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Democracy Promotion: Comparing African and Asian Experiences

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Abstract

In the wake of the Third Wave Wave of democracy, the EU developed democracy promotion policies toward African and Asian countries in the form of negative linkage (posing political conditions for economic aid) or positive linkage (supporting democratic reforms). The literature on democracy promotion points to four issues affecting this policy domain: competing political or economic interests, the degree of linkage and leverage, the presence of a normative consensus and the choice of a positive or negative linkage strategy. While there are significant differences in timing and kind of democratic transition in Sub-Sahara Africa and Southeast Asia, in both regions democracy still faces significant challenges. Policies toward both regions show significant similarities and differences: in both regions, democracy promotion suffers from competing political or economic interests, which is particularly visible in the material on two large countries from each region. The linkages and leverage between the EU and Sub-Sahara Africa are higher than in Southeast Asia, and the normative framework for Africa is developed more than in Asia. The EU is rather timid toward Southeast Asia compared to Sub-Sahara Africa, reflecting the presence of the 'Asian values' debate and lower linkage and leverage. In both regions, democracy promotion faces severe challenges due to difficult internal conditions. If donors wish to contribute to democratization, the positive linkage strategy holds more promise, but foremost, they need to be more consistent in choosing democracy over other political or economic interests.

Keywords: Democracy, Positive Linkage, Negative Linkage, Sub-Sahara Africa, Southeast Asia

Introduction

The so-called Third Wave of Democratization, a phrase coined by Samuel Huntington in his 1991 book, gave rise to a booming field of international democracy promotion. In the early phase of this policy field, during the early 1990s, when competitive elections swept across the African continent and gradually reached several Asian countries, great optimism accompanied Western governments' initiatives. This early optimism was tempered during the late 1990s in light of disappointing results of electoral democracy. On the whole, democratic change prevailed world-wide until well into the new millennium. Comparative democratization studies showed, however, that many regime transitions had resulted in shallow or even illiberal electoral democracies or even in set-backs to electoral authoritarianism. From 2005 onwards, Freedom House detects overall declines in freedom and democratic setbacks outnumbering democratic progress for the 12th consecutive year in 2018 (Freedom House 2018). Several authors now signal worldwide democratic decline and thus increased challenges for democracy promotion.

The early phase of democracy promotion was characterized by a strong emphasis on supporting competitive elections, reflecting a rather minimal conceptualization of democracy. As Burnell notes, it seemed that the 'easy victories had been won' (Burnell 2006). By the mid to late 1990s, emerging complex hybrid regimes and democratic set-backs presented new challenges and led donors to include broader approaches aimed at strengthening the rule of law and governance or civil society. At the same time, however, democracy promotion increasingly suffered from competing policy objectives: donor countries' interest in securing raw materials and oil meant the rising prominence of economic interests and the war on terror since the attacks of September 2001 implied that security concerns increasingly trump normative concerns for democracy and human rights. Commitment to democracy promotion waned (Carothers 2015) and some authors signalled 'democratic fatigue' (Cheeseman 2015; Gyimah-Boadi 2015). While these challenges to democracy have much to do with internal structural conditions and worldwide economic and political trends, there is also an obvious question regarding democracy promotion policies' effectiveness. This merits a closer look at policy goals, strategies and instruments in this field.

Against this general background, this contribution compares democracy promotion in Sub-Sahara African and Southeast Asian countries. The concept of democracy used is broader than a minimal procedural notion centered on competitive elections, to refer to a political system in which governments come to power through competitive and inclusive elections, and in which basic civil and political rights and constitutionalism are present.[2] Democracy promotion is defined here as 'largely non-coercive attempts to spread democracy abroad' (Burnell 2011: 1-2) and does not include democratic imposition through force or peace building operations in post conflict settings. Neither will the pure application of normative persuasion through diplomacy be addressed here. Numerous national and international actors are engaged in democracy promotion: the United States pioneered the field with the establishment of the National Endowment for Democracy in 1983, and Germany supported political parties in the developing world through its political party foundations since the 1970s. During the 1990s, international actors such as the UNDP took up democracy and governance and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) was founded in Stockholm. The World Bank - being prohibited by its charter to engage directly in politics, embraced a more technical notion of 'good governance' since the famous Berg Report identified a crisis of governance as the cause of Africa's economic crisis (World Bank 1989). The focus of this contribution is on the European Union, which initiated a consistent effort to promote democracy from the early 1990s. Before addressing the two sides of this policy arena, i.e. the recipient and the donor side, a brief overview of the literature on democracy promotion is presented.

Democracy promotion: issues emerging from the literature

The policy field emerged as a specific and separate field of donor intervention during the 1980s. In the early years of this new policy domain, international democracy promotion was implicitly based on a rather 'minimal' concept of democracy, revolving around the presence of competitive multiparty elections (van Cranenburgh 2019). Moreover, the field was based on a clear 'transition paradigm', entailing a specific sequence of regime opening, transition elections and democratic consolidation (Carothers 2002). The idea was that the primary means of increasing vertical accountability between governments and citizens in transition situations was elections. Accordingly, democracy promotion

policies were much focused on promoting and assisting the holding of multi-party elections. There is a clear rationale for this: holding elections is expensive and required financial and technical assistance. Moreover, to increase confidence in the electoral process and prevent fraud, election observation became the most visible and frequent means of democracy promotion.

During the second half of the 1990s – as transitions remained incomplete, sometimes stalled or even reversed, awareness increased that transitions were far from 'easy', and policies began to encompass broader issues that comparativists consider necessary 'to make democracy work'. These issues range from addressing institutional weaknesses of parliament, strengthening political parties, the rule of law and civil rights, to strengthening civil society – themes important for the creation of horizontal accountability. This implied also the need to address the institutional context which in many cases remained characterized by strong concentration of power, particular in the executive president (van Cranenburgh 2008 and 2011). Consequently, democracy promoters began to address these more difficult institutional and societal issues.

From the emergence of the policy field, however, democracy promotion as a goal has suffered from competition by other economic or political/strategic interests of donors. During the Cold War, superpower rivalry and the threat of communism implied willingness of Western governments to maintain friendly relations with non-democratic regimes allied on their side. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, political-strategic considerations seemed to retreat and there was a window for a broadly shared and single purpose democracy promotion commitment on the part of western countries. However, strategic and economic interests continued in the form of the goal to counterbalance China's rising power in Asia and Africa. In the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 2001, the so-called War on Terror implied a new strategic interest to maintain relations with non-democratic regimes who were allies in this struggle. In Africa, non-democratic countries such as Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda thus benefitted from their strategic importance; similarly, Indonesia was strategically important to western governments as a major but moderate Islamic country (Hagmann and Reyntjens 2005; Cheeseman 2015).

The presence of strong economic linkages and aid relations also affects democracy promotion. Levitsky and Way (2005: 21) examined linkage and leverage as important determinants of success in this field. Linkage refers to the density of ties to the West, while leverage refers to the power balance and the counterpart's vulnerability to external pressure. It is likely that high levels of linkage and leverage at the donor side lead to more successful democracy promotion. In the case of aid-dependent countries in Sub-Sahara Africa, a combination of high linkage and high leverage would imply more successful democracy promotion. However, economic interests do not only provide opportunities; they may also create constraints. Economic interests may compete with democracy promotion as a policy goal. European countries tend to maintain friendly relations with former colonies that remained important trading partners. Countries that supply important mineral and oil resources also present competing and conflicting policy objectives. In sum, the policy language of democracy promotion cannot be taken at face value and the policy field suffers from competing objectives.

Strategies for democracy promotion may be direct or indirect, coercive or non-coercive, and may employ conditionality or an 'assistance' approach. The application of political conditions for economic aid is also known as 'negative linkage' and assisting democratic reforms through financial or technical aid is known as 'positive linkage' (van Cranenburgh 2008, 2019). The effectiveness of negative linkage in general has been rather limited, with many authors pointing to inconsistency in applying conditions, lack of coordination between donors, and competing economic or political interests (Magen 2009). Olson (1998) argues that donor interests – often non-stated and non-official - are decisive in the actual application of the officially stated political conditions. Brown (2005) points to the many competing and often non compatible objectives pursued in Africa: economic interests, maintenance of long-standing economic assistance programs and stability and security representing such competing priorities. In a study of 5 'non-cases' of negative linkage in Africa, when severely flawed elections were held, Del Biondo (2011) argued that economic interests often explain the non-application of conditionality, but that political strategic interests primarily prevented the application of conditions, while more recently good performance of aid receiving

countries on poverty reduction also prevents a tough stand of donors in the field of democracy.

Moreover, a common approach is often lacking, which is due to the inherent decentralized decision making within the EU, and member states' long standing bilateral relations in the region. France, that targets 80% of its governance assistance to Francophone African partner countries, is frequently mentioned as having broken the ranks in the EU for the sake of maintaining strong relations with friendly regimes. In Asia, during Suharto's authoritarian rule in Indonesia, donors were reluctant to apply conditionality or sanctions, due to the country's political-strategic interests and increased trade and investment interests.

When it comes to results of political conditionality, several authors have signalled that external pushing for early elections often results in rather superficial reforms (Brown 2005; van Cranenburgh 2019). Electoral competition is introduced, while fuller democratic reforms or liberalization remain absent. African governments have also become adept at implementing superficial or 'cosmetic' political reforms to satisfy donor demands. After resuming aid, it is hard for donors to actually monitor reforms. A kind of 'reverse conditionality' can occur when recipient countries are well aware of donors' strategic or economic interests in their country. Thus, Ethiopia, Uganda and Rwanda, which are perceived as important partners in regional stability and security, remain relatively immune to donor pressures and conditions.

Positive linkage strategies consist of efforts to assist the transition or consolidation of democracy. Instruments are: supporting elections and election monitoring, support to political parties, strengthening institutions or 'capacity building' directed at state institutions, assisting civil society organizations and the media. Generally, donors tend to follow a universal 'template' consisting of these elements (Carothers 1999). In doing so, Carothers argues, donors tend to engage in 'institutional modelling', implicitly assuming that the institutions targeted for aid mirror the institutions of the donor country. The shortcomings of the 'one-size-fits-all' approach were discussed in much of the literature (Carothers 1999; Burnell 200;, IDEA 2009). Moreover, donors are not always consistent to apply a positive linkage strategy in cases where one would expect them to do so,

such as in Ghana. Crawford (2007) showed that surprisingly little was done in this 'most likely case' and thus pointed to the gap between rhetoric and reality in this field.

Lastly, with regard to European democracy promotion, the literature attests to the presence of a highly developed normative and legal framework framing democracy promotion policies in the EU's external relations (Magen et al. 2013; Youngs 2001). This framework is very strong in the case of the EU's relations with Africa, and laid down in numerous agreements within the ACP countries group. Such a normative and legal framework is less present in the Asian region. The strong normative and legal framework for relations with ACP countries may allow more effective democracy promotion, but may also make the EU more vulnerable to creating a gap between rhetoric and reality, as signalled by Crawford (2005).

Based on the general literature on democracy promotion, four issues are likely to affect international democracy promotion policies, i.e. interests, power, norms and strategy:

1. When donors have strong economic or political/strategic interests in a country, democracy promotion will be less effective due to conflicting goals and incoherent strategies.
2. Generally, a high degree of linkage and leverage is likely to increase the effectiveness of democracy promotion in the both regions.
3. The presence of a strong normative consensus in the EU's external relations and the reflection of these norms in legal instruments enhance effective democracy promotion.
4. The choice of positive linkage strategy, i.e. a broad strategy of democracy assistance going beyond the holding of competitive elections versus merely setting conditions for aid, will increase the effectiveness of democracy promotion.

After a description of democracy promotion policies in Sub-Sahara Africa and Asia, the conclusion will address how these issues affect democracy promotion in both regions.

The recipient side: the regional contexts of democratization

On the recipient side, a broad sketch of recent democratization in Asia and Africa serves to identify broad similarities and significant differences in the political contexts in which democracy promotion is pursued. Both regions have colonial pasts, are marked by ethnic and cultural diversity and economic weaknesses, counting as low or (lower) middle income countries. Various forms of authoritarianism long prevailed in both regions, a phenomenon at least until the 1980s linked to – and sometimes justified by - their status as developing countries.

For both regions, the global Third Wave of democracy forms the backdrop for regime transitions and democratization (Huntington 1991). Significantly, the emerging literature on democratization began to assess the impact of external factors, such as global norm change, the impact of non-state actors such as the Catholic Church, economic factors and foreign policies of great powers. More generally 'agency' became an important factor, next to the long term structural internal conditions for democracy, such as levels of economic development, rising middle classes or elite pacts, which had long been the focus of comparative analysis. The new focus on agency implied that choices of individuals, in particular regime elites, opposition leaders and external actors could significantly affect democratization outcomes. Rising mobilization of civil society was a factor of importance during the breakdown of authoritarian rule, but its influence after the transition was highly variable and most often declining.

However, on all these fronts, there are significant differences between both regions in terms of the timing of democratic transition, the specific form that transitions took and the relative influence of international actors. Firstly, the timing of the third wave democratization was different in Africa and Southeast Asia, with the third wave entering Asia relative late and 'reluctantly'. As remarked by Youngs (2001, 114) democracy has been challenged forcefully on the conceptual level in East Asia. There are also significant differences in the social-economic context, with most Southeast Asian economies exhibiting more dynamism than their African counterparts. As a result, economic linkages with Western countries tend to take different forms in both regions. While Africa's continued aid dependency makes power relations with Western countries highly unequal, relations with Southeast Asian countries are less asymmetrical.

At the same time, remarkable similarities become evident from the literature, such as the prevalence of neo-patrimonialism and the ability of incumbent (dominant) parties to restrict entry into the system. In both regions, hybrid regimes have emerged combining elements of formal electoral democracy with illiberal or authoritarian practices.

The Third Wave engulfed the African region from the early 1990s on, with the fall of the Ceausescu regime in Rumania serving as a strong source of inspiration on the continent. Most African regimes at the time were one-party regimes or personalistic authoritarian regimes, which had become discredited by long term weak economic performance, culminating in financial and debt crisis by the end of the 1970s. Domestic opposition rose and was aided by growing international pressures to democratize during the 1980s. Being rather dependent on international aid, most African regimes were vulnerable to such outside pressures, whether through threats of aid cuts, or promises of increased aid in turn for reforms. In the early to mid 1990s, these pressures led to the adoption of multi-party elections in most Sub-Sahara African countries. On top of these transitions from one party or personal authoritarianism, the region witnessed the end of South Africa's apartheid regime and independence for Namibia.

While some early cases were driven from below by strong civil society protests (Zambia, Benin, Togo), resembling Huntington's 'Replacement' model, in other cases the new rules of the game were set through consultations and negotiation in the form of national conferences. Many other transitions took the form of Transformations, or 'managed transitions', with the authoritarian regime elite allowing opposition to organize and contest elections, while remaining in control of the rules of the game. For example, Anglophone African countries all maintained their inherited majoritarian first-past-the post electoral system and the superposition of an executive president on an essentially Westminster parliamentary system. Democratic reforms were thus limited to the introduction of multi-party competition and remained shallow in many cases.

Despite these limitations the literature agrees on significant advances for democracy in the region. Some scholars go further to suggest a specific African path of regime transition through elections, with even limited or

flawed electoral reforms contributing to further democratization in the long run (Lindberg 2009). The high profile case of South Africa was distinctive: South Africa's pacted transition represented an example of Huntington's 'Transplacement' model and introduced an important electoral innovation of proportional representation – given the strong majoritarian legacy - which was also adopted by Namibia.

Freedom House scores for the region show many advances for democracy since the 1990s with South Africa and Namibia and the region's long term democratic exception Botswana stable in the free category. While competitive elections have become the norm for government change in most of the Africa region, however, democracy remains incomplete and flawed in important respects. Freedom House scores show many countries, such as Tanzania, Zambia and Malawi stuck in the partly free category. Late reformer Kenya scores partly free since 2002. Uganda moved from partly free to non-free in 2014, a category where Zimbabwe is since 2001, expect a brief period showing hopes of democratic change during 2015-16.[3]

Regime leaders still tend to overstep constitutional term limits, and many dominant parties use incumbency to retain power. The most recent report of Freedom House (2019), significantly titled 'Democracy in Retreat' reports a decline in freedom in the world for the 13th consecutive year. Gyimah-Boadi (2015) referred to Africa's waning democratic commitment. Moreover, institutions for horizontal accountability remain weak. Presidents wield great power and parliaments remain weak in holding executives accountable (van Cranenburgh 2008). On top of these institutional problems, the literature agrees on the survival of long standing patterns of neo-patrimonial rule: behind the façade of modern democratic institutions power is exercised in a personal way, with leaders extending benefits to their supporters in a chain of dyadic relations (Bratton and van de Walle 1997).

As far as economic change and distribution is concerned, the new democratic regimes did not lead to major improvements for the region's poor people, possibly contributing to the 'democratic fatigue' as observed by Cheeseman (2015). While economic liberalization adopted with the structural adjustment of the 1980s had led to some macro-economic gains, the poor often suffered consequences of declining public services. It is only

from the late 1990s and into the new millennium that poverty reduction rose high on the international 'Post-Washington Consensus' agenda, inducing African governments to implement pro-poor socio-economic policies.

The Third wave arrived rather later in the Asian region, which has consequently been dubbed the world's most recalcitrant region. Existing authoritarian regimes seemed more strongly entrenched, with many of them having shown sustained periods of economic growth. Authoritarian leaders were strong advocates of the 'Asian model' of democracy, counterpoising particularism to universalism, communal and family loyalty to individualism and social-economic advancement to political rights and liberty (Thompson 2015). The Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s, however, also affected the legitimacy of such claims and the durability of these authoritarian regimes. Economic instability spurred domestic political opposition and international criticism and was a major factor forcing democratic transitions.

While an early transition had occurred in the Philippines, with massive mobilization of civil society against personalist dictator Marcos in the 1980s, South Korea began democratic reforms in the late 1980s. Indonesia's transition only began with Suharto's downfall in 1998, marked initially by wide protests from civil society. The Indonesian transition was important in breaking the notion of a united 'front' against western democracy (Youngs 2001, 118). Both transitions seemed to follow the 'replacement' model, but were in time more managed by the regime leadership to ensure stability and continuity for regime elites. A democratic transition materialized in the late 1990s in Thailand.

The region seemed to show democratic advance, with South Korea as an example of democratic advance and important regional power Indonesia moving in the category of free countries in 2008. However, Malaysia and Singapore remained at best semi-democratic and Vietnam remained under one party rule. A brief survey of Freedom House and Polity IV scores for democracy reveals the high variable and fluctuating trends in the sub-region. The Philippines was first to move into the 'free' category during 1986-1988, to score 'partly free' thereafter. After a brief free episode, the country moved into the partly free category from 2005 until the present.

South Korea shows consistent democratic advance, scoring 'free' since 1988. Indonesia moved into the partially free category after the downfall of Suharto, to score 'free' from 2005 and to drop into the partly free category from the year 2013, due to negative trend in electoral reforms in Indonesia. Freedom House observes many democratic reversals and stagnation in the Asian region in its 2018 report. Thailand shows a highly volatile pattern moving in and out of brief free and partly free periods, to remain unfree since 2014. Singapore and Malaysia seem stable in the partly free category, while Vietnam and Cambodia remain unfree. While Polity IV scores show more nuance than FH scores, the overall highly variable pattern remains the same.

While the Southeast Asian region shows a net trend to more competitive politics, authors in an authoritative overview point to shaky foundations for democracy in preconditions, transitional processes and institutional designs (Case 2015: 7). A pattern of trade-off appears in the Southeast Asian region, with democratic quality suffering in the interest of maintaining elite interests and regime stability (Case 2015). Aspinall argues that the rather low quality of democracy in Indonesia tends to corrode 'faith in democracy itself' with the impoverished population primarily looking for the dispensation of patronage, rejecting politicians wishing to avoid 'money politics'. A vicious circle of poverty and patronage is the result (Aspinall 2015). Fukuoka also documents the resilience of patrimonial politics and qualifies the transitions as a mere transformation of the patrimonial system, with political struggles primarily involving access to state patronage (Fukuoka 2015). At the same time, electoral systems have been adjusted across the region to show increased majoritarian features, thus sacrificing representativeness for the sake of efficiency (Reilly 2007, 2015).

In sum, oligarchic patterns seem to continue under rather shallow political reforms and the region's masses of poor people have not benefitted clearly from major gains in welfare. As in Africa, countries eligible for support under the HIPC's program now draw up comprehensive poverty reduction strategies, including governance reforms in the field of participation and accountability.

The regional background sketched here suggests several broad similarities between Sub-Sahara Africa and Southeast Asia. In both regions, political competition has increased since the Third Wave, but resulted in a limited and formal kind of democracy. Democracy remains rather shallow and low in quality. Institutions still favour elite control, and mechanisms for horizontal accountability remain weak. Many authors conclude that underneath the democratic forms, neo-patrimonial politics continues, often in a transformed way. Civil society is often activated during transitions, but remains rather weak afterwards partly as a result of government regulation or cooptation. Both regions are still marked by widespread poverty, suggesting that at least in the short run, multi-party democracy brings limited results for the poor.

Differences between the two regions concern the timing of democratic reforms, with democratic transitions occurring relatively later in Southeast Asia than in Sub-Sahara Africa. Moreover, the Southeast Asian region seems more resilient to democratic reform, with forms of authoritarian rule more resilient. The Asian values debate still marks elite discourse, and there is a stronger resentment against outside interference. Generally, economic performance shows more dynamism in East Asia than in Sub-Sahara Africa and the economic linkages with Europe are growing, but are not as intense as in Sub-Sahara Africa. The latter region remains highly dependent on foreign aid. Due to all these factors, power relations with Europe are less asymmetrical in the case of Southeast Asia than in Sub-Sahara Africa.

The Donor side: European Democracy Promotion

Sub-Sahara Africa

Democracy promotion by European countries, whether individually or through the EU has primarily developed in the context of relations with former colonies. EU policies toward Sub-Sahara Africa have been embedded in broader trade and aid relations with Africa as part of the so-called Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. Overall, democracy promotion in Europe was not given form in a grand design, but evolved in a piecemeal fashion.

A first effort to bring democracy and human rights into its external relations was the Fourth Lomé Convention of 1995, which was further

developed in the Cotonou agreement for development from 2000 to 2020. The agreements provided a legal ground in its article 96 for suspending aid when the recipient country was found in violation of human rights or democratic governance, and the Cotonou agreement established a political dialogue mechanism to be applied in cases of violation, maintaining the possibility of suspension of aid in case the dialogue fails. With these instruments, the EU had given form to negative linkage, in other words, setting political conditions for economic aid.

Since the early 1990s, Europe also began to develop policies to assist and support democratic reforms, in other words, a 'positive linkage' strategy (van Cranenburgh 2019) or 'positive approach' (Magen 2009: 39). Already under the Lomé agreements, conditionality was coupled with capacity building programs, mainly directed at the public sector. In the Cotonou agreement, a process of political dialogue was established and capacity building was extended to civil society sectors – all of this still 'under the shadow of sanctions' in the case of serious violations. Thus the EU combined persuasion, positive linkage and capacity building with the threat of sanctions (negative linkage) in the background. The policy domain strongly reflects the decentralized nature of EU policy making, and is marked by 'learning by doing' rather than a grand design (Magen et al 2013: 37-39).

Over time, language in the EU's official policy documents employs the terms 'human rights', 'governance' and 'participation' more than the term 'democracy', a tendency also visible in individual European country policy documents (Youngs 2008; Magen et al. 2009: 17). 'Capacity building' is also a recurrent phrase, seemingly implying a neutral or a-political approach. In that respect official policy rhetoric differs from the United States, which has less political or ideological concerns over the term 'democracy'. The EU also supports regional organizations, such as the African Union, which replaced the OAS in 2005. The AU showed strong commitment to democracy and human rights in its charter, and continued the African Peer Review Mechanism started in 2003 by its predecessor.

Initially European donors tended to target state institutions for governance programs, and while increasing participation often forms a part of it, much of this support is rather technical. The approach was marked by an 'our

size fits all' and rather top-down approach, until well into the 2000s, when sensitivity to different cultural and political settings rose (Magen et al 2013, 37). Overall, in that overview of European democracy assistance, doubts are expressed that such governance support has done much to strengthen democracy. Subsequently, the EU has emphasized civil society in its policies.

The European Union possesses several financial instruments through which democracy or governance assistance may be provided. The general financial instrument under the Cotonou agreement is the European Development Fund (EDF), which contains a line for democracy and governance support. This instrument is by its nature restricted to partners of the agreement, the ACP countries. In 1994, the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) was established upon the initiative from the European Parliament. Under this initiative, worldwide programs have become possible. I will address this program more below. Next there is a Co-financing scheme for European NGOs, also used for democracy and human rights programs.

Southeast Asia

The EU's democracy promotion approach to Southeast Asia evolved very gradually, with western donors more 'tentative' (Youngs 2001: 115) and less assertive toward authoritarian regimes. A major obstacle in the 1990s was the 'Asian values' discourse prominent in the region (espoused in particular by authoritarian leaders). It took until the financial crisis of 1997 that the persuasive force of this discourse was reduced. Moreover, pressures for democratization emerged in Southeast Asian civil societies. Gradually economic links with Europe increased in the region and Europe became more involved in alliances in the region as a counterweight to the region's dependence on the United States (Youngs 2001: 121). However, to this day Asian government leaders remain highly sensitive to outside interference in domestic affairs. This is also evident in the regional organization ASEAN, a regional organization comprising 10 Southeast Asian nations, established in the 1960s, which long refrained from addressing democracy and human rights as an important objective.

The EU lacked strong bilateral relations in the region and tended to prefer a regional approach. In 1996, the EU started the Asia-Europe Meeting

(ASEM), recognizing its growing economic interests in the region. Trade and aid relations were less intensive than in Africa but increasing. Within the ASEM framework, commitment to the promotion of democracy was 'more measured' than in the EU's relations in the Mediterranean and ACP countries. At the same time, however, in Asia the EU was perceived as more insistent than the United States to formalize democratic commitments (Youngs 2001: 122).

Significantly, the EU did not have a separate bureaucratic unit for relations with Asia, and the region was merged with Latin America in a single bureaucratic unit (Kleinfeld 2013). Another significant difference with the EU relations with ACP countries is the lack of formalized contractual agreements, which implied that Asian governments were not required to sign up to the EU human rights and democracy clause. The EU generally preferred to work with a regional approach, building relations with ASEAN and working through ASEM. ASEM relied exclusively on indirect process of socialization rather than coercion or conditioning of aid. The focus of ASEM is on economic and financial matters, social policy and intercultural dialogue, and 'democracy' and human rights are not mentioned at all. It is likely that the combination of European commercial interests in the region and strong regional aversion against interference prevent a more assertive approach to democracy and human rights. Themes addressed are more narrowly focused on governance (Youngs 2001: 124-5).

Moreover, relations in the region were less asymmetrical than in the case of Africa; with levels of aid dependency considerable lower (Youngs 2001: 31-32). The EU's approach in Southeast Asia was hesitant and the EU preferred a 'positive engagement' with authoritarian leaders and semi-democratic regimes. Only in the case of Burma and North Korea did the EU take a more assertive stance, including isolation. EU relations with Southeast Asia were also complicated during the 1990s by several intraregional conflicts, e.g. in East Timor and Burma, presenting Asian sensitivities and intra-European discord (Youngs 2001: 130). For example, the EU was late and timid in dealing with Indonesia's authoritarian regime. The Netherlands was alone in applying aid sanctions after the Dili massacres of 1991.

In the new millennium, EU relations with ASEAN incorporated a political component. Cooperation is directed at general issues of sustainable development, but also addresses specific political sub-themes. The partnership signed in 2003 addresses regional stability and the fight against terrorism, the promotion of human rights, democratic principles and good governance, besides three more economic and policy issues. Cooperation from 2007-2010 addressed more technical capacity building issues, and from 2011-2013 support was directed to human rights.

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)

In 1994, the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (in 2006 'Initiative' was replaced by 'Instrument', EIDHR) was started as a merger of several EU budget lines for democracy and human rights support. Being a world-wide program, the EIDHR provides opportunities to compare policy strategies and funding priorities in both regions. It evolved through several steps, with renewals each time coupled with increased funding. The program has as its primary goal to enhance democracy and human rights. Initially assistance was directed to both state and civil society actors, but over time, more and more EIDHR funding has been provided to civil society. EU Regulation Number235/2014 for the period 2014-2020 states that financing can be provided worldwide and independently of the consent of governments in third countries (article 1 of the Preamble). The program thus developed a particular strong focus on civil society actors.

Table 1 provides an overview of the evolution of EIDHR, presenting its broad policy goals, budget, thematic priorities over the four periods since its inception. The data show an increased elaboration of the precise policy goals which evolved from a more general concern with democracy and human rights to more concrete policy objectives in the periods 2007-2013 and 2014-2020. While governance and the rule of law was emphasized in the first two periods, implying partnerships with governments, thematic priorities evolved more toward human rights and civil society in the latter two periods. Supporting democratic procedures remained an important priority for the program, as shown by thematic priorities for democracy and election observation. Support for election observation increased sharply in 2011 - more than doubling from 40,1 million euro in 2007-2010 to 105 million in 2011-13.

The budget increased with every renewal of the program. With the latest renewal for the period 2014-2020 the budget was increased by 21% compared to the period 2007-2013 to amount to over 1,3 million euros - a more than fourfold increase (European Commission – International Cooperation and Development, n.d.). Looking at allocation of the budget, wide regional differences are evident. ACP countries receive a rather large share of the budget: ACP countries received 21% of the total budget in the first period (64,5 million euro) in the period 1996-99 (Smith, 2008, pp.131-133). The region was second recipient after the East European neighbour countries. The ACP region was top recipient of the program in 2000-2006 with 194 million euro allocated (European Commission, 2006). This amount decreased to 124,5 million in the period starting in 2014 (European Commission, 2014). As remarked by Youngs (2008), over the entire period, Africa represents the largest recipient of EIDHR funds. Among this aid, much goes to fund the African Peer Review Mechanism, a system of voluntary and mutual democracy monitoring adopted by the African Union.

Allocations to the Southeast Asian region represent far smaller amounts. In the first period, only 1% of the budget was allocated to Asia (Smith, 2008, pp.131-133). In 2000-2006 Asia began to receive significant funding from EIDHR with 109 million euro, the regions being the fourth recipient of total funds (European Commission, 2006). In 2014-2020, funding to Asia and Central Asia dropped to 65 million euro (European Commission, 2014). Funding to Asia was also directed at multilateral organizations, with ASEM an important recipient. Data on budget allocation under the EIDHR show that despite its world-wide coverage, the program is significantly less used in Asia than in Africa. This suggests that the lower level of economic linkages and the more symmetrical relations present in relations between the EU and Southeast Asia present limitations for democracy promotion not only in the application of a negative linkage strategy, but also in developing policies under the positive linkage approach.

Table 1: The European Initiative (from 2006: Instrument) for Democracy and Human Rights

	Broad goals	Budget	Thematic priorities
1994-1999[4]	In 1994, several EU budget lines came together, forming the EIDHR. The initiative was aimed at: Promotion of democracy, good	Total budget 1996-1999: 307.500.000 euro	Budget allocations 1996 – 1999 to: 1. supporting and promoting a pluralist civil

	governance and human rights across the globe. Specific objectives: 1.Supporting pluralist civil society 2.Specific target groups (women) 3.Democratisation and rule of law 4.Peace and Confidence building 5.Procedural aspects		society (113,4 mn). 2. various target groups (62,2 mn) 3. democratisation and the rule of law (61,7 mn). 4. peace and confidence building (42,1 mn). 5. procedural aspects (28,1 mn).
2000-2006[5]	Promotion of human rights and democracy around the world. Specific objectives: - support international justice - electoral observation missions - support human rights defenders - promote the abolition of the death penalty - support women's and children's rights	Total budget 2000 - 2006: 731.400.000 euro.	Budget allocations 2000 - 2006 to: 1. promotion and protection of human rights (118,8 mn) 2. governance (79,6 mn) 3. fight against torture (79,1 mn) 4. strengthening civil society (58,2 mn) 5. Rule of law and justice (49,6 mn) This budget was used in 140 countries on all continents.
2007-2013[6]	The Instrument aims at: The development and consolidation of democracy and the rule of law, and of respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Specific objectives: 1. respect human rights 2. strengthen civil society 3. support for human rights and democracy issues covered by EU Guidelines. 4. support the international and regional framework for justice, democracy and rule of law. 5. improving the democratic electoral processes.	Total budget 2007-2013: 1.104.000.000 euro.	Budget allocations 2007-2010 and for 2014-2017 amount to: - objective 1 (103,2 mn) - objective 2 (392,3 mn) - objective 3 (164,9 mn) - objective 4 (105,2 mn) - objective 5 (145,1 mn)
2014-2020[7]	To enhance respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms and to support, develop and consolidate democracy in third countries. Specific objectives: 1 Support to human rights and human rights defenders 2 Support to other EU human rights priorities 3 Support to democracy 4 EU election observation 5 Support to targeted key actors and processes, including international and regional human rights instruments and mechanisms	Total budget 2014-2020: 1.332.750.000 euro.	For the period of 2014-2017 objective 4 (EU election observation) receives the highest budget worldwide. - objective 1 (20-25%) - objective 2 (20-25%) - objective 3 (15-20%) - objective 4 (25%) - objective 5 (5-10%)

Comparing EU policies in Nigeria and Indonesia

The case of Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation and its second largest economy, illustrates how policy instruments have been applied in practice. Nigeria experienced a democratic transition relatively late in 1999. Up to the present, however, the country is considered only partly free. Elections remain severely flawed and corruption remains endemic at all levels of government. The expectation would seem justified that Nigeria would experience sanctions or aid conditionality during its authoritarian rule, given the presence of the legal instruments described above. However, during authoritarian rule and after transition when elections remained flawed, conditionality was not applied by the EU. The country forms part of the study by Del Biondo (2011) on non-application of negative linkage. Political-strategic and economic interests explain the non-application of conditions, with Nigeria's serious efforts toward poverty reduction coming in as an additional justification for donors to be lenient.

The EU thus primarily pursues a strategy of positive linkage in Nigeria, with support aimed at state institutions, political parties and civil society organizations. The EU considered governance and democracy an important area for assistance since the transition in 1999. The EU has provided assistance to elections and provided Election Observation Missions. Capacity building is directed at the nation's electoral commission. Under governance, the rule of law and corruption is addressed. In a policy document of 2016 the EU details five thematic areas for support: i) the Electoral Management Body (EMB); ii) the National Assembly; iii) the Political Parties; iv) Media; v) Women, Youths and Marginalized Citizens; Civil Society Organizations and other Non-State Actors.

Table 2: EIDHR Projects in Nigeria

Years	Human Rights	Elections	Gender	Media	Political Participation	Justice	Other	Total
2000 – 2006	8	7	9	4	4	7	9	48
2007 – 2013	6	0	7	0	2	6	0	21

Sources: European Commission (n.d., a); European Commission, 2006; European Union, 2011.

Under the EIDHR, Nigeria received a total of 69 projects in the periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2014 (see Table 2). Most projects are rather small in

scale, amounting to around 90.000 Euro, with a small number of very large projects of over a million Euro in the field of governance, rule of law and the media. Under the heading of justice, there is a focus on the issues of the death penalty and torture. There was support for elections during the first period and not in the second. The projects funded in Nigeria indicate a rather broad but also scattered and small scale approach to democracy promotion. In terms of themes covered, the projects go beyond the funding of elections to include human rights, political participation and gender issues.

The case of Nigeria is instructive on several counts: competing political and economic interests hinder vigorous promotion of democracy through negative linkage. Although economic and political linkages with Nigeria are high, leverage remains limited vis-a-vis the regional giant. The form of democracy seems to be adopted since the transition, but in a very shallow manner, with elections still flawed on several fronts. More substantive democratic reform remains extremely limited. It is therefore that the EU focuses less on elections since 2007 than on the factors necessary to make democracy more substantive. The EU prioritizes human rights, political participation and rule of law projects in its funding strategy under EIDHR, but the programs do not involve a large scale investment. The presence of a strong normative and legal framework in which relations between the EU and Nigeria are embedded, does not evidently lead to a strong push for both the formal and the more substantive elements of democracy.

To illustrate the EU's approach in Asia, Indonesia is a case to examine both negative and positive forms of linkage. During the authoritarian regime of Suharto, the literature attests to a surprisingly high degree of non-engagement of the EU with the regime. Although economic links with Indonesia were increasing, they were not as intense as in Sub Sahara Africa. Indonesia had been a recipient of western aid, in particular in social development and natural resource management, but the country was not very aid dependent. At the same time, the country was considered important for regional stability and a counterweight to regional power China. Whether it was because of the absence of strong linkage and leverage, or because of a lack of commitment to the goal of democratization or strategy, the EU did not apply strong pressure for democratic reform, and did not pose conditions or sanctions for human

rights violations. Only a single member country, the Netherlands, attempted in 1992 to apply the negative linkage approach through suspending economic aid in the wake of the Dili massacres in East Timor – which resulted in strong indignation by the Indonesian government and the severing of aid links with the former colonial power.

When the transition unfolded, it took some time before assistance to democratic reform emerged. Moreover, the transition went together with ethnic violence and regional attempts to secede which were repressed violently. No sanctions were applied in this turbulent period, despite the fact that the EU had become the second largest trading partner of Indonesia and the largest source of foreign direct investment (Kleinfeld 2013: 230).

As for positive linkage, in other words assisting democratic reform, Kleinfeld (2013) argues that there was no coherent strategy on the part of the EU. This is also partly due to cumbersome and lengthy processes in allocating and disbursing EU aid programs. A first and visible action was to send a 136-member election observation mission for the 1999 elections. The EU began to engage more explicitly with Indonesia from 2000 and had formulated a country strategy by 2002. The overarching objective of the Country Strategy Paper (CSP) 2002-2006 was to encourage the consolidation of democracy and promote good governance through the provision of EC support to Indonesia's sustainable economic, social and environmental development. The indicative budget consisted of €216 million (EU CSP 2002-2006). Policies were directed at capacity building, primarily of state institutions, with many programs addressing the rule of law (Attorney General, Courts). The Country Strategy Paper sought to find a new balance in aid to Indonesia, moving away from the near exclusive focus on natural resources and social development toward new emphasis on governance and consolidation of democracy. This development continued in the subsequent country strategy.

From 2000, the EU also developed programs for capacity building of civil society. However, the strategy failed to identify NGOs that were strategically important in furthering human rights and democratization (Youngs 2001:146). The most promising recipient of aid, the Partnership for Governance Reform was given support indirectly (through the UN) and

support was discontinued (Kleinfeld 2013). The EIDHR funded a total of 66 projects in Indonesia over the two budget periods reviewed. Most allocations represent small amounts, covering between 60.000 and 100.000 euro. A couple of larger projects in the first period covered governance, traditional law, the media and gender. The data shows no allocation to elections, and a strong focus on human rights and justice.

Table 3: EIDHR allocations to Indonesia

Years	Human Rights	Elections	Gender	Media	Political Participation	Justice	Good Governance	Other	Total
2000 – 2006	11	0	4	6	5	11	4	3	44
2007 – 2013	13	0	2	0	7	3	0	3	12

Sources: European Commission (n.d., a); European Commission, 2006; European Union, 2011.

In 2014, the EU supported a project aimed at 'inclusive democracy' under the EIDHR. The EIDHR supported 11 projects in 2017, covering a broad spectrum of issues including conflict resolution and mediation, freedom of religion, the rights of people with disabilities, support for human rights defenders, business and human rights, and accountability for human rights violations. Moreover, the EU announced support for the National Human Rights Commission to support its work from February 2018.[8] Programs in the field of human rights and rule of law obviously dominates in the Indonesian case. The most successful program concerns training the police. However, as the EU required matching funds to be provided by Indonesia which were not forthcoming, some of these funds were never disbursed (Kleinfeld 2013).

The case of Indonesia can also be considered instructive. Firstly, the case attests to the importance of political and economic interests in overriding the official policy goal of democracy promotion. The EU also seems to rely more heavily on support to natural resources (forestry) and social development rather than direct democracy assistance. A negative linkage strategy has not been applied, and under the positive linkage strategy, a number of projects of relatively small size have been funded. The approach is often less direct, with a focus on human rights and justice. Secondly, while linkages are increasing, leverage is not particularly high. The 'Asian

Values' discourse and a strong ideology of non-interference by the West certainly plays a role here. The combination of a rather modest level of linkage and leverage with the relative absence of a normative and legal framework in which democracy promotion policies are embedded implies that the policies tend to be more tentative, piece-meal and less coherent than in the African region.

Conclusion

This overview of democracy promotion policies in Sub-Sahara Africa and Southeast Asia allows us to revisit the general issues identified in the review of the literature on democracy promotion and draw some tentative conclusions. Firstly, with regard to both regions and the two countries used to illustrate democracy promotion policies, democracy promotion clearly suffers from competing policy goals and interests in the political and economic realm. Politically, strategic interests, such as alliances in the fight against terrorism and the performance of a stabilizing role in the region seem to trump the goal of democracy promotion and human rights. Economically, trade and investments interests also influence donor approaches. The two large countries examined in the regions both represent countries rich in oil with many western business interests present. This clearly explains the relatively lower profile the EU shows in the field of democracy promotion in these two countries and the lack of application of negative linkage, in other words, political conditionality.

Secondly, there is an overall difference in the intensity of economic and political linkages between the EU and Sub-Sahara Africa versus the EU and Southeast Asia. High aid dependence generally in Sub Sahara Africa creates more leverage for the EU. Conditions may be applied more forcefully, although compliance and effects remain limited. However, these general features are less present in the case of the the African regional giant examined here. Nigeria is not a target of forceful democracy initiatives or conditionality and thus deviates from the general pattern evident in smaller African countries. As for Southeast Asia, with linkages relatively less intensive and less asymmetrical, the EU also possesses less leverage. This translates into a less assertive and less direct approach in democracy promotion. As far as positive linkage is concerned, the budget allocated to both regions for democracy assistance under the EIDHR reflects the difference in intensity of linkages: Africa received far more assistance in

this field than Asia. In Asia, the relative influence of the strong ideological position of Asian governments espousing an Asian Democracy discourse and strong opposition to Western interference in domestic affairs seems to explain the more indirect approach donors take in the case of Southeast Asia.

Thirdly, the impact of a strongly developed normative and legal framework deserves closer examination. Relations with Sub-Sahara Africa are strongly embedded in the Cotonou agreements, while relations with Southeast Asia lack such a highly developed legal foundation. Generally, and reflecting this normative framework, the EU seems to exhibit more assertiveness toward Africa compared to Southeast Asia. While this framework may appear to provide more consensus, consistence and vigour in the promotion of democracy, the application of the legal instruments in practice is quite another question, as can be seen even in Africa in the case of Nigeria. The more developed legal framework also generates higher expectations in the policy domain and thus may create a gap between rhetoric and reality, as observed by Crawford (2005). The presence of such a normative framework does not appear to be a recipe for successful democracy promotion.

Fourthly, the choice of a negative linkage strategy versus a broad strategy directed at assisting democratic change clearly makes a difference. Negative linkage has not been applied forcefully in the two country cases examined, and is known to be only very partially effective in general (such as producing only cosmetic changes). In both regions, the EU has tended toward the broader strategy of assisting democratic change through supporting programs directed at civil society, the media, the rule of law and broad participation. While disbursement for these issues under the EIDHR is actually quite modest, the EU is likely to reach more in the longer term using this approach. For Africa the EU addresses political change more directly, as evident in support to elections and election observation and voter education; in Asia, the EU's approach is more indirect, such as through social development and human rights. The language of human rights and governance are preferred over the language of democracy. Overall, in both regions, the tendency in EU policies, particularly under the EIDHR is to focus on civil society rather than state institutions and governance.

Democracy promotion in both regions is marked by high normative commitment, but this commitment is not equally coupled with concrete policies and actions. Democracy promotion continues to suffer from competing goals derived from political, strategic or economic interests, impeding a fully coherent and consistent approach. These interests are quite evident in the two cases examined, representing regional 'giants'. The character of the economic and political relations influences the application of political conditionality and the menu for choice in democracy assistance. Overall policies toward Africa are more elaborated and the region receives a greater share of budget allocations. Policies toward Southeast Asia are more tentative and more indirect. In the framework of positive linkage, many initiatives are taken through civil society and in the field of rule of law. Looking at amounts spent for these goals, these initiatives represent but small steps. However, they are likely to assist democratic change in the long run more than the mere use of political conditionality.

This comparison between two regions also indicates that although much more is being done in Sub-Sahara Africa than in Southeast Asia, the greater effort in Africa does not necessarily imply greater impact. The harsh political conditions on the recipient side in both regions imply limitations for democracy promotion. The future of democracy is uncertain in both regions. Democratization is a long term and difficult process and depends primarily on favourable internal conditions. At present, the prospects for democracy are less positive, with freedom levels declining consistently over more than a decade. Hybrid regimes, combining the outward features of electoral democracy with repression and unconstitutional behaviour by power holders prove to be resilient. Democracy promoters thus face considerable obstacles. To avoid 'democracy fatigue' among democracy promoters, expectations must be realistic. Donors can at most expect to offer a helping hand where domestic conditions are favourable. This requires that donors are able to identify the social forces and key political institutions in need of assistance. At the same time, to reach more consistent results, donors must also show a greater consistency in aligning policy practice to the high normative aims, and make clear choices for democracy and human rights, also where competing economic or political interests are at stake.

Notes

1. This article is a revised version of a paper presented at the Conference Africa-Asia: A New Axis of Knowledge, 20-22 September 2018, Dar es Salaam. The author wishes to thank Ms Esther van Dooren for her assistance in gathering data on EU policies.
2. This may be called an expanded procedural definition of democracy, going beyond a minimal definition focused solely on elections, much in line with Dahl's notion of polyarchy (1971).
3. FreedomHousehttps://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Country%20and%20Territory%20Ratings%20and%20Statuses%20FIW1973-2018.xlsx
4. Commission of the European communities (2000). *Report from the commission on the implementation of measures intended to promote observance of human rights and democratic principles in external relations for 1996 – 1999.* Eur-Lex (n.d.). *European initiative for democracy and human rights (EIDHR) (2000-2006).* (Report no. r10110). Smith, K. E. (2008). *European Union foreign policy in a changing world*. Cambridge: Polity Press. pp. 131-133.
5. European Commission (2006). *European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights 2000-2006: Promoting Democracy and Human Rights Worldwide.* Brussels.
6. Official Journal of the European Union (2006). Regulation (EC) No 1889/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 on establishing a financing instrument for the promotion of democracy and human rights worldwide. (Report no. L386/1). European Commission – External Relations (2010). *European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Strategy Paper 2011 – 2013*. (Report no. C(2010)2432). Brussels. European Commission (n.d.). *European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Strategy Paper 2007 – 2010.* (Report no. DG RELEX/B/1 JVK 70618). Brussels.
7. European Commission (2014). *Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights Worldwide Multiannual Indicative Programme (2014-2017).* (Report no. No 235/2014). Brussels. European Commission – International Cooperation and Development (n.d.). European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

8. See 2017 Country Updates, Annual Report on Democracy and Human Rights, Indonesia, 18 May 2018, found at the EU external action service website http://eeas.europa.eu.

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