'Normative *or* Realist' versus 'Normative *and* Realist'

Andy Storey (andy.storey@ucd.ie) and Vincent Durac (vincent.durac@ucd.ie): Centre for Development Studies, School of Politics and International Relations, University College Dublin

Introduction

The idea of the EU constituting a form of 'normative power' in its external relations is one which holds significant appeal – not only to European policymakers but also to a number of academic commentators. This article first outlines what is meant by 'normative power', and then offers a critique based on a political economy understanding of the ways in which 'norms' and interests are intermeshed. The example of relations between the EU and Morocco is examined in detail. It is concluded that the EU claim to represent a 'normative power' – understood in a necessarily positive and idealist sense – is misleading, but that the EU does seek to promote and support certain norms that may or may not be in the best interests of those at the receiving end of these promotive and supportive efforts.

The Concept of NPE

The concept of Normative Power Europe (NPE) was developed by Ian Manners as something to be distinguished from more traditional conceptions of military and civilian power. According to Manners (2002: 241):

> The EU has gone further towards making its external relations informed by, and conditional on, a catalogue of norms which come closer to those of the European convention on human rights and fundamental freedoms (ECHR)[1] and the universal declaration of human rights (UDHR) than most other actors in world politics. The EU is founded on and has as its foreign and development policy objectives the consolidation of democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Crucially, the norms promoted by the EU are seen as *universal*, and the EU is claimed to be unique in this regard (compared, for example, to the US which is seen as seeking to project specifically *American* values and norms).[2] One might even term the norms in question (E)Universal. Manners (2002: 241) can thus assert that "the EU is normatively different to other polities with its commitment to individual rights and principles" which, however, are globally shared (if not as well practiced by other powers). For Manners, the

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[1] The reference to the ECHR might be argued to limit the claimed universalism of the norms.

[2] On the tensions between the idea of the EU promoting "*its* rules, standards, values and institutions" and the idea of "'shared norms' and 'common values'" vis-à-vis relations with the Mediterranean, see Pace (2007a: 662, 665, emphasis added).

core (E)Universal norms are peace, liberty, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, with 'minor' norms of social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development and good governance. Bicchi (2006: 289) notes that "the normative value of Europe's power rests on the universal character of the principles it promotes"; or, as Manners himself (2006b: 174) puts it, "It is the lack of exceptionalism, rather than the claim to being special, which characterizes most of the normative claims in the EU".

As to why it so happens that the EU is uniquely positioned to embody and embrace these norms, Manners (2002: 240) identifies three distinctive, relevant characteristics of the EU (see also Sjursen, 2006a: 242). The first is its historical context – the commitment of Europeans to pool sovereignty in the wake of the Second World War as a means of curbing the excesses of nationalism. The second is its unique form of polity, which combines international and supranational forms of governance.[3] The third is its legal-political constitution, which formally embodies the principles of democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, etc. Thus, the EU's international role is determined not so much by "what it does or what it says, but what it is" (Manners, 2002: 252). Manners (2006b: 174) has also suggested that Europe's "historical context of reflexive humility" – a willingness to acknowledge past practices such as colonialism and the Holocaust – helps mould NPE.

These norms are diffused through the very procedures of EU membership and application – for example, states seeking to join the EU must move to abolish the death penalty. NPE also has a wider ability "to shape conceptions of the 'normal' in international relations" (Manners, 2002: 239) i.e., to alter what is seen as appropriate behaviour on the part of others and to bring them more into line with the EU's own (happily universal) norms (see also Diez, 2005: 615). This can be done through diplomatic means or through less overt methods – Manners (2006b: 176) speaks of "the contagion of norms through imitation (*mimétisme*) and attraction".

As Diez points out, there is a form of hegemonic power at work here – "the power to shape the values of others" (Diez, 2005: 616). This can also be interpreted in Foucauldian terms (Diez and Pace, 2007: 2): NPE acts a discourse, "a specific way of thinking about the world, a particular form of knowledge… which does not reflect but actually *constructs* reality. In doing so, it closes off alternative ways of thinking and so constitutes a form of power" (Kiely, 1999: 31, emphasis in original). The NPE discourse is, in these Foucauldian terms, about "disciplining difference, establishing what the norm is and what deviance is" (Munck, 1999: 68). Crucially, the norms are not imposed on others through physical force (Manners, 2006a: 184), nor do they need to be (in part because, as Manners sees it, they are universally shared to begin with).

One specific way in which normative power is exercised is through the EU's willingness (and/or the willingness of its member states) to ratify, and bind itself to, cosmopolitan

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[3] This is echoed in the argument of Habermas and Derrida (2003) that the EU's distinctiveness lies, in part, in a model of post-national governance, a means of reconciling national identity with a wider (in this case regional) identity which supersedes national allegiances and dilutes national rivalries.

treaties on matters such as human rights and environmental protection: "important symbolic and public demonstrations of international commitment" (Manners, 2006b: 173). Choosing to submit itself to "internationally binding law… provides a guarantee that the EU will enforce the norms it promotes in the international arena" (Schiepers and Sicurelli, 2007: 452) and distinguishes the EU from the type of power exercised by, especially, the US (a much less enthusiastic signer of such treaties).

Manners argues that NPE "was, and is, a statement of what is believed to be good about the EU; a statement which needed to be made in order to stimulate and reflect on what the EU *should* be doing in world politics" (2006b: 168, emphasis in original). It is "a normative claim with a normative aim" (Manners, 2006b: 179), the claim resting on the fact that while the EU is by no means a 'perfect' normative power, it is more so than most other actors in world politics. Manners (2006a: 190), however, has expressed fears that the emergence of an EU military capability designed for "robust intervention" subverts the normative approach vis-à-vis sustainable peace: "given the prioritization of military intervention over non-military conciliation, I have little doubt that normative conceptions of the EU are being undermined" (Manners, 2006a: 194).[4]

The Critique of NPE

Eurocentrism and uncritical thinking

Part of the reason for Manners' adoption of the NPE concept lies in his rejection of the notion that Europe has a unique set of values and principles which it can, or should, seek to export to the rest of the world: "Any and all of the norms discussed in the NP approach are not uniquely European, and neither is Europe itself" (Manners, 2006b: 180). Aware of the critique posed by postcolonial theory to any Eurocentric claim to be 'civilising' the world (Manners, 2006a: 184), Manners sees NPE as "an attempt to escape civilizing missions by countering the neocolonial discourses of claims implicit (or explicit) in civilian power" (Manners, 2006b: 175). The intent seems admirable, but it is difficult to see how Eurocentrism has been avoided in practice. Bicchi (2006: 287) asks: "Is the EU a 'normative power', promoting universal norms, or is it a 'civilising power', projecting its own understanding of norms onto the rest of the world?" Her answer is that it is the latter: "the EU does not promote (neutral) norms, but promotes 'Europe' (in the form of European norms)" (Bicchi, 2006: 299).

There is an inescapably strong whiff of Eurocentrism about the NPE project, not least because it accords so closely with EU policy-makers' own stated understanding of themselves and their (positive) roles, an understanding often shared by journalistic cheerleaders[5] and some academics.[6] Former French prime minister Lionel Jospin has

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[4] An increasingly security-driven approach to migration could be considered another such 'falling-off' from normative standards (Diez, 2005: 624).

[5] A colourful example is Jeremy Rifkin's 2004 book *The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream*: "The European dream emphasises community relationships over individual autonomy, cultural diversity over assimilation, quality of life over the accumulation of wealth, sustainable development over unlimited material growth, deep play over

argued that "Europe is much more than a market. It stands for a model of society" (cited in McGrew, 2003: 357). Romano Prodi, former President of the European Commission and prime minister of Italy, suggests that "Europe in the course of its history has had a great heritage to live up to, a heritage which still forms the richest store of culture and knowledge amassed by mankind" (in Hansen, 2004: 58), though given the history of colonial exploitation one is obliged to ask: amassed from whom? Indeed, contrary to the claims of Manners (see above), European leaders typically display little inclination to self-reflexively deal with subjects such as the legacy of colonialism (Hansen, 2004:58). Instead, they more commonly emphasise the claimed positive dimensions of European history and invoke these to justify European efforts to change the wider world, as evidenced again by Prodi:

> Europe needs to project its model of society into the wider world. We are not simply here to defend our own interests: we have a unique historic experience to offer. The experience of liberating people from poverty, war, oppression and intolerance . . . It is not imperialism to want to spread these principles and to share our model of society with the peoples of southern and eastern Europe who aspire to peace, justice and freedom (in Hansen, 2004: 60).

The dangers of this approach are recognized by several scholars, including Bicchi (2006: 287), who describes EU foreign policy as "often unreflexively Eurocentric.. mirroring the deeply ingrained belief that Europe's history is a lesson for everybody".

Academics who endorse the idea of Europe as a civilizing, ethical or normative power leave themselves "vulnerable to the charge of being unable to distinguish between their own sympathy for the European project and their academic role as critical analysts" (Sjursen, 2006b: 170). Pace (2007b: 1045) focuses on the dangers of an uncritical adoption of the EU's own 'liberal narrative'.[7] Whether it involves a claim that superior European values should be exported, or a claim that Europe best embodies universal global norms (Manners' position), this approach too easily slips into an assumption that Europe is, in one way or another, simply 'doing good' in international affairs, or at least attempting to do so (Sjursen, 2006b: 171).[8] Hyde-Price (2006: 218) defines the problem as follows: "when the object of study is seen as embodying the core values one believes in, it is difficult to achieve any critical distance".

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unrelenting toil, universal human rights and the rights of nature over property rights, and global cooperation over the unilateral exercise of power" (Rifkin 2004: 3).

[6] To take just two examples, and they could be multiplied many times over, McSweeney (2002: 362) casually refers to "European values of peace and security", while Wylie (2002: 131) hones in on "the best of the political ideas which have their provenance in Europe, such as democracy and liberty". Manners, in fairness, would reject such overt claims to European exceptionalism, but the idea that Europe happens to best embody *universal* norms is, arguably, little different.

[7] Pace (2007b), for example, highlights how this liberal narrative neglects the disjunction between the (claimed) values and norms of a European élite and the cultural values and norms of various actors in the Middle East conflict.

[8] Smith (2005: 77) notes that defence of the concept of 'civilian power EU' "sometimes may mean that that the EU's rhetoric is taken too seriously and its actions are not critically examined".

Walking the walk?

Following on from the above section, Diez and Pace (2007: 2) describe NPE as "first and foremost a discourse in which EU actors... construct themselves as 'model citizens'". This is ethically problematic, as discussed above, and is especially worrying for academic research when the self-construction is accepted as a description of the reality. However, Diez and Pace also point out that a crucial question concerns the effects this discourse generates – and these might not be entirely negative, however mythical its origins. In other words, the EU *could* actually be 'doing good' (for others as well as itself) through its representation of itself as a normative power provided it proved willing and able to live up to the claims it makes for itself. Indeed, the claims themselves may provide "a platform for activists, civil society organizations and NGOs to use rhetorical and symbolic tools, including shaming tactics, to get their political leaders to comply with the values, norms and ideals that EU actors advance" (Diez and Pace, 2007: 6), or claim to advance.

In that vein, some of the literature that has engaged – implicitly or explicitly – with the idea of NPE asks a variant of the following question: 'Europe talks the talk, but does it walk the walk?', or can it at least be pressured to do so? Diez (2005: 624) highlights "charges of bias and arbitrariness" in the application of EU human rights policy, and these are expanded on further below. The disjunction of the EU's claimed commitment to democracy promotion and its refusal to recognize the democratically elected government of Palestine is another obvious case in point (Pace, 2007b), as is the unwillingness to fully push for democracy in Morocco based on a prioritization of 'stability' and a fear of Islamist movements, as will be discussed further below (see also Pace, 2007a: 668).

However, some empirical studies appear to suggest that the walk is indeed walked. For example, in their analysis of the trade and political agreement signed by Mexico and the EU in 2000, Syzmanski and Smith relate the insertion of a human rights suspension clause in the agreement to "The centrality of human rights as a European cultural norm" (2005: 178). Previous EU agreements with third countries had included political dialogue provisions around issues of democracy and human rights, but had not contained provision for automatic suspension in the event of violations. EU negotiators were, it is claimed, willing to abandon the agreement altogether rather than abandon human rights principles (Syzmanski and Smith, 2005: 175). By contrast, the North American Free Trade Agreement between Mexico and the US (and Canada) contained no reference to human rights (Syzmanski and Smith, 2005: 173). Syzmanski and Smith conclude that there may be "a growing acceptance of the EU as a force for long-term global peace, prosperity and stability through its use of principled co-operative development programmes with poorer countries" (Syzmanski and Smith, 2005: 190).

However, a more recent assessment argues that the development impact of the EU-Mexico agreement has been negative, increasing Mexico's import penetration, damaging its industrial and service sectors, and heightening its dependence on foreign capital, thus raising the possibility that economic and social rights were sacrificed even as political and civil rights were strengthened (World Development Movement, 2008). Indeed, this

leads back to a critical conceptual point: could such a differentiated approach to rights, where political and civil rights are promoted whereas economic and social rights are, at the very least, deprioritised represent a specifically European (or Western) norm that is not universally shared? If so, the claim that NPE's uniqueness lies in its embodiment and promotion of universal norms is challenged (see above).

Other studies that are, broadly speaking, supportive of the impact of NPE include that by Schiepers and Sicurelli (2007), which sees NPE in action in the institutionalisation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and in the development and ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. Schiepers and Sicurelli (2008) also argue that the EU's campaign to have African states sign up to the ICC and the Kyoto Protocol empowered African countries – by enhancing their international identities (signing up gave these states recognition and legitimacy); by the direct provision to them of legal and technical expertise so that they could participate in discussions on, and implement, the agreements; and by material aid as a conditional *quid pro quo* being made available to African signatories. While this last form of support is acknowledged to run counter to the rhetoric of EU-African relationships consisting of a 'partnership of equals', the authors nonetheless conclude that African countries have been empowered by the EU's international promotion of its core norms.[9] They acknowledge that this did not occur for reasons of altruism (for example, the EU had an interest in positioning itself as a world leader on these issues vis-à-vis the US),[10] and they also acknowledge that making some development aid conditional on African (and other) countries ratifying the Kyoto Protocol (and other agreements) caused some African state agents to speak of a 'new colonialism' (Schiepers and Sicurelli, 2008: 617). The fact that some countries had to be thus 'bribed' to adopt these instruments again raises the possibility that certain (claimed) European norms (on human rights and environmental sustainability) are not necessarily shared universally – or not understood in the same way.

The primacy of interests?

An example of a study that is very critical of the EU's NPE claims is Falkner's political economy analysis of the EU's approach to international biotechnology regulation (Falkner, 2007). The EU has been somewhat successful at portraying itself as a 'green normative power' on issues such as the regulation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) by virtue of its adoption and promotion of the 'precautionary principle' within such regulation (see also the earlier discussion of EU leadership re the Kyoto Protocol, and Burchell and Lightfoot (2004) on the EU's stance at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development).[11] "In this view, European environmental leadership departs

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[9] This echoes Bicchi's idea that "the EU behaves normatively when it promotes values that *empower* actors affected by" European foreign policy (2006: 289, emphasis in original).

[10] Likewise, Oberthur and Roche Kelly (2008: 43) attribute EU leadership on international climate policy to the fact that it allowed EU institutions better legitimize the European integration project – as environmental protection was a very popular concern, the EU was able to attract support for integration by positioning itself as a global leader on this issue; concern about energy security also helped prompt increased EU attention to issues such as energy efficiency and alternative energy sources.

[11] Burchell and Lightfoot do not accept the EU's claim to sustainability leadership uncritically: they find that corporate and trade interests at least partially worked to undermine stated EU commitments to

from the *realpolitik* tradition in foreign policy and promotes the global common good over and above the national interest… [and is] infused with a universalist normative dimension" (Falkner, 2007: 510).

But Falkner goes on to argue that "what the normative power perspective portrays as the pursuit of universal values and global concerns is more accurately described as the internationalization of European policies" (Falkner, 2007: 511). EU policy on this issue was initially driven by a strong civil society anti-GMO movement, which European biotechnology companies were slow to react to. The companies fought back in the 1990s and lobbied extensively for a more biotech-friendly regime. However, popular opinion remained determinedly opposed to GMOs, especially in the wake of (albeit unrelated) food safety crises such as BSE, and the late 1990s saw resurgent anti-GMO campaigns force the EU to declare a moratorium on GMO approvals and the precautionary principle was thus institutionalized. Falkner notes that "the rise of a Europe-wide anti-GM movement and the relative weakness of organized biotechnology interests provided the key background conditions for the dramatic shift in the EU's international stance. None of this was the quasi-natural outflow of the EU's normative identity" (Falkner, 2007: 513). And while the EU subsequently joined forces with developing countries to seek to allow countries restrict trade in GMOs, under lobbying pressure from pharmaceutical companies the EU sided with the US to resist restrictions on GMOs that took the form of pharmaceuticals for human use (Falkner, 2007: 520).

Falkner's last point echoes, in some respects, the large amount of NGO and campaign group research that highlights corporate influence over EU policy.[12] The World Development Movement (WDM), for example, points to EU requests (tabled in 2002) under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) to 109 countries. Each such request involved asking the government of the country concerned to open certain, specified service sectors up to competition from EU firms. The requests largely originated from the European Services Forum (ESF), a European business lobby group (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2003).[13] While these requests were not initially made public, leaked documents obtained by the WDM (2003) led that organisation to draw conclusions about the EU's negotiating stance, including that the EU was targeting the poorest countries in the world in its pursuit of services market access for European companies and that the EU was targeting countries where "effective non-market based delivery systems are in operation" (WDM, 2003:2), precisely because such not-for-profit systems limit the commercial opportunities available to European service exporters.

Large corporations are usually best placed to maintain a permanent lobbying presence in Brussels and Strasbourg (Balanyá *et al*, 2003; Centre for a Social Europe, 2004; Friends

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sustainable development, in particular through influence over DG Trade (tending to favour free market liberalism) and over DG Agriculture (tending to defend the interests of European agribusiness).

[12] On the influence exerted by European financial services companies over EU policies on financial regulation (or the lack of it), see Vander Stichele (2008).

[13] In the words of one Commission official, speaking in 1999, "The European Commission is going to rely heavily on the ESF... We are going to rely on it just as heavily as on member state direct advice in trying to formulate our objectives" (cited in Corporate Europe Observatory, 2003).

of the Earth Europe, 2008; McGiffen, 2001: 139). The fact that this lobby power operates through decision-making structures that are often lacking in transparency aggravates the problem – EU trade policy formulation provides a particularly egregious example of non-transparency (Deckwirth, 2005; Worldwide Fund for Nature, 2003). Youngs (2004: 427), in his study of EU human rights policies (see also below), found that the 'good governance' agenda (including opposition to corruption) was most likely to be pursued by the EU when the specific commercial interests of European corporations were threatened – for example, by state corruption in a partner country.

Hyde-Price's realist critique of NPE (2006) argued that EU foreign policy was based on the natural interest that any 'great power' has in shaping their external environment to ensure their own security – what he describes as 'milieu shaping'. Ethical concerns, he argues, are 'second-order' concerns, doomed always to rank below national security considerations. Other commentators also point to examples of strategic (and economic) agendas clearly trumping any concern for human rights: Forsberg and Herd (2005) are scathing in their assessment of the EU's policy towards Russia in the light of the Chechen conflict which, they contend, exposed "the limitations of human rights principles as a central organising principle" within that policy (Forsberg and Herd 2005: 455). Instead, it is claimed, and especially after September 2001, the EU largely accepted the Russian characterisation of the conflict as 'anti-terrorist' in nature, and chose to concentrate on issues such as shared security threats, trade and investment (Forsberg and Herd 2005: 468). "[R]ealpolitik state interests were promoted at the expense of the normative agenda" (Forsberg and Herd 2005: 477). Simultaneously, the authors argue, the EU maintained the *pretence* of a concern for human rights by accepting Russian claims that abuses were decreasing, or, where occurring, were justified (Forsberg and Herd 2005: 477-8)

Of course, this is not to say that all EU external actions are based on a 'hidden agenda' of corporate or strategic interests. Bicchi (2006), drawing on sociological institutionalism, attributes the EU's promotion of regionalism in the Mediterranean region to 'institutional isomorphism' i.e., the tendency on the part of institutions to unreflexively export their own models to other situations. The EU treats the Mediterranean as a region and seeks to promote regional cooperation there simply because the EU's own experience is based on the regional cooperation model.

*Norms **and** interests*

Is the whole rhetoric of norm diffusion then simply a guise for the (overt or covert) pursuit of European economic and/or strategic interests (and/or unreflexive 'institutional isomorphism')? This is an important question, and yet it may also imply a somewhat reductive, binary opposition – norms *versus* interests. For Youngs (2004: 420), it is not possible to clearly differentiate between norms and interests: "Norms based on material interests can assume normative authority; norms are woven into material interests". Diez (2005: 622, 625) also makes the point that "interests and norms cannot easily be separated" and that "the assumption of a normative sphere without interests is itself nonsensical". Youngs argues that the EU's normative concerns for human rights are

underpinned by strategic interests. For example, vis-à-vis Afghanistan, EU states made aid conditional on the establishment of a Human Rights Commission but they also tolerated the rule of local warlords and agreed to the postponement of elections on the grounds of ensuring 'stability'(Youngs, 2004: 425). In the aftermath of 9/11, the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (an EU programme) targeted Pakistan for increased funding on the grounds of its centrality in the global 'war on terror' (Youngs, 2004: 428-9). Which rights are supported (if at all), and where, depends, not surprisingly, on the strategic assessments and interests of European governments.[14]

Norms are always likely to be derived from interests, albeit not in a necessarily direct and clear-cut manner (Storey, 2006). Interests may refer not only to the short-term commercial agenda of a particular corporation, or the security considerations of an EU state, but rather to the broader political economy concerns of European capital, EU governments, the Commission, and others. For example, the EU might promote a norm of economic liberalisation because it is committed to the extension and reinforcement of global capitalist relations – which it may or may not genuinely see as the best route to development for poorer countries – even if it does not envisage any immediate profits accruing to specific European companies from specific liberalising measures (Cammack 2005). Thus, the EU may promote a norm of 'good governance' (including market liberalisation) for reasons that combine both (long-term, perceived) self-interest and normative commitment. That the EU acts in this way in terms of the *internal* economic governance of Europe is already a commonplace in the burgeoning neo-Gramscian literature on EU political economy (Bonefeld, 2002; Cafruny and Ryner, 2007; Gill, 2001; Storey, 2008; Van Appeldoorn, 2001).

While norm diffusion may, on occasion, simply be a hypocritical smokescreen for the pursuit of naked and short-term economic or strategic gain, it may also constitute an attempt to project onto other countries and actors a specific model of behaviour. Crucially, regardless of whether the motivation is explicitly self-serving or not, this model of behaviour could be ill suited to those others' needs and priorities. Storey (2006) addressed these issues through an analysis of the EU's negotiating positions vis-à-vis the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) being put in place with African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. Was the EU really promoting norms in these negotiations? And if norms were being promoted or diffused, were they appropriate to African countries and populations?

According to the then EU Trade Commissioner, "EPAs are not about Europe trying to force open markets for our benefit" (Mandelson, 2005). Nonetheless, critics were sceptical on this point. The organisation Traidcraft (2003) was to the fore in criticisms of

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[14] Sjursen (2006a: 239) claims that Youngs has not conclusively established the primacy of strategic concerns within the EU's human rights agenda, and that even if strategic considerations do play some role, this does not invalidate the NPE argument – progressive norms can still be diffused even if for strategic reasons. But this point seems already implicit in Youngs' argument that, for example, EU human rights aid projects tend to channel money to civil society groups that are most 'Western' in character rather than, in the case of the Middle East and North Africa, to religious (especially Islamic) or clan-based groups; this does not mean that the groups funded might not be playing a politically progressive role in certain respects (Youngs, 2004: 427).

the EU's (allegedly self-serving) agenda, highlighting the following elements of the EU's negotiating stance vis-à-vis the EPAs:

- Demands for liberalisation of public procurement in the ACP states (allowing EU firms to bid for public works contracts there and not allowing ACP governments support or prioritise local contractors);

- Movement towards liberalisation of *all* service sectors i.e., an even more ambitious approach than the GATS one of tabling sectoral requests (see above);

- And pressure to ensure European firms received at least as favourable treatment as local ones in the ACP countries, meaning that ACP governments would not be allowed discriminate in favour of locally owned firms or require European companies to abide by special conditions with regard to local employment or procurement.

The Commission denied that these demands were based on European commercial self-interest and defended the very wide agenda of the negotiations:

> EPAs are part of the overall effort to build up the economic governance framework, the stable, transparent and predictable rules necessary to lower the costs of doing business, attract fresh domestic or foreign investment and make ACP producers more diversified and competitive. This is why the EPAs must be comprehensive, dealing with all the rules and issues that concern private investors and traders... As a result, issues such as competition policy and investment rules are no luxury but fundamental factors that affect the decisions of traders and investors (Commission, 2005:32).

Critics remained unconvinced by the attempt to extend the agreements beyond trade policies and into areas of what they saw as domestic economic governance. They noted that it was precisely these ambitions on the part of the EU, to push the so-called 'Singapore Issues' (investment, competition, and public procurement) into trade agreements, that had been rejected by most developing countries at World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations (Curtis, 2005:12-13). The Commission recognised the point, but was unapologetic:

> We recognise the concern among NGOs that the EU is 'trying to reintroduce the so-called Singapore issues by the back door'. However, *everyone should acknowledge* that investment, public procurement and competition policy are essential parts of successful economic governance (Commission memorandum, January 2005, cited in Curtis, 2005:13, emphasis added).

The phrase 'everyone should acknowledge' is particularly telling in the context of NPE – the EU was here making a universal claim about a particular (European?) norm concerning (good?) economic governance. But not everyone did acknowledge the universality of this norm, nor did they see why they should. They saw instead an attempt on the part of the Commission to lock ACP states into a particular model of economic

governance, reflecting a longer-term shift in EU-ACP relations from "a redistributive, interventionist approach to one founded on the principles of free trade and neoliberal othrodoxy" (Nunn and Price, 2004:213). Following Munck (1999: 68), a norm of neoliberal governance was being discursively and materially established, as was 'deviance' – in this case, more interventionist economic policies. Storey (2006) concluded that NPE was indeed in action on the EPA issue – diffusing, however, a particular and controversial 'norm' of good governance, narrowly focused on specific conceptions concerning liberal democracy and market economics (Abrahamsen, 2000). This was far from guaranteed to yield positive outcomes for African and other ACP countries.[15]

Norms and Interests: the Case of the EU and Morocco

A democratizing polity?

Morocco has one of the most open, plural, political systems in the Middle East and North Africa region. Since independence in 1956, the Moroccan state has sought to present itself to the world as politically open, if not democratic. Successive constitutions asserted the principle of multipartyism along with the preeminent role of the monarchy in political life (Bendourou, 1996: 110-111). While the rule of King Hassan II, who dominated Moroccan political life from 1961 until his death in 1999, was synonymous for much of its span with human rights abuses, corruption and the largely successful efforts of the monarch to dominate the political sphere, the accession to the throne of his son, Muhammad VI, in 1999, seemed to signal a real change in direction for Moroccan politics. Limited reforms took place in the final years of Hassan's reign but, under Muhammad VI, the rate of change accelerated. The powerful Minister of the Interior was sacked, political prisoners were released as political exiles returned to the country from Europe, and changes in the civil law code were pushed through which granted greater rights to women. An opposition Islamic movement, the Party of Justice and Development, was brought into the political process (although the other major Islamic movement, the Justice and Charity group, which refuses to engage with a political process which it considers illegitimate, remains outside the system). For some these changes portended "the establishment of a new, direct, and linear path towards an entirely democratic regime" (Tozy, 2008: 35).

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[15] This relates to wider debates within economic development about the claimed 'shrinking of development space' (Wade 2003) – the way in which trade and other agreements serve to preclude countries from pursuing the types of interventionist policies which, it is claimed, stimulated economic development in the now-developed economies (Chang 2008). The EU's commitment to neoliberal governance in its relations with developing countries was continued in the proposed Lisbon Treaty e.g., "all restrictions on the movement of capital between Member States and between Member States and third countries shall be prohibited." Other articles of the Treaty committed the EU to "to the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade and on foreign direct investment, and the lowering of customs and other barriers", and "the achievement of uniformity in measures of liberalisation." Attempting to constitutionally ensure that the EU's negotiating stance in international trade negotiations *must* be exercised in the pursuit of liberalization (of capital and of trade in goods and services) is a particularly clear example of seeking to institutionalize specific norms, norms which, amidst the current collapse of financialised capitalism, are ever *less* universally shared – within and beyond Europe.

The EU and Morocco

EU relations with Morocco are located within the broader context of its framework for engagement with non-member Mediterranean states. The basis for this was set out in 1995 when the then fifteen members of the union established the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) with twelve partner countries in the Mediterranean. The EMP identified three broad objectives – the definition of a common area of peace and stability through the reinforcement of political and security dialogue; the construction of 'a zone of shared prosperity' through economic and financial partnership; and rapprochement between peoples through social, cultural and human partnership (EU, 2004). The EMP envisaged that the EU would enter into 'Association Agreements' with individual partner countries, which would set out the steps to be taken in pursuit of these objectives. The Association Agreement between Morocco and the EU entered into force in March 2000. It emphasizes the observance of human rights, democratic principles and economic freedom and the need to strengthen political development and economic stability, stating that:

> [t]he respect for human rights and democratic principles guides the internal and international policy of both Morocco and the Community and constitutes an essential and positive element of the Agreement (EC, 2000).

The significance of its relations with Morocco for the EU can be seen in the trading relationship between the two. Between 1995 and 2007, EU-Morocco trade grew by 80 per cent. In 2007, EU exports of goods to Morocco were worth €12 billion, while goods imports from Morocco amounted to €7.8 billion. EU exports of services to Morocco were worth an additional €1.3 billion, while EU imports of services from Morocco were worth €3 billion. EU foreign direct investment in Morocco was valued at €4 billion in 2005 (EC, 2009).

Moroccan 'democracy'

Despite the optimism that surrounded moves towards greater political liberalization in the first years of the new king's reign, any suggestion that Morocco is moving in the direction of substantive democracy has to be treated with great caution. Indeed, as early as 2002, Maghraoui suggested that "Morocco is no closer today to a decisive democratic breakthrough than it was four decades ago" (Maghraoui, 2002: 30). While more open elections have been held since the death of Hassan II, the balance of power between the monarchy and parliament has not been altered. Zerhouni characterizes the Moroccan parliament as a legitimizing tool for decisions taken by the monarchy and as an instrument for "elite compensation, manipulation, integration, or cooptation", rather than as a legislative body; thus, it provides the king with a space to manage or resolve conflicts between stakeholders allowing him to present himself as the sole arbitrator of difference and conflict in Moroccan society (Zerhouni, 2008: 219).

A number of initiatives taken by Muhammad VI confirm the extent to which political power remains concentrated in the monarchy. After elections in 2002, and against parliament's wishes, the king appointed a Prime Minister, Dris Jettou, who was not a member of the majority in parliament. In keeping with traditional practice preceding his accession to the throne, he also appointed the Ministers of the Interior, Foreign Affairs and Islamic Affairs, thus confirming the "political supremacy of the monarchy and its position as the only significant force in political decision-making" (Maghraoui, 2008: 206). While the new regime oversaw a significant expansion in the activities of civil society organizations, it also took several steps to direct and penetrate those activities. Royal committees and institutions were established to deal with important issues of concern to civil society activists. This strategy has led to the emergence of a 'hybrid system' in which greater levels of political participation are available to civil society actors while their causes are appropriated by the monarchy (Maghraoui, 2008: 207). In this way, the establishment of royal institutions that include civil society actors, to deal with issues such as human rights abuses, women, poverty, the civil code and the Western Sahara, can be seen as part of new "technologies of control" (Maghraoui, 2008: 208). Sater has discussed the ways in which the state has positioned itself as a major player in the area of human rights, thereby defusing, to its advantage, critical aspects of its dialogue with national and international human rights organizations, thus illustrating the state's capacity to increase its power and to penetrate society while simultaneously *seeming* to enhance the role of non-state actors (Sater, 2002: 116).

The result of this is a political system that has been variously described as 'defused' or 'depoliticized'. For Tozy, the Moroccan political system revolves around a political game that has been 'defused' because of the degree of cooptation and consensus on key issues. The elections of 2007, he argues, were not about putting competing political projects before the voters. Rather, they were about "changing the methods by which the system can adapt in the face of a crisis among its elites"; key decisions about economic policies, major infrastructural development projects and social programmes were not discussed, much less criticized, during the election period (Tozy, 2008: 37).

Zemni and Bogaert point out that 'depoliticising' the debate on democracy and economic and political change means that the allocation and distribution of societal resources is seen as being independent of 'the logic of domination and rule':

> Therefore, the 'governors' are not seen as 'adversaries' but are depicted as 'partners' in a participatory logic of government and the market-economy is seen as a neutral field that is defined in terms of efficiency, good management and professionalism. The technocratisation of politics absorbs and neutralizes democratic transition (Zemni and Bogaert, 2009: 101).

The result in Morocco is a form of 'stalled democratization' (Cavatorta, 2005) in which no real threat to the regime is realistically likely to emerge.

The role of the EU

The resulting 'depoliticization' (Maghraoui, 2008:207) of the Moroccan political scene is crucially linked to the role of the EU in Morocco. Indeed, this 'depoliticization' serves perfectly the dual objectives of the EU in promoting Morocco as an example of its commitment to democracy and human rights in its foreign policy, while effectively ensuring the stability of a regime which secures other (superior) objectives. For the European Union, its interest in the promotion of democracy and human rights is embodied in the image of a reform-minded ruler whose economic and political project is seemingly (and very conveniently) supported by all of the major political actors. This in turn ensures that other interests are also protected. These include concerns about migration, the political instability that would flow from Islamist political success, and the preservation of an environment in which European economic interests are guaranteed.

With regard to migration, the Maghreb increasingly is seen not as a transit zone, but as a buffer zone between Europe and sub-Saharan Africa, as the countries of North Africa are now considered accountable not only for their borders with Europe but also for their southern borders since these open migratory routes from sub-Saharan Africa (Bensaad, 2007: 55). However, for the EU, stabilizing migration and securing borders are objectives that have little to do with democracy promotion, since their successful pursuit requires the co-operation of stable, friendly regimes which, in current circumstances, are by no means the certain consequences of free elections in contemporary North Africa (Durac, 2009: 84).

Indeed, fear of Islamist success in genuinely free and fair elections in Morocco and elsewhere in the region is a central characteristic of the EU's engagement with the Middle East and North Africa. This is clear in the Moroccan case by an examination of the extent to which the EU avoids engagement with Islamic-oriented organizations in its attempts to pursue the goals of supporting civil society and political change. While Islamic groups are not officially excluded from activities promoted by the EU, nonetheless EU funds do not reach them. This is, in large part, because the choice of which organizations to be included within the scope of EU aid to Mediterranean non-member states is largely left to the preferences of national governments. In 2005-06, the EU allocated €5m for activities related to human rights and democratization in Morocco. Of this, €2m went to a national human rights institution set up by the government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), while €3m, ostensibly for the strengthening of civil society organizations working for democracy and human rights, was allocated to the Ministry for Employment and Social Affairs, which was charged with selecting activities for funding (Bicchi and Martin, 2006, 198). Thus, in 2006, for example, 11 million dirhams (US$1.5m) were distributed to civil society groups in Morocco, not one of which was for an Islamist organization (Cavatorta, 2009: 150). While it may seem logical for the EU to fund organizations that seem to share its secular and democratic principles, the problem with this is that these organizations comprise a minority of those politically active in Morocco, while the EU may bring such secular organizations into disrepute through their association with other EU policies in the economic sphere that many see as resulting in the impoverishment of Moroccans (Cavatorta, 2009: 150).

Finally, As Zemni and Bogaert (2009) note, the EU's relations with Morocco are also motivated by the goal of a secure and profitable environment in which foreign commercial interests can prosper and the maintenance of a legal framework in which the interests and investments of European companies are safeguarded.

Hypocrisy, or a particular norm of economic and political governance?

EU support for recent political changes in Morocco, which have seen the emergence, on the face of it, of a greater level of pluralism than in most countries in the region, allows the EU to position itself as a supporter of the 'norms' of human rights and democracy. However, the process of political reform in Morocco is a managed, top-down process, which is firmly under royal control. This ensures that no significant destabilization of the status quo will take place. Indeed, the nature of the reforms that have taken place has resulted in a 'depoliticization' of the Moroccan public sphere, with key positions – such as the primacy of the monarchy, the broad direction of political and economic reform, and the need for more efficient management of the economic sphere – being accepted by all actors incorporated into the political system This, of course, satisfies the EU's interests in relation to key strategic goals to do with immigration, political Islam and economic interests in Morocco.

Recent history makes absolutely transparent the fact that should EU support for political reform threaten political instability and other key strategic interests, then support for 'normative' goals is severely circumscribed, if not abandoned outright. Clear examples of this can be seen in the negative reaction of the EU to the success of Hamas in elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council in 2006 (see above), as well as its reluctance to put any sanctions in place in its dealings with either Tunisia or Egypt, despite the palpable failure of long-standing authoritarian regimes in both of those countries to take seriously the commitments to democratic political reform and human rights protection that are ostensibly core to European interventions in the region (Durac and Cavatorta 2009; Durac, 2009).

And yet, to return to the main theme of this paper, it would be reductive to see the EU as necessarily hypocritical in its dealings with Morocco, as being willing to *sacrifice* norms for interests (though this is certainly *part* of the story). As described earlier, the EU's dealings with (sub-Saharan) Africa are at least partly driven by the genuine embrace of a 'norm' of neoliberal economic governance. Likewise, the EU is itself partially wedded to the 'norm' of seemingly consensual and 'technocratised' democracy that characterizes Morocco. Witness, for example, the EU's containment of trade unions within corporatist structures (Hyman, 2004). The Maastricht Treaty established frameworks for the 'social partners', including the unions, to be consulted on relevant issues, a process that generated subsequent agreements on parental leave and part-time employment (Taylor and Mathers, 2002: 48). A Works Council Directive facilitated a degree of employee consultation in some companies, though with minimal results (Taylor and Mathers, 2002: 49-50). In return for these meagre gains,

> The ETUC [European Trade Union Confederation] has increasingly moved
> towards an accommodation with neo-liberalism and through its support and

involvement in 'social partnership' has promoted monetary stability, market flexibility and employability at both European and enterprise level (Taylor and Mathers, 2002: 49).

In a manner that would not be unfamiliar to Moroccan observers, having coopted some potential opposition forces, European-level institutions such as the European Central Bank (ECB) and the Commission then exercise power in a technocratic manner. Significant areas of, especially economic, policy are decided upon not by democratic discussion and debate, but by administrative fiat. Competition policy, state aid rules, the appropriate level of the interest rate and many other matters are all largely determined by technical 'experts' operating in a supposedly neutral realm of objective facts and data. Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), as McGiffen (2001: 64) puts it, "abolished the tiresome influence of popular, democratic institutions on macro-economic policy". This does not, in practice, make the matters decided upon non-political – the level of the exchange rate and the interest rate, for example, have important distributional consequences. But it does serve to limit the public's very right to even discuss issues that are portrayed as inappropriate subjects for public debate, such decisions being best left to the 'experts' (Forder, 2004).[16] The restricted and debilitated version of democracy that characterizes Morocco is also therefore partially present in the EU itself: in its own way, it itself constitutes a European 'norm'.

Conclusion

Amongst the criticisms of NPE are that it is Eurocentric and that it may function as a smokescreen for the pursuit of self-interest on the part of European corporations and/or states. Diez and Pace (2007), however, rightly stress that what may be most important about the NPE discourse is the effects it generates and that the effects could be positive even if discourse itself was illusory or 'constructed'. Equally, as this paper has argued, EU actors may genuinely subscribe to a particular set of norms – concerning, for example, liberal democracy, market economics, and a 'consensual'/technocratic form of governance – but the effects could be negative for those with whom the EU enters into 'partnership'. In other words, the EU could actually be 'doing bad' (for others as well as itself) through its representation of itself as a normative power *even if* (indeed, *especially* if) it is willing and able to live up to the claims it makes for itself.

EU reality may often not live up to the rhetoric – the realist may trump the normative. Equally, reality and rhetoric may perfectly chime – the realist and the normative may march in step. In this latter case, the question then becomes whether what is being rhetorically espoused and practiced in reality is for the good or ill of those at the receiving end – in or outside Europe. In a variant of the poet WB Yeats' line that 'the best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity', the EU may precisely do most harm when it (and its journalistic and academic cheerleaders) are most

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[16] Nor is this a new phenomenon: 'EMU is compatible with the strong tradition of elitism and depoliticization in European integration' (Tzoukalis, 2003: 157). Within this tradition, the role of the citizens is simply to be persuaded of the arguments of the experts, and the only role of politicians is to better engage in that task of persuasion (Wodak, 2000).

convinced it is doing good. In any event, there is little to be gained by adhering to the idealist (indeed naïve) elements of the NPE thesis, such as focusing on "what is believed to be good about the EU" (Manners, 2006b: 168). Instead, we can accept that the EU sometimes acts as a normative power, but that these norms are not necessarily universal, and that their pursuit may either advance *or* retard the well-being of Europeans and non-Europeans. As Falkner puts it, "In a field of study that is at constant risk of moral hyperbole… we need to retain a critical perspective on any claim that power serves global interests and universal values" (2007: 522, 520). *Certain* interests are always prioritised over others, including through the espousal of particular norms.

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