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DEMOCRACY PROMOTION: THE ROLE AND STRATEGY OF EUROPEAN UNION

Abstract:

The European Union (EU) is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy and respect for human rights and the EU's enlargement policy has promoted democracy with the process of accession conditionality, which has made a great contribution towards global democratization. Since the end of the Cold War, the EU has evolved its democracy promotion strategies through aid related projects and political cooperation. The EU and the member states support democracy promotion by providing funding through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

However, while the EU engages in many democracy promotion initiatives, it has shown inconsistencies in terms of how is understood conceptually and how it is actually put into practice. This is largely in part because of the diversity amongst the member EU states and the complex structure of the organization. This study critically analyzes the EU's democracy promotion agenda by looking at the key operational instruments and strategies of the organization. This study also deals with the EU's understanding of democracy and the structural constraints of the organization within the framework of democracy promotion.

Keywords:

European Union, democratization,democracy promotion

JEL Classification: F50

Introduction

20th century has witnessed the rise of democratization and democratic governance. After the collapse of communism there was no alternate form of rule left and democracy has become the most legitimate form of government. Some scholars described democracy as "the world's new universal religion" (Corcoran 1983:14). In accordance with the advancement of democracy, democracy promotion studies increased substantially over the last three decades and democracy promotion emerged as one of the remarkable fact of the post-cold war international order. Most of the time democracy promotion efforts associated with liberal democracy and liberal democratic procedures like freedoms of expression, press and association and institutionalization of rule of law and electoral processes (Kurki 2010: 363).

Democracy promotion can be defined as advances through economic and social assistance, military intervention or conditionality by strengthening governments, civil society and fundamental rights (Hobson, Kurki 2012: 3). There are wide range of activities, tools and instruments to assist democracy promotion efforts and there are various international and regional actors actively engaging in democracy promotion like United States, United Nations and European Union. Since United States no longer holds a monopoly on the business of democracy promotion, this paper seeks to explore the EU's initiatives, programs and institutional constraints of the organization (James, Carrie 2011: 47-69).

EU Democracy Promotion Strategies

After the Second World War Europeans were determined to unite and create peaceful continent. To achieve this goal, Coal and Steel Community established with the initiative of six European countries-Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany- and then they went further to deepen this cooperation by creating European Economic Community. In 1993 with the Treaty of Maastricht; organization changed its name to European Union and became stronger at the second half of the 20th century (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/). Democracy promotion was not the main aim of the European union since the end of the cold war; however last 20 years the EU has evolved its democracy promotion strategies through aid related projects and political cooperation.

EU's enlargement policy and focus on accession countries has been one of the most important factor in European Union democracy promotion history. The EU's enlargement policy has promoted democracy with the process of accession conditionality, which has made a great contribution towards global democratization. The EU supported processes of democratization in Portugal, Greece and Spain in 1970s and 80s, after the cold war supported the democratization of Central Europe (www.freedomhouse.org). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, democratization of Central Europe has shown some differences in comparison to southern Europe.

Socialist Central and East Europe liberalized and its economy capitalized while democratization of the region. We can say that the EU's democracy promotion activities during the 1990s have been turning point of the organization. The EU's enlargement policy can be counted as a significant incentive for accession countries. The 2004 enlargement of the EU was a significant step in terms of democracy promotion as well. Mc Faul states that integration is an especially benign yet effective tool of democracy promotion because the mechanism provides incentives for the leadership of a democratizing country to pursue internal change (Mcfaul 2004: 157).

EU's accession conditionality has been one the effective tools of the democracy promotion efforts of the organization. Adoption of the democratic rules, the rule of law, human rights and respect for minorities are the pre-accession conditions that member states have to meet. Moreover, the EU's political conditionality as a motivation for democratization assisted East Europe's democratic consolidation even after becoming member state. In the context of pre-accession conditionality, Copenhagen criteria require that the candidate country has achieved stability of institutions and guaranteeing democracy. Since 1993, Copenhagen criteria were established, the EU has been taking essential role on democracy promotion and accelerating political reforms and democratization process in countries.

In addition to political conditionality, through treaties such as the Lome IV agreement of 1989, the European Initiative for Development and Human in Rights in 1999, and the European Neighborhood Policy in 2003, the EU has made the promotion of democratic values a core policy objective of its external relations (McFaul 2004: 157) Furthermore, the EU and the member states support democracy promotion by providing funding through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIHDR). The EIDHR offers a comprehensive package of local action to encourage political pluralism, empower disenfranchised groups, defend victims and promote dialogue, fostering mediation, transparency, accountability and consultation (EIHDR 2011:7). The EU promotes democracy and human rights through its budget for foreign assistance, which is managed by the European Commission (www.freedomhouse.org). Since 2000, the European Commission has implemented more than EUR 5.4 billion worth of activities in the all-encompassing field of governance, identified as an area of European Commission added value (EIDHR 2011:8). Contributions from the EIHDR represented 17 % of this amount aimed at mainly smaller projects (EIHDR 2011:8).

Launched in 2006, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) is part of the EU's agenda to move towards a more locally sensitive democratization approach. EIHDR's main aim is to provide support for the promotion of democracy and human rights in non-EU countries (http://www.eidhr.eu/whatis-eidhr). EIHDR supports mostly civil society organizations for instance in the 2009-2010 period, the EIDHR backed more than 900 civil society organizations. Approximately 90% of the partners are civil society organizations and the remaining %10 are international organizations (http://ec.europa.eu). To support home-grown

democracy efforts, EIDHR works with a wide range of partners, from grass-roots organizations to international parliamentary associations, from advocacy and watch-dog organizations to political foundations, trade unions and the media (EIHDR 2011:21).

The EU's democracy promotion activity through European Neighborhood Policy is a key part of the EU's foreign policy since 2003. The EU works with its southern and eastern neighbors to achieve the closest possible political association and the greatest possible degree of economic integration (http://eeas.europa.eu). In 2012, the European Endowment for Democracy was established and the European Endowment for Democracy aims to support political and civil society actors striving for democratic change in the EU's eastern and southern neighborhoods as well (http://www.europarl.europa.eu). The European Neighborhood Policy governs the EU's relations with 16 of the EU's closest Eastern and Southern Neighbors. To the South: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia and to the East: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Since the inception of the European Neighborhood policy, the EU wants to engage in close relationship with these countries but the accession to the EU is not promised (http://carnegieeurope.eu).

Following the Arab Spring uprisings the European Neighborhood Policy was updated and emphasized the respect to the differences of the partner countries. This reconsideration of the policy has been called 'deep democracy' and 'more for more' (http://europa.eu/). According to Wetzel and Orbie, the 'deep democracy', concept has been defined in various and rather vague terms (Wetzel, Orbie 2012:2). Moreover, Michael Emerson criticizes the deep democracy concept was invented in the wake of the crisis in Tunisia to hide the EU's ambiguous democracy promotion agenda in that region (Wetzel, Orbie 2012:2).

Some scholars argue that EU's primary focus is on elections some others stress that EU democracy promotion policies support a neoliberal market model rather than political rights (Ceps Policy Brief 2012:2). President of European Commission José Manuel Durão Barroso clarifies the EU's democracy promotion objectives (http://europa.eu/):

"Of course in Europe you should not be arguing that we have a monopoly of democratic virtue or that we can serve as some kind of automatic template. It is true to say nevertheless that Europe is a kind of laboratory based on the rule of law, the pooling of sovereignty, the respect for diversity. Without arrogance, we have to be ready to show the way. Not to impose but to propose to the rest of the world the values of freedom, solidarity and democracy. And we have indeed a very important – to use a well known expression - transformational power also outside our borders".

Conclusion

With 28 member states the EU's supranational structure provides strength and weakness for democracy support. In practice, there is a gap between the EU's ambitions and its performance. (www.freedomhouse.org). The EU prioritizes human rights and democracy on democracy promotion work so the EU's initiatives can be counted as an important contribution and the strength of the organization. On the other hand, diversity amongst the member EU states and the complex structure of the organization impose constraints to aid related projects. The EU should define democracy promotion more broadly and organize the coordination difficulties of the actors within the EU system. For an actor with a strong bureaucratic culture and large budget such as EU member states need to overlook to their national interests.

The EU's accession conditionality as a democracy promotion incentive setter is proven. Therefore, The European Neighborhood Policy should take further steps to build more effective partnerships in the neighborhood, and the EU should develop more holistic approach to democracy promotion rather than focusing just elections like in the past or socio-economic development and human rights.

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