Why the European Union Promotes Democracy through Membership Conditionality

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Abstract

Explanations of why the European Union promotes democracy through membership conditionality provide different accounts of its normative rationale. Constructivists argue that the EU's membership policy reflects a norm-driven commitment to democracy as fundamental to political legitimacy. Alternatively, rationalists argue that membership conditionality is a way for member states to advance their economic and security interests in the near abroad. The existing research, however, has only a weak empirical basis. A systematic consideration of evidence leads to a novel understanding of EU membership conditionality. The main empirical finding is that whereas the constructivist argument holds true when *de facto* membership criteria were first established in the 1960s, the rationalist argument more closely aligns with the evidence at the end of the Cold War when accession requirements were formally codified as part of the Copenhagen Criteria (1993).

Introduction

On October 12, 2012 in the Norwegian capital of Oslo, Thorbjørn Jagland declared, 'The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided that the Nobel Peace Prize for 2012 is to be awarded to the European Union. The Union and its forerunners have for over six decades contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe' (Jagland 2012). In awarding the EU the Nobel Peace Prize, the former prime minister voiced a common view of the organization as well as its predecessors, namely that it has been a major force for the advancement of democracy throughout Europe.

Membership conditionality – that is, the explicit linking of a country's membership status to domestic democratic reforms – is frequently cited as the EU's most potent instrument in the promotion of democracy in non-member states. The effectiveness of EU membership conditionality can be overstated (Pravda 2001; 10; Pridham 2005: 1; Grabbe 2006: 207-208), but researchers have repeatedly concluded that it played a significant role in the democratization of central and eastern Europe (Pravda 2003; Pridham *et al.* 1994: 1; Schimmelfennig *et al.* 2006; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004). Indeed, it is frequently asserted that no other international organization can match the EU's democratizing influence. The economic and political benefits of membership are thought to give the EU unparalleled leverage over countries hoping to join (Dimitrova and Pridham; Pridham 2005, 28; Pravda 2001: 12; Smith 2003).

But why does the EU promote democracy through membership conditionality? In order for the EU to deliberately promote democracy abroad, EU policymakers had to hold three beliefs.[1] First, they had to believe that the EU should promote democracy. Democracy promotion

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[1] Actively or purposefully promoting democracy is not the only way the EU might be said to "support democracy." It may also do so through activities that inadvertently do so. The focus here is only on deliberate efforts.

had to be seen as a normatively desirable goal of Community activity. Second, they had to

believe that the EU could promote democracy. That is, EU actors needed to believe that they had

the means available to them to bring about democracy enhancing changes in non-member states.

And third, they had to hold beliefs about what constituted democracy – the set of institutions,

practices and conditions by which democracy is said to exist. In short, to promote democracy in

third-states, EU policymakers had to hold a set of normative, causal and constitutive beliefs

about democracy.

Each one of these beliefs is necessary to deliberately promote democracy, but none are

obvious. First, it is not obvious that democracy is an absolute good nor its relation or relative

priority to other goods like stability, security, justice, social welfare, the protection of individual

rights and the like. Second, it is far from clear that external actors can promote democracy in

third-states. While the academic debate continues over whether, to what extent and how states,

international organizations or international non-governmental organizations can influence a

country's path toward democratization, until the 1990s the mainstream academic view was that

with the exception of military conquest,[2] democratization was largely (if not wholly) a domestic

affair.[3] Third, the history of democratic thought and practice is marked by significant

disagreements about what institutions, practices and conditions are essential or supportive of

self-governance amongst political equals. And yet each of these controversies regarding

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[2] Alfred C Stepan, "Paths Toward Redemocratization: Theoretical and Comparative
Considerations," in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, ed.
Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (1986).
[3] Philippe C Schmitter, "An Introduction to Southern European Transitions from Authoritarian
Rule," in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Southern Europe*, ed. Guillermo O'Donnell,
Philippe C Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University
Press, 1986), 5.

democracy – the normative, the causal and the constitutive – had to be settled, at least temporarily, in order for the EU to be in the business of democracy promotion.

Existing research on the origins the EU membership conditionality has focused on its normative rationale – i.e., the good democracy promotion is intended to achieve. We can identify two camps. Constructivist analyses emphasize the principled basis of the EU's enlargement policy. Rationalists, alternatively, claim that it is the expected economic and security benefits for EU member states that explain EU policy. As I discuss below, however, neither explanation is built on strong empirical foundations. Based on a more systematic consideration of the empirical record, I advance a novel explanation of EU membership policy. My empirical research demonstrates that whereas in the early 1960s EU membership policy was driven by a moral commitment to the intrinsic legitimacy of democracy, by the 1990s spreading democracy was seen more as a way to ensure regional security and economic development. That is, there was a shift over time from the constructivist view to the rationalist view. One implication of this conclusion, is that it contests the view that the EU's external identity became increasingly infused with normative values at the end of the Cold War (Manners 2002). While democracy promotion did move up on the EU's priority list, it was not because values replaced interests, but rather the spread of democracy was seen as a way to protect member states' economic and security interests.

The paper is organized as follows. The next section discusses the development of EU membership policy with respect to democracy and existing research. Section three discusses the empirical basis of the study and the analytical techniques employed. Section four tests the constructivist and rationalist theses and presents the empirical findings. The final section

summarizes the primary findings and discusses some potential limitations of the research as well as implications.

Research on democracy promotion and conditionality

EU membership norms did not appear all at once. They emerged through a series of contested deliberations that date to the founding of the European Economic Community in 1957 (Thomas 2016). Democracy promotion did not become a formal, legally codified goal of EU membership policy until the 1990s (Börzel and Risse 2009; Olsen 2000). Although the preamble to the Treaty of Rome stated that an aim of the EEC was to 'strengthen peace and liberty', according to the treaty democracy was neither a requirement for membership nor was it a stated goal of the EEC. It was not until the Single European Act (1986) that democracy promotion was explicitly incorporated into the treaties as an aim of the European Community (cite treaty art.). Only in 1993 at the Copenhagen Summit of the European Council did EU member state leaders formally declare that eligibility for membership was reserved for democratic countries. Following the establishment of the 'Copenhagen Criteria', the European Commission was entrusted with evaluating the democratic credentials of applicant states and reporting its findings to the other EU institutions. From 1997, the Commission produced annual regular reports on the progress of applicant countries in meeting the requirements of membership.

Though democracy was only formally adopted as an entry requirement in 1993, its practical application to considerations of membership dates to the 1960s, when the authoritarian regimes of southern Europe sought closer relations with the EEC (Pridham 2005: 11–22; Smith 1998: 258; Whitehead 1986). Spain applied for an associative agreement in 1962, and membership negotiations did not commence until after the death of General Franco and the

beginning of democratic reforms in the mid-1970s. Greece completed an association agreement with the EEC in 1962, but following the 'colonel's coup' in 1967, relations were frozen until the military regime collapsed in 1974. Similarly, negotiations with Portugal did not enter into a steady stream of progression until the military regime fell in 1974.

For the sake of simplicity, I use the terms 'political conditionality', 'membership conditionality' and 'democratic conditionality' interchangeably to refer to the EU's policy of linking membership to democratic reforms in applicant states. Conditionality is one of several policy instruments that the EU employs to promote democracy in countries around the world (Börzel and Risse 2009). What distinguishes political conditionality from these other instruments is the use of 'carrots-and-sticks' to promote political change: '[p]olitical conditionality entails the linking, by a state or international organization, of perceived benefits to another state (such as aid), to the fulfillment of conditions related to the protection of human rights and the advancement of democracy' (Smith 1998: 256). While the EU has primarily relied upon positive inducements – carrots – to encourage domestic political change, in rare circumstances it has also resorted to sticks to penalize countries for backsliding on their agreements, for instance in the case of Slovakia in 199X.

Most research on EU membership conditionality has focused on the issue of its effectiveness. Researchers have addressed whether, under what conditions, how, and to what extent membership conditionality has supported democratic consolidation (Dimitrova and Pridham 2004; Grabbe 2002; Grabbe 2006; Haughton 2007; Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2011; Noutcheva 2016; Schimmelfennig *et al.* 2006; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004). While the relative significance of membership conditionality in comparison to other factors is debated

(NB), it is widely accepted that membership conditionality gives the EU unparalleled influence over states wanting to join the Union (Pravda 2003: 12).

Given that researchers have repeatedly concluded that EU membership conditionality made a significant contribution the consolidation of democracy in central and eastern Europe, one might expect similarly rigorous studies of the origins of EU policy. A review of the existing literature leads to the conclusion that this is not the case. Further, the research that exists lacks the empirical or theoretical attention that has been devoted to the study of the effectiveness of membership conditionality.

Existing research on the origins of EU membership conditionality has focused on the policy's normative rationale – i.e., the interest or values it is intended to achieve. While not all authors explicitly adopt the 'rationalist' or 'constructivist' labels, their substantive arguments largely track the rationalist/constructivist divide in International Relations and EU studies. Constructivists argue that EU policy is guided by the belief that liberal democracy is a foundational element of political legitimacy. Rationalists view the EU's democratization efforts as a means of achieving member states' economic and security interests in the region. Less frequently, scholars argue that the EU's policy reflects a mixture of these two views (Pravda 2003; Schimmelfennig *et al.* 2006; Torreblanca 2001: 1).

Ian Manners has put forward a particularly influential account of the constructivist view (2002; 2006a; Manners 2006b; 2008; see also Kreutz 2015; Pridham 2005: 5, 25; Schimmelfennig 2001: 48; Smith 2003; Weber 1995). According to Manners, the EU is a 'normative power' in world politics. Rather than aspiring to the status as a great power, its primary role is one of 'shaping conceptions of 'normal' in international relations' (2002: 239). Democracy is a 'core norm' of the EU (2002: 242) and a fundamental element of its conception

of political legitimacy. Manners argues that the commitment to democracy constrains its relations with non-EU countries. The EU's rules on membership reflect the EU's belief that liberal democracy is a fundamental element of political legitimacy.

By contrast rationalists view membership conditionality as a means for member states to advance their economic and security interests (Börzel and Risse 2009; Laïdi 2008; Schimmelfennig *et al.* 2006). Zaki Laïdi (2008: 40) agrees with Manners that the EU 'seeks the integration of a world order based on the legitimacy of rules', but criticizes Manners for idealizing norms (2008: 44). For Laïdi, promoting democracy is a way to weaken state sovereignty and the threat it poses to regional security without abolishing it. Similarly, according to Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse the EU follows 'a world cultural script according to which democracy is good for international security and development' (Börzel and Risse 2009: 35).

Constructivist and rationalists thus offer competing accounts of the normative rationale for EU membership policy. One offshoot of this disagreement is that they also tend to hold different interpretations of why EU democratic promotion gained in prominence at the end the Cold War. Both camps recognize that the fall of the Soviet empire led western states and institutions to try to exert greater influence over central and eastern Europe. Geoffrey Pridham (2005: 25-26) argues that the principled commitment to democracy existed at least since the 1960s, but remained suppressed under the security logic of the Cold War. The end of the Soviet threat led to a rebalancing of security interests and the promotion of democracy. Alternatively, rationalists see the collapse of the Soviet Union as heralding the emergence of new threats to western Europe, namely economic and social instability in central and eastern Europe and potential spillover effects (Börzel and Risse 2009: 40–42). Democracy, along with the protection of individual rights and a market economy, were aimed at ensuring west European interests in

the region. Thus in addition to disagreeing about whether democracy promotion is driven by values or interests, rationalists and constructivists disagree about the timeline for when these beliefs emerged. For constructivists, membership conditionality reflects a long-held, if latent, commitment to democracy that was for a long time suppressed under a Cold War security rationale, whereas rationalists see democracy promotion as a response to the emergency of new economic and security threats at the end of the Cold War.

What is driving the disagreement between constructivists and rationalists? I suspect that in part it is the result of the theoretical context in which these analyses emerged. The bulk of the research was carried out in the early to mid-2000s when some prominent scholars suggested that the main axis of debate in the field of International Relations would be rationalism vs. constructivism (Fearon and Wendt 2002; Katzenstein *et al.* 1998). Convinced that political actors follow a 'logic of appropriateness', constructivists gravitated to the idea that a policy of democratic conditionality was an example of norm-guided behavior. Alternatively, convinced that actors followed a 'logic of consequences', rationalists gravitated to the belief that enlargement policy must be driven by the self-interests of member states. If this explanation is at least partly right, then one implications of the analysis that follows is a warning about (meta)theory-driven research.

It is also true, however, that advocates of both constructivist and rationalist explanations found evidence that supported their theoretical claims. Though perhaps unsurprisingly they rely upon different sources of evidence. Manners draws his conclusions about the EU's normative identity from an analysis of 'declarations, treaties, policies, criteria and conditions' produced by the EU or its predecessors over the past 50 years or ones it signed onto (e.g., the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (2002: 240–241), particular consonant actions (e.g., the pursuit of

the abolition of the death penalty (2002: 245–254), various EU military and police interventions (2006b: 273), and apparent contrasts with the United States and past histories of European imperialism (2006b: 172–176). By contrast, Börzel and Risse seem to suggest that the fact that the 'prospect of membership helped to transform ten former communist countries into consolidated liberal democracies with functioning market economies in less that 15 years' speaks for itself. The stabilizing effect of membership conditionality reflects a stabilizing intent. Laïdi cites the European Security Strategy document 'A Secure Europe in a Better World' (2003) and the European Defence Agency's 'An Initial Long-Term Vision for European Defense Capability and Capacity Needs' (2006) as evidence that democracy promotion was part of a broader security strategy. That is, both constructivists and rationalists selectively draw on evidence that support their respective theories.

In addition to the problem of selectivity, additional questions can be raised about the validity of the evidence. Manners relies heavily upon statements that reflect a general commitment to particular norms or values, like treaties or summit declarations. Given that EU policy changed over time one might wonder whether those general commitments guided actual policies, or whether other more proximate considerations were influential. Laïdi discusses documents that were created in the early to mid-2000s. But as previously described, official membership conditionality was introduced in 1993. Laïdi's evidence therefore seems potentially anachronistic, using future evidence to explain prior changes. One might wonder whether democracy promotion was originally understood to be part of the EU's security strategy or whether that idea developed somewhat later.

Nevertheless, since there is some evidence for both constructivist and rationalist explanations, one could conclude that this a classic example of mixed motivations. Perhaps, but

for scholars who take this view, the empirical basis is not well researched (Pravda 2003: 9–10; Schimmelfennig *et al.* 2006: 18; Smith 2003: 33–35). None of the literature reviewed attempts to systematically collect and analyze the relevant evidence. My view is that conflicting accounts of the origins of the EU democratic conditionality can be best adjudicated by establishing an adequate empirical basis. In the next section, I discuss the data sources and analytical techniques used in this study.

Data sources and analytical techniques

Constructivist and rationalist explanations of EU membership conditionality disagree on two points: (1) whether it reflects the belief that democracy is a fundamental element of political legitimacy or self-interests, and (2) whether the value attached to democracy was present from the founding of the European Communities or is of more recent origins. On what empirical basis should we assess these claims?

To address these questions, the subsequent analysis draws on two sets of documents: (1) the Birkelbach Report produced by the European Parliamentary Assembly (EPA) and the accompanying debate held in the EPA in the early 1960s and (2) European Council documents for the period 1988-1993. Included in the second set of documents analyzed were the 'Conclusions of the Presidency' and associated annexes issued at European Council summits. I also included a select number of other documents, all of which were cited in the Conclusions of the Presidency and judged to be particularly relevant to understanding the views of the European Council.

Why these documents? As previously discussed, although democracy did not become a formal requirement of membership until the early 1990s, it first emerged as a practical

requirement in the 1960s. Previous research has demonstrated the central role the EPA played in establishing a *de facto* requirement of democracy countries seeking membership in the European Communities (Anaya 2001; Thomas 2006). Daniel Thomas (2006: 1206) concludes that sustained public criticism by MEPs and civil society groups led member states, including France and Germany, to drop their initial support for the Franco regime's application in 1962, thereby establishing an ongoing precedent for relations with non-democratic states. Therefore, to answer why the EEC began in the 1960s to require states seeking entry into the Community to be democratic requires accounting for the beliefs of MEPs at the time. In 1961, the EPA set out its reasoning in the 'Report on the Political and Institutional aspects of Membership or Association for the Community'.[4] Drafted by Willi Birkelbach as the Political Affairs Committee's rapporteur, the Report is conventionally known as 'the Birkelbach Report'. Subsequently, a parliamentary debate on the report was held in January 1962.

The section period of 1988 to 1993 was selected because it covers the beginning of the revolutions in central and eastern Europe to the declaration of the Copenhagen Criteria in 1993. I limit the scope of the study to European Council documents because at the end of the Cold War, decision-making on enlargement policy was firmly in the hands of the member states and decided collectively in the European Council (Schimmelfennig 2003; Smith 1999; Torreblanca 2001). While the Commission played a secondary role in establishing relations between the EU and central and eastern European countries, the member states were paramount. Thus to understand why membership conditionality became *de jure* in 1993, it is important to understanding the collective reasoning of the European Council during this period.

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[4] There is no official English translation of the Report. The original report was translated into the four official languages of the Communities: German, French, Dutch and Italian. Community documents were not widely circulated in English until the UK joined in 1973. The discussion of the Report and associated debates are based on my translation from the French.

These two sets of documents, then, allow us to understand the reasoning of the principal

actors during two crucial periods in the development of the EU's membership policy. To analyze

the documents, I use the techniques of content and discourse analysis. These techniques allow

me to demonstrate how the Parliament and the Council's normative ideas regarding democracy

and membership fit together to form a coherent policy. Content analysis was used to code the

documents analyzed for their explicit views expressed about membership and democracy

(Krippendorff 2013).[5] Discourse analysis was employed to account for tacit or implied views

(Milliken 1999). As I show, the latter was especially useful in understanding the Parliament's

justification for the democratic criterion because MEPs did not explicitly state why democracy

should be a requirement. The justification was implied from other ideas expressed in the

documents.

Discussion of empirical findings

In this section I describe the major differences between how the EPA and the European

Council understood the relationship between democracy, membership and the purposes or

character of the EECEU across the two periods of interest. My primary conclusion is that

whereas in the 1960s the Parliamentary Assembly stressed the moral significance of democracy,

at the end of the Cold War the European Council linked democracy to regional security and

economic welfare in addition to a concern for political legitimacy.

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[5] Coding instructions and a list of documents analyzed can be provided upon request.

The view of the European Parliamentary Assembly in the early 1960s

The Birkelbach Report and five of the ten MEPs who spoke during the parliamentary

debate explicitly affirmed that membership was only open to democratic states.[6] No speaker

opposed the democratic requirement. According to the Report, 'The political regime of a country

seeking to join the Community cannot be treated with indifference'. It continues,

> Guaranteeing the existence of a democratic form of state, within the meaning of a liberal
> political organization, is a condition for membership. States whose governments have no
> democratic legitimacy and whose people do not participate in government decisions
> directly or by freely elected representatives, cannot be admitted into the circle of people
> that form the European Communities. (1961: II.3.24–25)

Similarly, speaking as President of the Christian Democrat Party Group, Jean Duvieusart stated

that Birkelbach was 'quite right to stress' that the Community could only form a union with

states that were 'animated by the political philosophy of democracy' (European Parliamentary

Assembly 1962: 62).

Neither the Report nor the MEPs who participated in the parliamentary debate *explicitly*

addressed why the nature of a country's domestic political regime was relevant to the

consideration of its inclusion in the Community. How then should we best account for why

members of the EPA repeatedly opposed closer relations with non-democratic states? The

argument advanced here is that opposition to including authoritarian states as members is best

explained by the widely expressed belief that the Community formed a 'moral community'. I

present it as the most plausible account given what is contained in the Report and said in the

debates.

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[6] In addition to 10 MEPs, one member of the Euratom Commission and two members of the EEC Commission
spoke in the Assembly. Six of the MEPs were members of the Socialist Party Group, two members of the Christian
Democratic Group and one member of the Liberal and Allied Group. Mr. Duvieusart is introduced in the transcript
of the debate as speaking in his capacity as President of the Christian Democratic Group and on their behalf. This
probably explains why no other member of his party spoke, other than Mr. Battista who spoke in his role as
Chairman of the Political Committee. There is one other speaker – Jarrosson – whose nationality, party affiliation
and gender could not be identified. Mostly likely s/he was one of the few MEPs not aligned with any of the three
party groups and thus her or his presence was less well documented.

Evidence in the Report and debate for the belief that the Community does and should have a moral nature is found in two primary areas: 1) statements regarding the purpose of the Community and 2) a repeated contrast of the Community's goals and nature with those of a 'simple economic association'. First, the idea that the six member states formed a moral community is evident in repeated claims that a central priority of the Community was to further European unity and solidarity as well as statements that the Community should prioritize association agreements with colonies or former colonies. The Report as well as nine out of ten speakers stated that the goal of the Community was unity and solidarity amongst European peoples. According to Emilio Battista (It/Christian Democrat), 'The main purpose of our Communities is not to solve problems of an economic nature but to achieve political unity' (1962: 92). Seven of the ten speakers singled our supporting overseas countries and territories as a priority. For instance, Jean Duvieusart (Bel/President of Christian Democratic Group) stated that the Community should show a 'special desire for solidarity' with 'the black nations' of Africa (1962: 61). The member states had formed a moral community in the sense that they would act with due regard and care for the legitimate interests and values of others both within and outside the Community.

Second, the Report and a number of speakers contrasted the Community with the idea that it formed a 'simple economic association' (Birkelbach 1961: V.88). The nature of an economic association is depicted as differing from the Community in one significant respect: in an economic association states pursue their economic interests without regard for the valid and vital interests of others. By contrast, in the Community only certain interests were legitimate and states must pursue their valid interests in ways that take into account the effects on the interests of other states and their peoples. The Report states that a country that mistakenly believes that

the Community is a simple economic association 'considers only its own situation and only the real or imagined trade disadvantages it may suffer as a result of the implementation of the common customs tariff of the Community' (Birkelbach 1961: IV.1.88). Similarly, Emilio Battista, the chair of the Political Affairs Committee and member of the Christian Democrat Party Group stated,

> [W]e cannot think only of creating business relations. We are not here to do business, we are here to do something much more important: we are here to ensure a happier future of peace and tranquility in Europe, improving economic opportunities in order to raise the living standard of the populations of our countries. I believe there is an absolutely fundamental principle that must be believed in order to enter the Community…. They [i.e., applicant states] must also have a commitment to adhere to the political spirit that animates the European Community. (1962: 93)

In sum, the commonly expressed view in the Report and speeches by MEPs with different party-affiliations is that the Community is a moral community, not just an economic one. It is a moral community because it is founded on a set of common set of moral aims and values, which include achieving the vital and legitimate interests of its members and enhancing European and extra-European unity and solidarity. Given the Community's moral nature, only democratic states were considered acceptable members.

The views of the European Council in the late 1980s/early 1990s

Of the twenty European Council documents analyzed, eighteen of the twenty documents (90 percent) stated the Community supported – symbolically, materially or both – democracy or democratization efforts in other countries. Similar to the earlier period, political legitimacy remained a justification for why states should be democratic. Five documents in which democracy was discussed stated that democracy was an element of the Community's moral character (28 percent). It is striking to note, however, that there were no statements about democracy contributing to political legitimacy after 1990. Democratic legitimacy was discussed

in five documents up to and including the *Charter of Paris* (November 1990), but did not appear in any of the documents analyzed after this date.

Running alongside and then replacing the belief that democracy is central to political legitimacy were two other ideas that were absent in the Birkelbach Report and parliamentary debate: (1) democracy and security are mutually supportive and (2) democracy and economic development are mutually supportive. Fifteen documents democracy (83 percent), linked democracy to security. In four of the documents (22 percent), peace and stability were portrayed as contributing to democracy. For instance, the proposed 'Stability Pact' to address the status of territorial borders and the treatment of minorities in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia is said to be a 'staple component of joint action to promote stability, reinforcement of the democratic process and the development of regional co-operation in Central and Eastern Europe' (The European Council 1993: 24). But in fourteen of the documents (78 percent) democracy is portrayed as contributing to peace, security and stability. At the 1988 Rhodes' summit, for instance, the heads of state and government issued the 'Declaration of the European Council on the International Role of the European Community', stating,

> The European Community and its member states are determined to play an active role in the preservation of international peace and security and in the solution of regional conflicts, in conformity with the United Nations Charter. Europe can not [*sic*] but actively demonstrate its solidarity to the great and spreading movement for democracy and full support for the principles of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. (1988)

Repeated across European Council documents was the Declaration's claim that democratization would contribute to regional peace and stability in Europe.

A second new theme was the linking of economic development to democracy. Fourteen documents (78 percent) stated that economic development and democracy were conjoined. Frequently, the relationship was portrayed as recursive and symbiotic. For instance, the

Presidency conclusions for the 1992 Lisbon European Council stated, 'A political consensus is growing around the fundamental relationship between pluralistic democracy, respect for human rights and development' (1992: 24). The relationship between democracy and economic development was also portrayed in more directed ways. Democracy was said to contribute to economic development in seven of the documents (39 percent). Appearing somewhat more frequently was the belief that economic development contributed to democracy (11 documents or 61 percent). But repeated across European Council documents was the idea that economic progress and democracy stood in a symbiotic relationship.

Summary

In comparing the views of the European Council during late 1980s and early 1990s to the views of the Parliamentary Assembly in the early 1960s, a significant shift is evident: the normative rationale given for the democracy requirement changed. In the latter period, the concern for political legitimacy is not absent, but gaining in prominence is the belief that democracy contributes to security, peace and stability as well as economic development. Table 1 summarizes these differences.

Table 1. The normative rationale of democracy

	1961-62 (n=11)	1988-93 (n=18)
Political legitimacy	6 (55%)	5 (28%)
Economic development	0 (0%)	7 (39%)
Peace, security, and stability	0 (0%)	14 (78%)

How do these conclusions compare to the constructivist and rationalist accounts? First, the constructivist thesis that EU membership policy was driven by the belief that democracy was elemental to political legitimacy was more accurate in the 1960s when the Parliamentary Assembly was influential than in the 1980s and 90s when the heads of state and government were making decisions about enlargement. While the concern for political legitimacy did not entirely disappear in the latter period, the emphasis on the security and welfare benefits of democracy increased in prominence. As noted previously, no reference to political legitimacy and democracy appears in European Council documents after 1990. The Copenhagen Criteria were declared in 1993. Secondly, the evidence supports the rationalist view that at the end of the Cold War member states' security and economic interests guided membership policy. While the concern for political legitimacy did not entirely disappear, the concern for regional security and economic welfare grew in importance.

Conclusion

In June 1993 at the Copenhagen Summit, the European Council announced that ten countries of former communist Europe were eligible to join the EU. At the meeting, the leaders of the twelve member states declared that countries wishing to join the EU would have to 'achieve stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy'. With a short declaration, a political system long thought by many to be the essence of anarchy and injustice was embraced as a cornerstone for a stable, peaceful and prosperous Europe.

This paper has addressed why the EU promotes democracy through membership conditionality. My analysis of the evidence concludes that different normative rationales shaped EEC/EU policy over time. In the 1960s, MEPs emphasized the moral desirability of democracy

and its contribution to political legitimacy. In the late 1980s/early 1990s, the European Council focused greater attention on the regional security and economic benefits of democratization. This conclusion undermines (though does not completely reject) the constructivist view that the EU has increasingly become a 'normative power' over time and adds weight to the rationalist view that the promotion of democracy through membership conditionality was intended to advance the security and economic interests of EU member states and their citizens.

What are some potential limitations of this research? I will briefly discuss two, before turning to one implication. First, one potential worry could be that I rely upon publicly accessible documents and that political actors have various incentives to hide their true beliefs (Moravcsik 1998). On the one hand, I think further research that draws on different sorts of evidence could either support or impugn the conclusions I draw. There are, however, two considerations that support the findings. The first is that they cohere with existing research that has concluded that member states' economic and security interests drove EU policy on enlargement (Grabbe 2002: 251; Higashino 2004; Hyde-Price 2006: 226–227; Schimmelfennig 2001; Torreblanca 2001). Additionally, leaders did not have an obvious incentive to misrepresent their views. My argument is not that EU leaders were driven by an idealistic commitment to democracy. Rather they viewed the spread of democracy as beneficial to their countries; they were not hiding self-interests behind a façade of idealism.

There is, however, one clear limitation of this research. As noted throughout, the focus of this paper has been the normative rationale for the EU's policy on democracy and membership conditionality. That is, I have addressed the purpose, interests or values conditionality is intended to achieve. The reason for this focus is that it tracks the debate in existing research. What I have not addressed is why the EU adopted *conditionality* as a particular technique or technology of

government. As Karen Smith has noted, the shift to a policy of conditionality at the end of the Cold War marked a significant change in Community policy toward central and eastern Europe. She states that conditionality was 'a reverse of the Community's position during the Cold War, when trade with communist Europe was a "carrot", but the Community hesitated before using it as a "stick"' (Smith 1999: 43–44). One might describe this as a change from a policy of détente to conditionality and a reversal in policy orientation. Conditionality promises future benefits in return for present reforms, whereas détente – in addition to hoping to stabilize East-West relations in the present – provided immediate benefits with the hope of future reforms. What the change to conditionality signaled therefore was the advent of a new empirical theory of democratization, a different set of causal beliefs about how democracy comes about. This change has not been addressed in the article, but should be an object of further research.

One implication of this research is that it suggests we think differently about recent criticisms of the EU's external policy. Recent controversial decisions like the EU's immigration agreement with Turkey, its weak response to the refugee crisis and its willingness to tolerate or actively collude with authoritarian regimes, has been interpreted by critics as evidence that the EU is willing to sacrifice its values when they conflict with its interests (NB). That is, when the EU faces a tradeoff between promoting democracy, human rights and rule of law abroad or its own economic and security interests, it chooses the latter. But if the analysis here is correct, the advancement of democracy is primarily of instrumental value for the EU. Since the early 1990s the promotion of democracy has been viewed as a way to advance member states' security and economic interests in the near abroad. With this in mind, what the immigration agreement with Turkey, for instance, reveals is not a failure of the EU to abide by its values, but the acceptance that democracy promotion does not always serve its interests.

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