REPORT ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE WORKSHOP ‘COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON THE SUBSTANCE OF EU DEMOCRACY PROMOTION’
HELD ON 24 JUNE 2011 AT GHENT UNIVERSITY, BELGIUM

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The workshop was opened by Dr Anne Wetzel who thanked the sponsors of the event, UACES, BISA, the Centre for EU Studies of Ghent University and the Department of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Birmingham. She pointed out that the workshop was part of the on-going projects on democracy promotion (DP) of Dr Michelle Pace1 and of Dr Anne Wetzel and Prof. dr. Jan Orbie2. She explained that the aim of the workshop was to explore the substance of DP and to provide comparative perspectives of different democracy promoters.

The first panel, ‘**Conceptual and Theoretical Perspectives**’ started with the presentation of the paper by Dr Jeff Bridoux and Dr Milja Kurki, both from Aberystwyth

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1 For more information about this project, see http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/government-society/eumena/index.aspx

2 For more information about this project see www.eu-ipods.eu
University, entitled ‘Conceptualizing Politico-economic Models of EU and US Democracy Promotion: a Comparative Approach’. The paper analysed the compatibility and mutual supportiveness of the democracy promotion activities of the EU and the US and if there were major discrepancies in their conceptual approaches towards policies in support of democracy. The paper argued that there are important differences in the histories, political and economic pressures and organisational practices in the EU’s and the US’s democracy promotion policies, which lead to different ideological stances, argumentative structures and potentially even rivalries between these two actors. The discussant of this paper was Dr Anne Wetzel. She acknowledged that the paper was on topic and summarised that it questioned the similarities between the EU and US. However, she pointed out that the analysis of the discourses presented in the paper can be deeper, addressing for example issues such as the exact documents that were analysed and the way they were analysed. Other questions that the paper as it currently stands does not address are the existing democracy literature, the actors whose discourses were studied, i.e. did the authors see the EU and US as black boxes? Furthermore, Anne questioned if it is not too simple to see the EU as a ‘fuzzy democracy promoter’ as for example there can be a greater distinction between the various regions in which the EU operates. Another point that has to be clarified is why the authors chose the case studies they did, as it could be better to choose the same examples for both actors. Otherwise it is not really possible to compare between them. Overall, Anne said she thought the paper was very ambitious and therefore it could benefit from greater focus. She suggested that the two authors concentrate on their third argument and examine how the political and economic positions of the EU and the US shape their DP policies. Another area that can be strengthened is to stress more the role of the EU member states and to think about the importance of the Transatlantic dialogue – is it really likely to influence the strategies of the two actors in future?

The Q & A session was started by Dr Maria Omelicheva, from the University of Kansas, USA. She stressed that while the US is a state, the EU is a supranational entity and often its position is shaped by the member state that holds the Presidency. Therefore, she wanted to find out if this has been taken into account in the analysis of the paper and how it has affected the EU’s vision. Jeff replied that the Principal Investigator on the project, Dr Kurki, has conducted interviews at different Directorates General (DGs) of the European Commission. She did not want to talk about member states’ ideas of DP as her main interest
was to find out how DP is conceptualized by various European Commission DGs. Therefore, she did not really look at Presidencies. But she has looked at parties in Germany for example.

Dr Tsveta Petrova from Harvard University, US, said that when she read the paper she was thinking of the literature on empire and studies that look at the EU as a hegemon. She wanted to know if the authors found this literature useful. Jeff replied that he thought US literature on empire is confusing as you cannot talk about liberty and empire. Tsveta clarified that she meant more a hegemon than an empire, to which Jeff wondered how ‘hegemon’ would be defined. He said that the US intervention in the Middle East (ME) was not a good idea and that he hoped that Obama will now manage to get people talking to each other.

Dr Michelle Pace from the University of Birmingham joined the discussion, saying that one can reflect on terms but the core issue is how this reflects on the US’s identity. Therefore, she said she would not completely leave aside the issue of what image the US and the EU are projecting externally by their DP policies. In the ME the EU is trying to carve out an image different from the US. Jeff agreed with that but clarified that he was talking about the 1990s literature. He accepted that the ways in which the EU and the US project their images is totally relevant. In Libya he admitted that two EU member states led the way. Michelle added that this was done under the umbrella of NATO. She said that it is not necessary to be bogged down in the literature. For her it was of interest which the member states with the strongest say were. Of course France wanted to establish itself as the leader.

Prof. dr Adam Fagan from Queen Mary, University of London, added that on the Balkans the EU is increasingly not looking as a democracy promoter as this inhibits its ability to be a power-broker. He also said that he thought the suggestion in the paper that the EU is less ideological is problematic. Another issue was whether these were not different conceptions of the role of the state. Jeff replied that he was not aware of what was going on on the ground in the Balkans. On the second issue, he said that it conditions the way of DP, while the US’ is more bottom-up, the EU has a top-down approach. He added that in the paper they tried to use ideology as a way of distinguishing between these two approaches. They did not take into account the role of the state, which he admitted they probably should have done.

The second paper, entitled ‘Disaggregated and Reshuffled? Rereading the ‘Inside-Outside’ Analogy of European Union Democracy Promotion’ was presented by Jessica Schmidt, a PhD researcher at the University of Westminster, UK. Similar to the first
contribution, this paper aimed to provide a more conceptual approach to the study of DP. Through analysis of the DP discourse trajectory, the paper sought to tease out the shifts that have occurred in the conceptualisation and role of democracy; the logics, dynamics, rationalities discernible as well as the problems and questions they raise. The paper argued that there has been a reconfiguration in the relation of (liberal) democracy and the state and subsequently, between citizens and government that is linked to the emergence and escalation of good governance. Jessica used the Foucauldian concepts of sovereign power and regulatory power in an effort to demonstrate how the conglomerate of good governance, capacity and participation has emerged that signifies the end of representative democracy in the lawful state. Thus, Jessica maintained that the ‘new democracy agenda’ must neither be understood as a hypocritical imperialist, nor traditionally (liberal) democratic project but as a therapeutic normalisation. The discussant for this paper was Dr Pace. She said that Jessica’s Foucauldian approach was a fresh input into the DP literature and that she liked how the notion of ‘good governance’ was unpacked. However, she pointed out that the paper made no reference to the concept of ‘nation’, which Michelle said was an important aspect of citizenry, which is crucial in places like Palestine. Also, she said that Jessica ends up arguing that the EU is a sincere actor, which is a bit strange when using Foucault. So, her questions were how can Jessica apply her conceptual framework to particular examples? Would on-the-ground interviews with EU officials support or question Jessica’s arguments? Another weakness of the paper, given the focus of the workshop, was that it concentrated on the EU and was missing an in-depth comparison with another actor. In light of this, Michelle suggested that Jessica consider whether the EU adopts norms from other actors or whether it was creating norms itself. Furthermore, Dr Pace said that she did not find the case studies very convincing – is it justifiable to switch between that many countries in a region and between regions? This brought up the question of whether Jessica did not pick up the cases that fit her argument best. She suggested that Jessica explore more in-depth the issue of norms and what that implies for the way they are perceived in international organisations (IOs).

Jessica replied to these points in turn. She said that she has not really thought about ‘nation’ as development literature does not really talk about this notion. On sincerity she said she wanted to counter-argue that the EU is hypocritical. This justifies the EU’s DP but implies that the policies can be done better. Regarding interviews, she said she’d prefer to stick to text and literature. With reference to including a comparative element she said that
this would be a demanding task if a Foucauldian approach is applied and therefore she may not have the space and the time to do this. On the issue of the applicability in particular cases she said that her approach is conceptual and that she intends to also look at conflict as something that runs through the individual. On the point of norms Jessica said that she did not think that Foucault understood norms as values but rather as regulatory mechanisms.

The Q&A session was opened by Karen del Biondo, a PhD researcher at Ghent University. She pointed out that in the paper Jessica looks at Commission documents and wanted to find out how she can generalise about the EU on the basis of that. Furthermore, she wondered if it was a new idea that elections are not enough. And although that is what is stated in the documents, the EU keeps supporting elections. Jessica said that she is open to Karen’s suggestions on what she should look at and clarified that she tries to capture paradigmatic shifts, to trace the logic. In the documents she does not see the EU as an imperialist. It is rather asking ‘how do we use our power?’ Taking issue with the last point, Michelle said that EU citizens only give power to the European Parliament. On ‘nation’ Michelle thought that if there are references to ethnicity, conflict, etc. but none on nation that was an interesting finding in itself. On documents and interviews she said from a Foucauldian point of view it would be interesting to observe how the EU works, therefore it is not necessary to interview people. However, it is not feasible to observe the EU alone – rather think about how a power structure (such as the EU) is influenced by other power structures. Jessica replied that the White Paper on Governance talks about a global phenomenon of alienation and disenchantment. It may be possible, therefore, to observe the functions of the EU.

The last paper of the panel, entitled ‘Promoting the Rule of Law in Central Asia: the EU’s Regional Rule of Law Initiative as Part of a Comprehensive Democratization Strategy?’ was presented by Vera Axyonova, a PhD fellow at the Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences. The paper aimed to investigate how the recently launched implementation of the regional Rule of Law Initiative for Central Asia fits the EU conception of DP and to assess the potential contribution of the Initiative to the democratisation of the states in question. The paper concluded that there is a cleavage between the conceptualisation of the rule of law in EU documents and the practical implementation of this concept by the EU. As the practise of the Rule of Law Initiative in Central Asia showed, the end goals of a rule of law system had not been considered at the implementation stage. Instead the focus was on reforming specific features of selected
institutions and procedures. Thus, this initiative can hardly be regarded as part of a comprehensive democratisation strategy in the region.

The discussant for this paper was Dr Fabienne Bossuyt from Ghent University. She praised the paper as very well written. However, she thought that one of the things missing in it was the comparative perspective, for example with regard to what the EU Member States were doing in terms of rule of law? She suggested that it would be also interesting to compare engagement of the Council of Europe (especially the Venice Commission) with that of the EU. Another thing that Fabienne thought was missing was the Central Asian perspective on the rule of law reforms. Further questions included the following: Was there anything done by the EU on improving the investment climate in Central Asia? Or what is the link with good governance promotion by the EU as the EU puts this issue more and more under DP. And finally, what caused the gap between what was happening on the ground and EU documents? On the issue of the comparative aspect Vera answered that she wanted to look at specific elements of the broader initiative. The Rule of Law initiative incorporates already existing programmes, including those of the European Commission and the Member States. The plan was to include examination of these programmes in the new draft of the paper. With regards to the EU Member States, for example Germany had strong economic interests and France had a security-guided approach towards Central Asia. Both states were the driving forces behind the Rule of Law initiative. Therefore, Vera expected that the economic and security related issues would be more present in the reform agenda promoted through the initiative. But she did not really find evidence of this. In all five Central Asian Republics the Rule of Law initiative provides for country-specific agendas. The main focus of the dialogue within the initiative was on criminal justice reform as this was a priority for the Central Asian republics. Further, Vera said that it was not surprising that there was a gap between the documents and practice. Practitioners focus on reforming institutions and procedures as this is easier to implement. The main problem is, however, that before an initiative such as the Rule of Law one is launched, the broader aims of proposed institutional reforms need to be considered.

Mariya Omelicheva was the first to ask a question during the Q&A session. She thought that it was a bit early to conclude that the Rule of Law initiative had not contributed to democracy. She advised Vera to think about and define what constitutes efficiency, i.e. try to find documents and local practices that would show what improving efficiency entails. She also pointed out that Central Asia is one of the most authoritarian areas in the world. So,
having a programme that deals with very sensitive issues is perhaps quite an achievement in itself. Tsveta said that in her opinion Vera’s work emphasises the EU’s focus on institutions. Therefore, she questions whether the EU was really trying to promote democracy in Central Asia because its actions can also be seen as propping authoritarians by only supporting rule of law. This potentially allows the authoritarian regimes to use the mantle of law. Dr Giselle Bosse from Maastricht University asked what was actually happening on the ground and Mariya asked how has the Rule of Law initiative been evaluated so far?

To these questions Vera responded that EU officials thought it was too early to evaluate the initiative in terms of impact as its implementation started only in 2008. What has been done so far is dialogue, which is a long-term process. To the first question she replied that at grass-root level certain DP issues can be tackled but this is an argument that is difficult to use in the paper as its focus is different. With regard to the question concerning the perspective of the Central Asian states she said that she deliberately excluded it from the paper and only focused on what and how the EU is acting. A starting assumption she had in the paper was that the EU sees the rule of law as part of DP because at least at a rhetorical level the EU aims at DP. To answer Giselle’s question, Vera said that a major component initially was twinning programmes that promoted people’s involvement on the ground. However, when she spoke to EU Commission officials they said that for the moment twinning programmes could not be launched for financial reasons. Seminars that included Central Asian lawyers and judges were more successful.

The second panel of the workshop was entitled ‘Comparing the Substance of EU and International Democracy Promotion (in the post-Soviet space)’. It was chaired by Michelle. The first presenter on this panel was Dr Giselle Bosse whose paper was entitled ‘The Clash of Good Intentions? Comparing the Substance of European and International Democracy Promotion Activities in Belarus’. This paper examined closely European DP efforts in Belarus by focusing on how the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE) and the EU have been promoting democracy in Belarus. Furthermore, the paper raised the questions to what extent their strategies reflect different understandings of the substance of DP and of the conditions under which democracy can and should be promoted. The overall finding of the paper is that the three European organisations have pursued DP in Belarus in rather different ways in terms of financial resources available or the particular approach adopted. Furthermore, the OSCE has been the most consistent institution in terms of adhering to its DP strategy.
Tsveta was the discussant for this paper. She said she liked the idea of comparing European regional regimes that are important for the European setting. She wondered if the theoretical framework could be simplified as not all the components of the current framework were explored in-depth in the paper. She questioned one of the arguments of Giselle’s paper, namely that Lukashenko exploited the lack of coordination between European institutions. In that respect, Tsveta suggested that Giselle think about more evidence of how the regimes overlap. One possible way to gather this information was to interview European politicians on their reflections on the strategies they had used. Also, Giselle said that European actors’ strategies were half-hearted. However, EU officials say that the Union has tried everything in its relations with Belarus. Therefore, is the relationship not described better as evolution? Is the EU not trying to find what works best? Europeans do not know what is the best way to deal with such a difficult environment. Hence, the big question for Tsveta was how to think about the evolution of DP strategy. Also, Tsveta pointed out that the organisations that Giselle had chosen have different but overlapping membership. This poses the question to what extent the different DP strategies are a result of different memberships. Empirically, it seemed that some of the OSCE dates were scrambled. The paper does not discuss the very important period of the early 1990s.

The Q&A session was opened by Mariya who pointed out that when we think of DP we don’t usually think of the World Bank or other financial institutions. Therefore, she wanted to know if it is possible for these institutions to be added to the paper. Other questions she posed were how Belarus is different from Kazakhstan? What did the Europeans do wrong in Belarus? Has the substance of DP in these two countries been different?

Giselle answered that the issues of simplicity, rationales and interviews were a matter of time. In response to Tsveta on the arguments of the paper, Giselle disagreed that the EU stigmatised Belarus. But the EU has always been very keen to cooperate on border controls. The approach of the new EU member states has been that they know everything, which has made learning very difficult. On the issue of European relations with Belarus, there is a lot of inertia. Furthermore, countries are keen to have relations with Russia. Tsveta replied that there are key points when learning can occur, for example, the role of the opposition. Giselle responded that the EU started to open more to Belarusian civil society. She thought that the WTO, the World Bank are very interesting and she has some research on the WTO. Their approach is quite different. The comparative perspective is always very interesting. Dr Clara Portela from the Singapore Management University and the University of Leuven, said in the
period between 2008 and the 2010 elections there has been an easing of sanctions in the EU-
Belarus relations as a result of the release of political prisoners. The EU, and especially the
Commission, has used this period to put on the agenda issues and to start dialogues they
consider important. Therefore, she was interested if the EU had used opportunities for DP.
Also, had the sectoral dialogues been influenced by the re-imposition of sanctions? Giselle
referred to an interview with an EU official who said that at the end of the day they get down
to business. The EU wants to start with technical cooperation that can lead to democratisation
of the elites. So, some are idealists, while others push for de-politicisation. On the question of
sectoral dialogue, projects and money are on-going. Michelle took issue with the
conversation asking whether there was not a conflation between democratisation and
Europeanisation.

The second paper of the panel, ‘The ‘What’ of Democracy Promotion in the post-
Soviet Space: a Comparative Analysis of the EU, the CoE and the OSCE’, was presented
by Dr Ecaterina McDonagh from Dublin City University. The paper had parallels with
Giselle’s paper as it posed the question of whether international organisations are effective
when they adopt DP policies. Thus, the paper discussed the evolution of DP norms of the
CoE, the EU and the OSCE in Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus and the extent of cooperation
between the three organisations in the policy areas of media freedoms and national
minorities’ rights. One of the main findings of the paper was that overall it was not entirely
clear what types of democracy the three European organisations were trying to promote. In
concurrence with some of the findings in Giselle’s paper, Ecaterina’s study also showed
differences in the substance of democracy promotion between the EU, OSCE and the CoE.
Another interesting finding of the paper was that the CoE and the OSCE tend to be the ones
that frame the democracy and human rights discourse, while the EU usually borrows their
framework and therefore is a norm-taker. Other findings were that the three organisations did
not seem to learn much from each other or from their own experience and that very little
priority is attached to consistent promotion of core liberal values.

Dr Oscar Pardo Sierra from the University of Birmingham was the discussant for the
paper. He started his comments by acknowledging that the paper has a lot of potential and
that the introduction was good. But he had a few suggestions on possible ways of improving
it. Firstly, he said that he thought that the literature review was detached from the analysis
and therefore was not that related to the paper. Secondly, he thought that the paper was very
ambitious and therefore thought it maybe better to focus it more exclusively on what the three
organisations are promoting. Thirdly, when Ecaterina conceptualises DP she does not make it clear where her conceptualisation comes from, which theories, which literature. It seemed to him that concepts and theory were detached from the paper. Therefore, again he suggested more focus on unpacking the substance of DP of the three organisations. Furthermore, as they influence each other it would be interesting to see what is common between them and why. Hence, he advised to disentangle bilateral promotion of norms between states. To link the empirical cases better to the conceptual framework, Oscar suggested instead of looking at the countries to focus on the issues that are being promoted (i.e. freedom of media, etc.). He finished by pointing out that after the Presidential elections in Belarus when the Council was discussing what to do, the Swedish pushed for engagement.

In the Q&A session, Vanessa Boas from CEPS, Brussels, wondered what it means exactly that the EU is a ‘norm-borrower’ rather than diffuser or creator. In relation to Oscar’s comments, Vera agreed that the conceptual and the empirical parts are detached. Olga Burlyuk, from the University of Kent in Brussels, pointed out that the assumption for democracy promoters seems to be that they are free to choose what they promote, which as Tsveta had said earlier with regards to IOs is not really the case. IOs have mandates that restrain them. Therefore, the question is not only what the promoter chooses but what they can actually do. Michelle agreed that this is a very good point.

Ecaterina started her responses by acknowledging that the paper is definitely a draft. On the issue of the paper’s focus, she emphasised that one of the dimensions she had concentrated on was civil and political rights. She tried to look at a number of laws on them. On the questions of EU being a norm-borrower she said that in comparison to the other two organisations examined in the paper, the EU emerges as the entity that is focused on implementing existing standards. It tends to refer to the norms created by the other two organisations. Thus, overall, it seems that these two organisations seem to frame DP norms and the EU seems to implement. On Vera’s point she said that as far as she knows, TACIS is now redundant and is replaced by the ENPI.

The last paper in the panel, entitled ‘Drivers and Brakemen – Multipolar External Influences in Building Up Democratic Institutions in post-Orange Ukraine’ was co-authored by Dr Rainer Schweickert from the Kiel Institute for the World Economy and Inna Melnykovska from the Christian Albrecht University in Kiel. It was presented by Inna. Starting from the premise that in the post-Soviet space external democracy promoters are
challenged by the so-called democracy brakemen, the paper analysed the multipolar external influences in a key ‘buffer’ state between the West and the East, Ukraine. The main research question is whether Russia’s policies towards Ukraine counter-balance the EU DP activities and eventually promote autocracy. The major finding of the paper is that Russia has a negative impact on democratic development in post-Communist countries. In Ukraine, Russia’s policies counter-balance EU’s democracy-promoting activities and eventually promote autocracy.

The discussant, Dr Barbara Lehmbruch from the International Institute of Social Studies, the Hague, said that this is an interesting paper that aimed to look at the target of Russian foreign policy. However, she thought that the paper did not distinguish well the actor it looked at, who does what. This comes out only in the empirical part of the paper (the issue of energy). Furthermore, Barbara said she liked the idea of the autocracy concept. However, in the paper there was a blur between developmental programmes and conventional foreign policy. On the empirical part of the paper, Barbara said she found problematic the causality used in the quantitative analysis. It was unclear what exactly the study measures as to her mind stability was a pre-condition for inclusion. The example of Russian minorities was also problematic as Barbara thought it is applicable more to countries that are ethnically divided. She wondered if it was possible to test this hypothesis by taking case studies with small Russian minorities. Therefore, she urged the authors to think more about their own political pre-conceptions because in the paper they come across as blaming Russia for the state of democracy in Ukraine. Another weakness of the paper she thought was the fact that all the examples were pro-democracy, which in practice was a bit more difficult. On the issue of energy she was also not convinced how good an example that was because there were examples of Russia increasing energy prices for Belarus even though there is an ideological convergence between the two counties. Inna acknowledged that they did not open the black boxes, which Barbara pointed out was problematic because reflection was necessary in the choice of examples.

On the identity issue Inna replied that they could not find substance to the EU employing the identity issue, there was, therefore, unused potential for the EU. On the question of Russian minorities – this opens the door for Russia to interfere in the internal affairs of its neighbouring countries. On energy she said that one could see the energy disputes while the ‘Orange’ were in power in Ukraine. Thus, sometimes the normative
agenda was more important than the strategic one. Inna clarified that the normative agenda is for example when you destabilise and interfere in Ukrainian internal affairs.

In the Q&A session, Giselle said she was surprised to find that the category ‘autocracy promotion’ was still there. She said that she would contest that the EU promotes democracy. Therefore, she was interested why the paper used these categories. Tsveta said that the EU promotes a version of liberal democracy but wondered what kind of model Russia promotes. Barbara agreed that she had the same question – is there a model behind Russia’s policy? Mariya pointed out that binary models are oversimplifying and therefore are problematic. There are road-blocs to DP but they are not necessarily in opposition to DP per se. Analytically there are important distinctions that have to be made. Inna responded that in the DP literature there are a lot of geopolitical interests and power politics that overlap with DP strategies. The authors of the paper agree that there may be geopolitical agendas but they coincide with the DP one, it is difficult to distinguish what is what.

The third panel of the workshop was entitled ‘Comparing the Substance of EU and US Democracy Promotion’. The first paper, ‘Aiding Democracy while Respecting Ownership: Comparing the Substance of EU and US Democracy Assistance in Ethiopia’ was presented by Karen del Biondo, a PhD researcher at Ghent University. The premise of the paper was that the domestic context is usually underestimated. Building on this, the paper compared the substance of EU and US democracy promotion in Ethiopia. Karen’s main argument was that ownership is a crucial factor in understanding the differences of the two actors’ democracy assistance in Ethiopia. As this case study shows, the EU has been less reluctant than the US to respect national ownership in democracy and governance support. Thus, the EU prefers to engage in technical capacity-building programmes in the hope that this will enable it to have some leverage from within the establishment. However, the study also showed that both the EU and the US encounter similar difficulties in their democracy promotion efforts in Africa.

The discussant of the paper was Dr Rinda Bosker from the International Institute of Social Studies, the Hague. She had experience in DP work in Ethiopia and thought that the paper and the topic were very interesting. Rinda suggested to Karen to look at other issues besides ownership. For example, she wondered what the value of ownership was if there is not a legitimate government or if there is not economic credit available. Some Westerns donors may want to give Ethiopia the benefit of the doubt of it being a developmental state.
Furthermore, if one accepts the concept of ownership, this poses the question of whom. Yes, there may be ownership of the government of the political developments (including democratisation) to a certain extent but why not the civil society? She said that in EU rhetoric ownership is important but there may be other reasons for working so closely with Ethiopia. To Rinda’s mind, an important question was if the approach to ownership was the only difference between the EU’s and US’s DP? For example, in distinction to the US, the EU does not have clear criteria in its DP documents. Rinda found the paper’s conclusion that in distinction to the US, the EU respects ownership a bit thin. For example, she suggested that Karen explore more the difference in EU support for political DP with respect to the role played by EU member states. Another question of interest is what role the US Congress plays in comparison to the European Parliament? Lastly, is working with civil society really a bottom-up approach, given what Karen says about the situation in Ethiopia?

Karen agreed with the comment on the concept of ownership but also said that for her this is more of an ideological discussion. During her interviews she found that people on the ground thought that having engagement is the better option. Furthermore, conditionality does not always work. Ownership’s importance came from the need to respect the principles across all the programmes. Therefore, Karen thought that the concept had value. The question for whom was also a relevant one. If one works with civil society the issue is how you engage with them. For example, donors say that although civil society has a value if you want to be serious, you have to align with the government. Thus, one has to be consistent – either respect the strong state when such exists or there is a danger that the actor will lose legitimacy. In fact in her case, the aspect of ownership in Ethiopia came out of field work. Yes, of course the EU wants to keep the relationship with Ethiopia because of its strategic importance. If that were not the case, they would get less financing. On the question of other countries, the EU tries to engage as much as possible with the government. Milja and Jeff’s paper presented earlier today was arguing that the EU had a fuzzy strategy, in light of which Karen thought that policies are not so much Brussels-driven. On the US, Karen agreed with Rinda but said that she thought the US respected ownership in the past.

The Q&A session started with a statement by representatives of the Ethiopian government. They thanked the organisers for the chance to participate in the workshop. They asked Karen to explain what she meant by characterising the Ethiopian people as proud. They pointed out that they have identified poverty as Ethiopia’s real enemy and that in the last 8 years the country has registered 11 per cent growth. Their government’s policy has three
inter-related pillars – development, peace, democracy. The EU and US assistance does not have to be taken as a grant. Every country has its national interests and for Ethiopia democracy is a matter of survival. However, it is a process and democracy in Ethiopia is only 15 years old. Ethiopians choose their representatives in the House of Representatives. Ethiopia has its problems with democracy but it is on the right track. The representative took issue with the comment about the private sector and said that in the last few years thousands of small and medium sized enterprises have been established with the government’s support. However, there are a lot of interests from abroad. Ethiopia is a rule of law country. On the point of the anti-terror laws the representative said that Ethiopia took the best practice and the experience of the US as an example. In fact, it has directly copied America’s law. On the issue of the 2010 elections he clarified that the government agreed with the Report but not with the political judgement.

The second paper on this panel, ‘Western and Central Asian Perspectives on Democracy and Democratization: Comparing the Models of Democracy Promoted by the EU, US, and Kazakhstan’ was presented by Dr Mariya Omelicheva. The central question that the paper aims to tackle is how Central Asians perceive the messages issued by the West and how the effectiveness of DP in Central Asia can be increased. In addressing these issues, the paper looks at the normative suasion literature, where communication is key. The argument put forward by the study is that the efficacy of DP programmes depends not only on the amount of financial resources made available but also on the ability of the democracy promoters to frame their appeals in such a way that they resonate with the target nations. Thus, success of democracy promotion depends on the framing of the socialisation message itself.

Vanessa Boas, the discussant of the paper, praised the clarity of the theory part of it. At the same time she thought that it was too simplistic. Furthermore, she pointed out that the Central Asian discursive frame examined in the paper was the elite frame. In her opinion the people in the region were apathetic. Therefore, what is said does not necessarily represent what people think. For its part, the EU is divided on how to deal with many of these cases. Therefore, she asked Mariya if she would suggest suspending the dialogue? Another question was whether some kind of objective criteria was needed in order to enable some kind of measuring and decision on particular programmes on which to focus.
Mariya responded that there are no public opinion polls in these countries, therefore, we simply do not know what the public thinks. Thus, Western political science approaches are not applicable in the Central Asian region. The public, Mariya thought, was either ignorant or in agreement with the government. On the issue of the human rights dialogue and how to measure accomplishments she said in her opinion the solution has to be country-specific. On the question of how is best to deal with the countries in the region, Mariya said that in Turkmenistan it is best to keep the exchanges on democratization going; Kazakhstan and Kirgizstan were different as one of them was more dependent on foreign assistance. She gave an example with the Red Cross that has developed programmes that use language, which resonates with the local population (culture). Such programmes are more successful and illustrate the argument of her paper. Mariya concluded by saying that in authoritarian contexts the focus should not be only on human rights, civil or political questions. Initially the focus should be elsewhere.

Adam was the first to pose a question during the Q&A session. He took issue with incentive-based strategies being ineffective. He thought this was too dismissive because in the Central and East European countries, Western Balkans and Turkey there are many examples that at times these are effective and manage to establish institutions that are stable and persist even after the incentive goes away. Furthermore, there is literature that has looked into the conditions that contribute to that end. Vera asked a question on the methodology of the paper. She was interested to find out how the frames were built. She said she was fascinated by the paper but was surprised that Mariya compared Western and local frames with narratives. Therefore, she wondered if language was a problem. Fabienne took issue with the argument on the views of the population in Central Asia as there are huge differences between the five countries in the region. For example, Kyrgyzstan is a major exception in having free media. This posed the question whether this made a difference on the way Kyrgyz people thought about democracy. Kazakhstan is more comparable to Russia, while in Uzbekistan people are not ignorant but afraid of speaking against the regime. In Turkmenistan people are most ignorant as they were most isolated. Fabienne thought that in Central Asia the elite pays lip service to Western democracy as they are trying to show that they have democracy in their countries. Jessica was the next to take the floor. She said that using a concept from advertising in politics is problematic, as the former is not dialogical. Furthermore, she wanted a clarification on whether the argument of the paper was only that
the West has to re-frame its message. Even so, another pertinent issue is whether this can be done easily.

In response, Mariya said she agrees with Adam that incentive-based interventions can work. However, they cannot work in authoritarian regimes. Such interventions take time. In response to Vera, Mariya said that she tries to use multiple methodologies, i.e. identify how framing has been used in the past, focus groups, surveys, etc. To Fabienne Mariya replied that we really do not know if the population is informed. Studies conducted in the 1990s found that people prefer stability. In Central Asia there are no media restrictions. But for the population to be able to benefit most of the possibilities available it has to be well educated. With regard to the elite, it is possible that they really believe they have democracy. She said she thinks that the government does not only pay lip service. This highlights that it is crucial to have a frame of reference. In response to Jessica’s questions, Mariya said that she is not only concerned with the message but also with subsequent changes in practice.

The last paper in this panel was ‘EU and US Democracy Promotion in Georgia and Azerbaijan: Euro-Atlantic Dilemma in the Caucasian Triangle’, presented by Dr Oscar Pardo Sierra from the University of Birmingham. The paper provided a preliminary overview of the substance of the EU and the US DP in the Caucasus and posed the question how the EU can have legitimacy to suggest an agenda for reforms. The paper argued that the perception that internally the EU and US have a unitary approach to DP is a myth. Furthermore, there are conceptual differences as well as differences in tools in the way the EU and the US promote democracy. At the same time, the paper identified several important similarities between the EU and US DP in this region: both actors’ promotion of democratic values is inconsistent and unprincipled; there are problems with the assistance provided to state institutions and civil society.

Mariya was the discussant for this paper and she suggested that Oscar refer to Milja’s and Jeff’s and to Giselle’s papers in order to conceptualise better the DP policies of the EU and US. This would provide him with a typology of DP efforts. She suggested further that Oscar think about different classification schemes. She agreed with the conclusions of the paper but thought that the US and Georgian case study was developed better. Georgia and Azerbaijan to her mind are illustrative cases of pragmatic DP – the US became involved in Georgia in 2003 when it was a failing state that was becoming a base for extremists and so
on. Thus, the reasons for DP there are non-normative. As a result of US assistance Georgia became more centralised.

The Q&A session was opened by Hrant Kostanyan from CEPS Brussels and Ghent University, who pointed out that divergences between Commission DGs were also a problem. This has become especially true now with transferring DG RELEX outside of the Commission. As a result it has become very unclear who should take care of what exactly. Currently in Georgia there is a conflict between DG Trade and European External Actions Service (EEAS). One issue he thought is not emphasised enough on Azerbaijan but has to be taken into consideration is security. He wanted to know why the paper compared exactly these two counties. Mariya said that external developments have affected EU-Georgia relations with respect to the possible EU and NATO candidate status of Georgia and she wanted to find out more details of their effects.

Oscar replied that the DG Trade-RELEX relations were a mess. This was given as the reason why in the last two years it was in fact DG Energy that had taken over the relationship with Azerbaijan. On security, the EU cannot offer anything. On NATO and US flights – most of them go through Russia although Georgia had expressed its willingness to become a base. On the question of the case-selection Oscar replied that he is interested in the region, which consists of countries that are partners to the EU in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Rhetorically Georgia is the most pro-Western country in that part of the world, while Azerbaijan is more closed. With reference to the effects of external shocks, Oscar refrained from answering and said that the focus of the paper is on the substance of DP. On the issue of EU membership he said that it was always clear that it is not on the table. One of the conditions for membership in NATO is independent judiciary and this membership has been considered twice.

The last panel of the workshop was on ‘Other Perspectives on the Substance of EU Democracy Promotion’. The first paper, entitled ‘A New Generation of Democracy Promoters? Eastern Europe Supports the Democratization in the Neighbourhood’ was presented by Dr Tsveta Petrova from Columbia University. This paper engaged with two main questions: how are the Eastern EU countries supporting democracy abroad and are the strategies they use different from those employed by established Western democracies? To answer these questions, the paper examined the policies of DP of Poland and Slovakia in Belarus and Ukraine. The main findings of the study were that similarly to the US (and in
contrast to Western EU) donors, Eastern EU members have a political approach to DP. They focus on strengthening pro-democratic forces abroad, rather than on supporting recipients’ national development. Unlike the US, however, Eastern EU member states prefer to rely on minimally to moderately intrusive policy instruments, such as diplomacy, assistance and positive conditionality. Eastern EU member states also strategically export national ‘best practices’ from their own recent transitions to democracy. In contrast to the Western one-size-fits-all and institution-centric approaches, Eastern donors’ approaches to DP vary according to the regime type of the recipient states and pay more attention to the process of democratisation. Therefore, according to Tsveta, Eastern EU states represent a new generation of democracy promoters that seek to avoid some of the mistakes made by the Western donors.

Ecaterina was the discussant for the paper. She started by saying that the area the paper deals with is an interesting and under-researched one. She said she liked Tsveta’s methods and thought the case-study selection as well as the primary data were good. One of the paper’s findings is that national experiences and strategic interests shape the countries’ DP. In that respect Ecaterina wondered if a bottom-up approach was really a strategic choice rather than the cheaper, non-committal option, which furthermore is difficult to criticise. Furthermore, she found the time-frame of the study puzzling. Instead of starting in the early 1990s she suggested focusing only on the last 10 years because prior to that the democracy promoters examined in the paper had their own problems (as they still do). Ecaterina also found problematic the categorical claim that Poland and Slovakia had their own national DP. The author herself retracts from this later on in the paper. Another claim Ecaterina disagreed with was that the Central and East European countries (CEECs) are norm-makers as she would expect that the substance of their DP is the same but they promote what has worked. Another interesting question raised towards the end of the paper is whether CEECs are qualified enough to promote democracy. Ecaterina said she did not find a lot of connection between the theoretical and the empirical parts of the paper. She urged Tsveta to make more explicit the logic Poland and Slovakia follow in their DP policies and to clarify why she thinks these are the most active states in this field.

In the Q&A session, Jessica asked Tsveta to specify what else a country should promote as the finding that it promotes a mirror of itself is not very surprising. Another question is whether DP is a legitimate mechanism. Adam referred to the anecdote with which Tsveta ended her presentation and asked if it reflected the fact that Poland was a new
democracy. Further he wondered if Poland’s attitude would be different in ten years. He pointed out that Turkey is becoming very significant in providing an example of how to do things. Giselle asked to what extent strategic interests play a role and Mariya enquired about the role the fear of Russia plays in DP in this region.

Tsveta responded that civil society is not less costly. Furthermore, Slovakia still puts a lot of attention on the state. She defended her choice of the time-frame saying that in the early 1990s Poland was already supporting democratisation in Ukraine. This tells us something about DP. However, CEECs do not support political parties as they do not have expertise. She admitted that she will benefit from reflecting more on the reference to ‘national’ DP but nevertheless she thought that there was indeed something distinctively national in these policies. For example, CEECs are not exporting institutions and values but experience. She did not respond to the question about internalisation as she did not understand it. With regard to Jessica’s question Tsveta said that she finds it surprising as the new EU member states are very young democracies themselves. She said that DP as democratisation legislation was not a question of approach for her. For these countries, DP becomes part of their foreign policy. On the issue of motivations she clarified that she wanted to test if that plays a role. Furthermore, one would expect differences on how DP plays out. Poland preferred to engage. To Adam’s question Tsveta replied that her expectation is that in ten years there will be a shift to another logic, a move to the Western script.

The second paper on the panel, entitled ‘EU Assistance for Civil Society in Kosovo: a Step too Far for Democracy Promotion?’ was presented by Dr Adam Fagan. The aim of this paper was to offer a first tentative analysis of the effectiveness of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and the Instrument of Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) to Kosovo in building local development capacities and generating domestic alliances within civil societies and the state supportive of change. The main argument of the paper is that the EU’s strategy is ambitious, trying to simultaneously achieve two aims – stimulate participation and widen the representation of interests as well as to build the transnational capacities of recipients, thus enabling them to play a role in the development and implementation of policies as non-state actors. However, this strategy is also failing to target resources most effectively vis-à-vis the other overarching goal of developing good governance. The discussant of the paper was Giselle. She praised the detailed empirical work of the paper and pointed out that Adam was positive about EU assistance. However, she said that the conclusions of the paper left her unsure as to their meanings with regard to his
hypothesis. Has the EU increased transactional capacity? Another problem she had was that
the paper used a lot of different concepts, which was a bit confusing. Furthermore, Giselle
was interested to find out what Adam thought were the implications for normative power and
what role should non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play in good governance? Lastly,
she enquired about the ultimate goal – is it Europeanisation or democratisation and said that
Adam does not justify his claim about the best way for funding civil society. Adam replied
that civil society should play a role. Furthermore, he said it is important to shift away from
evaluating DP only on the basis of its role in communities. In his view, the EU strategy is twin-tracked. But he was not sure if this was the best strategy in the context of Kosovo. On the
question of transactional capacity he said that it is necessary to move towards building on the
engagement achieved.

The Q&A session was opened by Hrant Kostanyan who agreed that Adam needs to
update some of the information available. He asked for clarification on whether Adam
claimed that the EU is promoting democracy through civil society organisations because that
can be a problematic issue as a very small part of the EU funding in Kosovo goes to civil society. Furthermore, most NGOs find it very difficult to get EU funding. Only NGOs in Pristina have succeeded in this. Another question the participant raised was about Adam’s
perception on the role of other international donors who have contributed more than the EU.
Adam replied that since 1998 USAID has decreased, while the EU’s responsibility has
increased. Thus, he was aiming to emphasise the big change that was occurring. Furthermore,
EU uses the term ‘assistance’, not ‘promotion’ in Kosovo. All EU initiatives have to involve
civil society and in fact a lot of the aid involves NGOs. However, only very few NGOs get
grants. In his view, in the CEECs the EU went wrong in setting the bar very high and he was
afraid that the same would happen in Kosovo as well.

The last paper of the day, ‘Herding Cats? EU Democracy Promotion and
Coordination with Non-State Donors in Jordan and Georgia’ was presented by Dr
Barbara Lehmbruch and Dr Rinda Bosker. This paper started from the observation that the
current criticisms to Western DP leave unclear the issue whether the underlying concept of
democracy is deficient in itself or the perceived shortcomings are at least partially rooted in
aid delivery methods. The latter would suggest that modifications and improvements in the
aid delivery modes should affect the substance of what is being imparted in aid practice.
Pursuing this route, the paper argues that an important constraint to EU DP is the fact that
assistance delivery is tied largely to working with host government counterparts and
therefore, works predominantly in a top-down fashion. Thus, the paper suggests that there are certain areas and underlying conditions in which non-state actors can take a role of increasing importance, which in the final analysis will be beneficial for the EU DP efforts abroad.

The discussant for this paper was Karen. She started by saying that she found the idea of the paper, application of aid effectiveness to DP, interesting as well as its focus as it clearly shows the difference of political vs developmental approachees. The EU is considering developing a more political approach. However, she pointed out that it should be made clearer what the research question is about – effectiveness, subsidiarity, or complementarity. Furthermore, Karen thought that it would be beneficial if the authors focus more on political foundations. For example, they can compare the approaches of the EU and the US on political foundations. She said she was not sure if the EU tries to consciously follow subsidiarity. If that was the path the authors wanted to follow, Karen advised them to explain why this is interesting. Thus, overall, Karen encouraged greater engagement with the scholarly literature on which Barbara and Rinda can ground their study. Lastly, Karen enquired whether the reasons for EU democracy support affect the substance of the policy.

Barbara said that she had already responded to the comment on effectiveness and that the attempt was for subsidiarity to be utilised as a way for putting pressure. She clarified that they argued that there is a difference between the normative concepts used and what can be done in practice. Further, they were suggesting that non-state actors have freedom, and therefore, more space. Their aim was not to make systematic comparisons between EU and US foundations but said that European non-state actors are more successful as through the greater numbers of actors involved they acquired more critical mass. On the issue of Jordan and the EU’s interest in dealing with it, it was pointed out that the Jordanian government is trying to find a balance in order to satisfy its population. The EU has a high interest in peace and stability in Jordan. Therefore, in this country, it is likely to prioritise stability over DP. For example, in 2010 a bill was passed that gave the ruling regime greater control over civil society but the EU did not react. Also, Jordan has a status of an advanced partner under the ENP. EU officials, however, tell Jordanian officials in private that they should do more on the human rights front.

In the Q&A session, Michelle went back to the point on normalisation, raised earlier by Jessica and wondered if the EU’s policy in Jordan is affected by the effort to preserve the peace treaty with Israel. As there are many Palestinian refugees in Jordan, preservation of the
peace treaty with Israel could be a way of normalising the status-quo. Rinda replied that this goes back to the issue of stability being the greater interest for the EU than DP. Barbara added that the same applies to Georgia as well.

The workshop was concluded by the organisers who thanked the participants for their contributions and for a fruitful discussion that flagged out many different perspectives. As a result of these discussions as well as the papers presented, two common themes emerged. The first one was the issue of norm-takers and norm-makers and the second one – the tension and complementarity between DP and development. Thus, it was concluded that more work needed to be done in order to clarify this link. The day showed that a lot of the focus in DP has been on the EU and the US and less attention has been paid to the UN or NGOs. Another important issue was the role of public opinion, especially in cases where this is difficult to gauge. This posed the question what data is available in terms of income gaps, access to social services and so on. Therefore, while in the theoretical literature there exists a good coherent framework on the role of public opinion, it is interesting to investigate how empirical case studies relate to the theoretical expectations. Lastly it was emphasised that it is crucial to be sensitive to what the recipients of the policies in question perceive. The aim of the organisers is to publish some of the papers in a special issue. A target journal and a more precise timetable will be sent out to the participants.