and interests. Claiming that the norms-interests

41. Arne Niemann and Charlotte Bretherton, “EU external policy at the crossroads: The challenge of actorness and effectiveness,” *International Relations*, vol. 27, no. 3 (2013), p. 262.

42. Ian Manners, “The European Union’s Normative Power: Critical Perspectives and Perspectives on the Critical,” in *Normative Power Europe: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*, ed. Richard G. Whitman, (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 231-232.

43. See, for example, Manners, “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?,” and Manners and Whitman, “The ‘Difference Engine.’”

44. Manners, “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?,” p. 253.

45. Ole Waever, “The EU as a security actor—Reflections from a pessimistic constructivist on post-sovereign security orders,” in *International Relations Theory and the Politics of European Integration—Power, Security and Community*, eds. Morten Kelstrup and Michael Williams (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 261.

46. Merlingen, “Everything is dangerous”, 438.

dichotomy is a “false” one, Manners underlines that “the separation of norms and interests, both in terms of policy-making and policy analysis, is impossible.”⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the author of this article still finds such an argument problematic because when interests of an entity (and of its members, as in the case of the EU) override its norms, insisting on naming that entity as a ‘normative power’ pertains to a power-knowledge relationship, where the dominative dimension of European foreign policy goes hand in hand with privileged EFP research scripts.

As a matter of fact, some of conditions that the EU expects the third countries to fulfil are normatively determined by the EU, as Manners argues⁴⁸ (as in the case of the abandonment of the death penalty). But more often, those conditions better serve the interests of the Union and its member states rather than solely being applied for normative purposes. The fact that the EU supported authoritarian regimes of North African countries for years for the sake of stability and security in the region, before the Arab uprisings, is a crucial example in this respect that can hardly be explained through the normative power Europe discourse. On the other hand, such practices on the part of the EU surely raise doubts about its democracy promotion efforts.

The EU’s democracy promotion activities are shaped by the discourse of normative power, especially by the Union’s claim to the universality of the norms that it represents. Nevertheless, the claim to be representing universal norms and values is also problematic as it also reproduces certain knowledge about the EU, legitimizing its acts in global politics. The discourse on the EU as representing universal norms inevitably constructs the Union’s several others as either violating them, or having difficulties in complying with them. Thus, the EU’s actorness in global politics is marked by its normative difference, which gives it the ‘power’ to legitimize its civilizing acts against others.

47. Ian Manners, “Sociology of Knowledge and Production of Normative Power in the European Union’s External Actions”, *Journal of European Integration*, vol. 37, no. 2, (2015), pp. 299-318, 300-301.

48. Manners, “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?”.

The EU as a Global Actor and its Democracy Promotion in the World: Displacing the “Ideal Power Europe” Meta-narrative

There is a general understanding in EFPR that the EU is not a homogenous/monolithic⁴⁹ and full-fledged global actor. Even Bretherton and Vogler who argued for its global actorness in 1999 and the early 2000s have revised their approach and started to consider the Union as “a global actor past its peak”⁵⁰. In their view, “[w]hile the EU will remain an important global actor, its ability to exert influence externally, which was at its peak in the post-Cold War period, has declined since the mid-2000s;” mainly because of “the disastrous impact of” the economic crisis in Europe and “the difficult renegotiation of UK membership.”⁵¹

It should be noted at this point that although many analysts find problems with the EU’s global actorness and its “normative” nature; they tend to focus on the *aspirations* of the EU and regard its future on positive terms. In a sense, the EU’s ‘ideal power’ image is constructed more on the premise that it *aspires* to act in ideal ways, rather than on the basis that it acts in ideal ways. This is important because, in practice, it is usually very hard to distinguish between norms and interests, and the EU fails to act in some cases due to its non-unitary nature and associated problems with coherence.⁵² Diez defines “three epistemological standings in” Manners’ NPE approach: “as an ontological category for classification”—the EU example; “as an explanation of EU foreign policy”—especially EU conditionality; and “as a normative aim and critique of the present.”⁵³ The third epistemological standing of NPE that he refers to also captures the point that this chapter seeks to make with regard to aspirations. Having a normative aim for the future means basing the NPE on a “future to be brought about.”⁵⁴

49. Note the exception of Bretherton and Vogler who take the EU as a singular unit in their analysis. Bretherton and Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor*.

50. Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, “Past Its Peak: The European Union as a Global Actor 10 Years after,” in *The EU as a Foreign and Security Policy Actor*, ed. Finn Laursen (Dordrecht: Republic of Letters Publishing, 2009), 23–44; and Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, “A global actor past its peak?,” *International Relations*, vol. 27, no. 3 (2013), pp. 375–390.

51. Bretherton and Vogler, “A global actor past its peak?,” p. 387.

52. Cebeci, “European Foreign Policy Research Reconsidered,” pp. 576–578.

53. Thomas Diez, “Normative power as hegemony,” *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 48, no. 2 (2013), p. 204.

54. Jean-François Lyotard, “Memorandum on Legitimation,” in *The Political*, ed. David Ingram, (Massachusetts and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2002), p. 234.

Manners also acknowledges this aspirational dimension when he attaches the Union a “normative quality” on the basis of its aspirations; underlining “that the EU *should* act to extend its norms into the international system.”⁵⁵ In his view, the EU can do this via ensuring consistency and coherence in its acts⁵⁶ in order to show “that the EU is not hypocritical in promoting norms which it does itself not comply with,” and, “that the EU is not simply promoting its own norms, but that the normative principles that constitute it and its external actions are part of a more universalizable and holistic strategy for world peace.” Manners concludes: “The creative efforts and *longer term vision* of EU normative power towards the achievement of a more just, cosmopolitical world which empowers people in the actual conditions of their lives should and must be based on more universally accepted values and principles that can be explained to both Europeans and non-European[s] alike.”⁵⁷

Through such logic, the EU’s ‘ideal’ traits are established in any case. Even if it fails to act in “ideal ways” it suffices for the Union to “aspire” to act in ideal ways.⁵⁸ This is exactly the point which produces and reproduces the EU’s actorness in global politics in the form of an “ideal power.” The EU’s identity is constructed positively against all other actors through its unique postmodern/post-sovereign nature, its virtuous example and its normative difference; not only with reference to what it is and what it does but also with reference to what it aspires to.

Neither the EU’s global actorness nor its democracy promotion is without problems. EU practice usually does not match the ‘ideal power Europe’ discourse in many instances. This is also the case in the Union’s democracy promotion activities. Without infringing the poststructuralist nature of this chapter, it would be helpful to have a look at the EU’s practices in this regard, to see how the ‘ideal power Europe discourse’ employed by EFP researchers legitimizes them. This would also testify to Hansen’s poststructuralist claim that foreign policy researchers act as agents that help “the construction of a link between policy and identity that makes the two appear consistent with each other.”⁵⁹ EU practice usually displaces the ‘ideal power Europe’ meta-narrative that is con-

55. Manners, “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?,” p. 252.

56. Ian Manners, “The Normative Ethics of the European Union,” *International Affairs*, vol. 84, no. 1 (2006), p. 76.

57. *Ibid.*, 80. Emphasis added.

58. Cebeci, “European Foreign Policy Research Reconsidered,” p.578.

59. Hansen, *Security as Practice*, p. 25.

veyed by EFP researchers in this regard, shattering the link between the Union's policy and identity.

For example, European foreign policy (especially EU conditionality) is pursued with the logic that the EU's model of democracy, human rights and the rule of law can fit all cases and can be successful in other parts of the world as well. However, this is not always the case in practice. An important problem in this regard is the EU's technocratic approach to democracy promotion.⁶⁰ Such a technocratic approach especially reveals itself in the EU's emphasis on governance aspects of democratization, which falls short of considering the specific political and cultural dynamics of the target societies. Such a technocratic approach inevitably brings about the creation of a "shallow"⁶¹ form of democracy in the target countries. "Shallow democracy" in this sense refers to the minimum requirement of free elections; a parliamentary system based on majority rule; and a few selective political reforms. Referring to the case of Morocco, Kausch contends: "[H]opeful European talk of a regional model of democratisation is misplaced. Political reforms, instead of being steps in a consistent, overarching process towards democracy, have been ad hoc, selective and often superficial."⁶²

Another problem in EU democracy promotion is that the EU, as an international organization, has to work, inevitably and mainly, with the governments of target countries.⁶³ Although this might seem as natural, corresponding mostly with the governments might be counter-productive for democratization because in most cases it is the governments of target countries that tend to limit democracy and fundamental rights and freedoms. This has been the case in North Africa for years, especially before the Arab uprisings. Echagüe refers to this as the EU's

60. See, e.g., Milja Kurki, 'Democracy through technocracy? Reflections on technocratic assumptions in EU democracy promotion discourse', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 5, no. 2 (2011): 211-234; and Piotr Maciej Kaczynski and Piotr Kazmierkiewicz, 'European Neighbourhood Policy: Differentiation and Political Benchmarks', EuroMeSCo Paper 44, September 2005, http://www.euromesco.net/euromesco/media/euromesco_paper_44.pdf (30 September 2013).

61. Vicky Reynaert, 'Preoccupied with the Market: The EU as a Promoter of "Shallow" Democracy in the Mediterranean', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol. 16, no. 5, (2011), pp. 623-637.

62. Kristina Kausch, "Morocco" in *Is the European Union Supporting Democracy in its Neighbourhood?*, Richard Youngs, ed., (Spain: FRIDE, 2008), p. 10 (9-31)

63. For a similar argument, see: Stefanie Kappler, 'Divergent Transformation and Centrifugal Peacebuilding: The EU in Bosnia and Herzegovina', *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 19, no. 5, (2012), p. 616.

“indulgence or, some would say, connivance with a non-democratic regime”⁶⁴ and “its receptiveness to government priorities,”⁶⁵ in the case of Jordan. On the other hand, it should not also be forgotten that EU conditionality also helps the governments of third countries legitimize their acts in domestic politics through the rhetoric of “EU induced reforms” where those acts might be met with harsh criticism and opposition without the EU tag.⁶⁶ This example also shows that the EU’s normative power image conveyed by EFP researchers on the one hand and its practices oriented towards preserving security and stability—even preserving and pursuing its member states’ interests—on the other, do not match.

An important ingredient of democracy promotion, support for civil society is also problematic in the case of the EU. Although the Union has an ambitious agenda for supporting civil society in its enlargement and neighbourhood policies, its practice on the ground suffers from certain discrepancies. The first one is that the EU tends to support professionalized civil society organizations, which seek their own interests (rather than the everyday needs of the locals), and in many cases grassroots actors cannot have their voice heard in the EU circles. In many cases, the EU has also been criticized for not incorporating civil society organizations in its negotiations with the governments of target countries (for example, in accession negotiations in the case of Turkey,⁶⁷ and in negotiations of the Action Plans with ENP Partners, as in the case of Jordan⁶⁸).

The EU also pursues a selective agenda in its conditionality, mainly based on its Member States’ and its own interests. For example, despite grave human rights problems in Morocco and Jordan, these problems have not stopped the EU from “granting advanced status” to these countries in the ENP.⁶⁹ Although “norms and interests cannot so easily be separated and both are infused by each other,”⁷⁰ still this example

64. Ana Echagüe, “Jordan”, in *Is the European Union Supporting Democracy in its Neighbourhood?*, ed Richard Youngs, (Spain: FRIDE, 2008), p. 33. (33-53)

65. *Ibid.*, 44.

66. For a similar argument, see: Kappler, ‘Divergent Transformation’, 616.

67. Atila Eralp, ‘The role of temporality and interaction in the Turkey-EU relationship’, *New Perspectives on Turkey*, vol. 40, no. 1, (2009), p. 162.

68. Echagüe, “Jordan”, 42.

69. Tobias Schumacher, “The EU and the Arab Spring: Between Spectatorship and Actorness”, *Insight Turkey*, vol. 13, no. 3, (2011), pp. (107-119) 113.

alone suffices to show that the EU is not the “normative power” some analysts believe it to be. On the other hand, it is also widely observed that the EU also acts selectively in promoting democratization, prioritizing issues that are more popular among the European public, rather than addressing the needs of the locals. In the case of Turkey, for example, the EU has paid more attention to the Kurdish issue, civil-military relations, and the status of the Greek Orthodox theological/clergy school in Halki/Heybeliada for years, mostly overlooking the general human rights problems in the country until the Gezi Protests.⁷¹

The EU’s promotion of its own model is also problematic in the sense that it does not take into account the specific political, social, economic and cultural characteristics of the target societies and rather imposes its own best practices in a one-size-fits-all fashion. The EU’s discourse and insistence on its own model and best practices automatically put the Union in a dominant and dictating position in its relationship with the others where the EU sets the conditions and the others have to fulfill them. Haine summarizes the EU’s problems with regard to democracy promotion as follows:

The [EU] does not pay sufficient attention or give sufficient support to civil society, civic organizations, opposition parties, or NGOs. Moreover, when there is a democracy agenda, it relies on existing regimes, some robustly authoritarian, to implement liberal reforms, and for those, there are no real incentives to comply with democratic and human rights rules. Overall, the union’s approach privileges order over reforms, stability over democracy, and the status quo over change.⁷²

All in all, it can be claimed that the EU as an actor has a general problem about democracy promotion in other countries and its practices mainly lead to or nurture the creation of a superficial understanding of democracy pursued for instrumentalist reasons (for establishing closer relations with the Union). On the other hand, the EU’s portrayal as an ‘ideal power’ in any case—even when it does not act ideally—surely legitimizes its governmentality, empowering it in the face of the

70. Diez, ‘Normative Power as Hegemony’, p. 201.

71. See several Progress Reports on Turkey by the European Commission for the EU’s priorities in promoting democracy.

72. Jean Yves Haine, “The European crisis of liberal internationalism”, *International Journal*, vol. 64, no. 2 (2009), pp. (453-479) 460.

others. Such construction leaves its others as *the defective*, which have problems that can only be solved through compliance with EU standards and which are “incapable”⁷³ of adopting necessary reforms without “assistance”⁷⁴ from the Europeans. The EU’s asymmetrical approach towards those countries that seek membership in the EU or that would like to have access to European markets is justified through the employment of such an “ideal power Europe” narrative. This also brings about the imposition of the EU’s best practices on others in a fashion that does not take into account the economic, cultural, political and social specificities of the countries concerned. The result is insensitivity towards the everyday needs of the peoples in the geographies that the EU intervenes—economically, politically or militarily.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the construction of the EU as a specific type of actor in global politics inevitably creates a positive European identity against its others, legitimizing the Union’s application of some form of governmentality to various countries and regions. It has analysed thoroughly how the EU’s identity in global politics is constructed in a specific way—as “a positive force”⁷⁵—by European Foreign Policy (EFP) researchers and policy-makers/practitioners. It looked into three major epistemological practices that define the EU as a specific type of actor: the EU as a unique, postmodern/post-sovereign actor discourse, the discourse on the EU as an actor which leads by virtuous example, and the EU as a normative power discourse.

It has shown that a crucial part of the EU’s actorness is based on its unique nature. For those who construct it as such, the Union’s uniqueness reveals itself in its structural and functional traits as its member states have transferred parts of their sovereignty to the Union level and the EU thus enjoys pooled sovereignty. These traits refer mainly to the Union’s supranational characteristics. This is exactly the point that leads to the construction of the EU’s identity as postmodern/post-sovereign, transcending the modern/sovereign state. On the other hand, this study

73. Senem Aydın-Düzgit, *Constructions of European Identity—Debates and Discourses on Turkey and the EU*, (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 67, 96, 145, 152.

74. *Ibid.*, 45, 67, 77–98.

75. Diez, “Constructing the Self and Changing Others.”

has revealed that a different interpretation is also possible: that the EU's construction as such refers to the legitimization of the EU's governmentality in world politics.

This chapter has further put forward that the representation of the EU as a virtuous example for others also legitimizes the EU's imposition of its own model and best practices on others. This surely nurtures the Union's actorness in global politics as it provides relevance to its role and actions. Such a self-claimed role makes the EU apply a one-size-fits-all approach in its relations with other regions that falls short of addressing the specific economic, cultural, social and political needs of the target societies.

The discourse on the EU's normative power has also been scrutinized in detail in this chapter. It has shown how the Union's representation as a normative power has given it the justification to define what is normal for others. It has also argued that the EU's normativity is highly contested due to the norms/interests dichotomy and it is very hard to distinguish whether the EU acts on its own interests or seeks to pursue normative claims in some cases. On the other hand, the quest for being a normative power and representing universal values endows the EU with the legitimacy to impose its own civilizational standards on others—an action which is very much criticized by some (although very few) EFP researchers, because they see it as a neo-colonial attempt.

Lastly, this chapter has attempted to displace 'the ideal power Europe' meta-narrative especially through looking into how its normative aspirations for the future legitimize its governmentality today and how the EU's practice on the ground shatters the 'ideal power Europe' image that is conveyed by EFP researchers to make the Union's identity and policies seem consistent with each other. It has shown, through scrutinizing the EU's democracy promotion activities in the world, that the EU practice does not usually match the NPE identity attached to it. It has also revealed that the EU's democracy promotion efforts do not go beyond the portrayal of the EU as an ideal entity which promotes universal values and norms and of its others (the target societies) as imperfect—as societies which need the EU's help in order to become democratic, etc.

All in all, it can be concluded that the EU's global actorness and its ideal traits are represented as characteristics that can be maintained under any circumstances. Even the Union's own internal problems such

as financial crises (e.g., the Euro crisis) or political crises (e.g., the renegotiation of the UK's membership) cannot seriously damage its ideal image constructed by EFP researchers and policy-makers.⁷⁶ It can only be regarded as “a global actor past its peak,”⁷⁷ but still as an “important”⁷⁸ one—and definitely not as a failing one. This shows how the image of an ‘ideal power’ is maintained (produced and reproduced) even when the EU is experiencing hardships—if not failing. Any future work on the EU's actorness should thus take into account how the EU's identity as an ‘ideal power’ is constructed against its imperfect others and how this legitimizes its role and actions in global politics.

76. Cf. Bretherton and Vogler, “A global actor past its peak?,” p. 387.

77. *Ibid.*

78. *Ibid.*