The limits of ‘proactive cosmopolitanism’: EU foreign policy towards Burma, Cuba, and Zimbabwe

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This paper seeks to answer one of the questions posed by the workshop directors: under what conditions and in what circumstances can and does the EU export norms, and to what effect? It concentrates on three cases in which the EU has actively tried to export norms (namely respect for human rights and democratic principles) outside the wider European neighbourhood: Burma/Myanmar, Cuba and Zimbabwe. In none of these countries does the EU appear to have successfully exported norms. Why? In all three cases there have been inconsistencies in EU policy and difficulties in holding a common line, which contribute to the EU’s lack of success, but this paper also points to an additional reason.

The answer given here calls into question the positive connation inherent in our conceptions of the EU as a ‘civilian’ or ‘normative’ power. Those conceptions emphasise the role of values and norms in EU foreign policy, which are generally considered progressive, enlightened, ethical. Yet the rest of the world – particularly the developing world – may not share these views, and the EU’s foreign policy is contested by third countries precisely because it is not seen as ethical, but rather as imperialist and self-serving (as well as, and because it is, inconsistent). While the targets of EU action (Burma, Cuba and Zimbabwe here) might be expected to lob such accusations at the EU, what is more worrisome is that their neighbours do so – through the very regional groupings whose set-up and operation the EU has supported. It is the EU’s failure to convince other countries, closer to its targets, of the merits of its actions – and thus to convince them to back, or at the very least, not oppose them – that has contributed to the EU’s failures to export norms to the three difficult cases considered here. This failure is undoubtedly not the sole or even primary reason for the non-export of norms, but it is one that should prompt us to ask more questions about how outsiders perceive the EU, the content of the norms and values that the EU tries to export, and its diplomatic capabilities.

Because I was ill for two weeks before the conference, I had to leave out the Cuba case. Sorry.
Values in the EU’s foreign policy

A considerable amount of work has been done on the extent to which the EU has incorporated values in its foreign relations. The Union has been described as a ‘gentle power’, ‘normative power’, ‘post-modern power’, and ‘civilian power’. All of these terms broadly refer to the EU’s pursuit of distinct foreign policy principles: the acceptance of the necessity of cooperation with others in the pursuit of international objectives (thus a preference for multilateralism and respect for international law), and a concentration on non-military means to secure goals. The goals that the EU pursues are, broadly speaking, ‘liberal internationalist’: respect for human rights and democratic principles; encouragement of regional cooperation; reduction of poverty; support for international organisations; and so on. The first set of goals – promotion of human rights and democracy – is particularly important, especially in terms of how the EU perceives itself. For example, in December 1998, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the EU declared that ‘[b]oth internally and externally, respect for human rights as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration is one of the essential components of the activities of the Union.’

The EU has been practicing what Paul Taylor calls ‘proactive cosmopolitanism’, which is ‘a deliberate attempt to create a consensus about values and behaviour – a cosmopolitan community – among diverse communities’. Those values are generally the civil and political values of western liberal states (though some have more universal appeal), and promoting them involves placing limits on sovereignty, by interfering in the ‘domestic jurisdiction’ of states. Proactive

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cosmopolitanism clashes with the traditional norm of non-intervention, and in fact aims explicitly to change the traditional conception of sovereignty. However, ‘interference’ is still controversial in the developing world.  

It was not always thus: during the Cold War, the European Community’s development aid was supposed to be non-political, its relations with the ‘Third World’ free of the vestiges of colonialism and distinct from the superpowers. The Community was thus distinguishing itself as a unique international actor, by maintaining a ‘neutral’ stance vis-à-vis the human rights and democracy records of third countries. Respect for sovereignty, non-interference in the domestic affairs of developing countries – these were the principles that were supposed to guide the policies of the post-colonial Community, a way to cure the colonial hangover. The end of the Cold War changed this, and the Community, along with other donors, introduced political conditionality in its relations with third countries, as part of a stronger emphasis on the promotion of human rights and democracy in its foreign relations over all.

The use of political conditionality in particular is controversial: while some governments may appreciate the support that it gives reformers, others resent it as an imposition of foreign values. The critics are aided by the inconsistent manner in which conditionality is imposed – which thus opens the EU to charges that it imposes conditionality only when its interests are not affected. The use of conditionality by the EU also reinforces the inequality of the relationship between it and its ‘demandeurs’: although the ‘human rights clause’ in EU external agreements, for example, states that either party can suspend the agreement, it is highly unlikely that recipients of EU aid and trade preferences will act to suspend the agreement from which they benefit.

It should thus be clear that there is considerable potential for (non-violent) conflict between the EU and its ‘partners’ in the developing world. The clash of norms can inhibit EU influence, because the norms that the EU is exporting are not fully accepted (even though there may be rhetoric which indicates otherwise), and the way that the EU exports them (through the application of political conditionality) is resented. As a result, the EU’s influence is limited, as seen in the three case studies

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5 Christopher Clapham notes how strongly governing elites in developing countries cling to conceptions of sovereignty which bar outside interference in the domestic affairs of the country – even when this hardly corresponds to reality. Christopher Clapham, ‘Sovereignty and the Third World State’, *Political Studies*, 47, 3, 1999.
included here. It is assumed that readers know the broad outlines of the human rights and democratic situation in each of the countries, so the paper only recounts the EU’s policy and the response to that policy from the target country and its neighbours.

**Burma/Myanmar**

The EU first imposed limited sanctions on Burma in 1990, following the refusal of the military regime (then the State Law and Order Restoration Council, now the State Peace and Development Council) to honour the results of elections in 1990, which were won overwhelmingly by the democratic opposition led by Aung San Suu Kyi, the National League for Democracy (NLD). An arms embargo was imposed in 1990, defence cooperation was suspended in 1991, and all bilateral aid was suspended (except for humanitarian aid) the same year. In 1996, a CFSP common position confirmed the existing sanctions, imposed a visa ban on members of the military and government, and suspended high-level governmental visits to the country. In March 1997, the Council suspended the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) for Burma, because of the use of forced labour there. (This also means that Burma has been excluded from the new Everything But Arms initiative, for which it would otherwise be eligible.) The CFSP common position was periodically renewed, and the negative measures somewhat strengthened (for example, by freezing the assets of people affected by the visa ban). The Council did not, however, impose trade sanctions or an investment ban on the country.

In April 2003, the Council agreed a new common position, which consolidated all previous measures and added to the list of people affected by the visa ban and asset

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8 Since 1994, the protection of certain social rights is a condition of the GSP. Additional trading preferences will be provided to countries that apply International Labour Organisation conventions on freedom of association (nos. 87 and 98) and child labour (no. 138). Preferences can be withdrawn if a state practices forced labour or exports goods made by prison labour. Regulations no. 3281/94, in OJ L348, 1994 and no. 1256/96 in OJ L160, 1996, and renewed since.
9 According to Richard Youngs, only Denmark, the Netherlands and Ireland called for complete sanctions. Richard Youngs, *The European Union and the Promotion of Democracy: Europe’s Mediterranean and Asian Policies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 139. The European Parliament has called for both measures. European Parliament, ‘Resolution on Burma’, 11 March 2004. Furthermore, the EP pointed out the inconsistencies in the EU’s approach: in February 2004, Ireland established diplomatic relations with Burma. According to the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, this was necessary so that Ireland could carry out its responsibilities as EU president, and contribute to
freeze. In an explicit attempt to mix both carrots and sticks, it further agreed to suspend the new measures until 29 October 2003, but threatened to impose them on that date if there was no ‘substantive progress towards national reconciliation, the restoration of a democratic order and greater respect for human rights’.10 When, however, a convoy carrying Aung San Suu Kyi was attacked and she was detained again on 30 May 2003, the Council imposed the measures early.11

The EU’s negative measures thus have clearly not (yet) had much impact on the respect for human rights and democratic principles in Burma. In August 2003, the military regime issued a seven-step roadmap for a transition to democracy, which however did not indicate any deadlines for the steps, and promised to hold a constitutional convention. How inclusive and democratic this process will be (if indeed it takes place) and whether it will result in fundamental political change are unknowns. Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest.

The EU has also not been successful in convincing Burma’s neighbours – and principally the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) – to isolate the regime, though the widespread condemnation of Aung San Suu Kyi’s detention has prompted ASEAN and its member states to express soft criticism of the regime.

The EU’s relationship with ASEAN is its oldest with any regional grouping, but it hit trouble in the 1990s, over the Indonesian occupation of East Timor (until 1999) and then ASEAN’s decision to expand to include Burma (as well as Cambodia and Laos) in 1997.12 The EU’s statement on the accession of Cambodia, Laos, and Burma/Myanmar to ASEAN was pretty restrained: ‘The EU would like to … reaffirm its commitment to the EU-ASEAN dialogue, and to the promotion of shared values, including respect for human rights and democratic principles. It trusts that membership of ASEAN will further these aims in the new members states and in promoting democracy in Burma. Department of Foreign Affairs, Government of Ireland, Press Release, 13 February 2004, ‘Ireland establishes diplomatic relations with Myanmar (Burma)’.10 Council Common Position 2003/297/CFSP of 28 April 2003 on Burma/Myanmar’, in OJ L 106, 29 April 2003, recitals paragraph 5.


12 The EU’s relationship with dates back to soon after ASEAN was formed. Political dialogue with ASEAN dates from 1978. The foreign ministers meet every two years to discuss political, economic and development issues; senior officials meet in the alternate years. In 1980, the Community concluded an economic cooperation agreement with ASEAN, which provides for commercial, economic and development cooperation, and a regular dialogue at senior official level. After the massacre of protesters in Dili, East Timor, in November 1991, Portugal (the former colonial power in East Timor) blocked the conclusion of a revised EC-ASEAN cooperation agreement.
particular in Burma/Myanmar…’¹³ But the EU refused to allow Burma to accede to the EC-ASEAN cooperation agreement and in November 1997, it called off a meeting between senior officials of the EU and ASEAN because ASEAN insisted that Burma be a full observer at the meeting.¹⁴ The EU-ASEAN dialogue remained suspended for the next two years. ASEAN’s position was always that Burma should be able to participate.

In the meantime, the EU used another grouping to conduct relations with ASEAN members. In 1996, the Union also launched the Asia-Europe meeting (ASEM). This is clearly the EU’s answer to the US-sponsored Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. It includes all of the EU and ASEAN member states (with the exception of Burma), Japan, China, and South Korea. A summit is held every two years to discuss matters of foreign affairs, economic cooperation, and other issues of interest to the participants. ASEM was a convenient way to get around the tricky issue of dialogue with south-east Asian states, since Burma was not included in ASEM.

With agreement on East Timorese autonomy in 1999 (and later independence), however, one of the major stumbling blocks in EU-ASEAN relations was removed. With the aim of revitalising that relationship, the Union minimised the Burmese problem: it agreed to resume ministerial meetings with ASEAN even if they include Burma. In May 1999 EU and ASEAN senior officials met in Thailand; Burma attended but could not talk during formal sessions.¹⁵ In July 2000, the EU said that high-level talks with ASEAN would resume, so that the issue of Burma would not block dialogue with ASEAN.¹⁶ In January 2003, the Burmese foreign minister even participated in the EU-ASEAN foreign ministers’ summit on European territory.

Richard Youngs argues that the opening to Burma was the result of an intra-EU deal: in return for southern EU member states accepting a strengthening of sanctions (in 2000), northern EU states agreed to accept a Burmese presence in EU meetings with ASEAN ministers.¹⁷

The issue of human rights and democracy in the relationship with south-east Asian countries has always been a difficult one. We all know about the ‘Asian values’

¹⁶ ‘EU to resume talks with ASEAN’, *BBC News online*, 26 July 2000.
response to western claims that ‘universal’ human rights should be respected. And the EU has not pushed human rights and democracy very hard in its relations with ASEAN - with the notable exception of Burma. Only a small percentage of funding under the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights, the EU’s programme for human rights and democracy aid, goes to Asia (one per cent in 1996-99, ten per cent in 2000). Political dialogue with ASEAN has not focussed extensively on human rights and democracy. The EU has been hesitant to counter governmental resistance in Asian countries to the promotion of human rights, and has assumed that economic development will have positive consequences for human rights.

In contrast to the African Union (see below), ASEAN has never made respect for human rights and democratic principles a key objective or norm of the organisation. In fact, the fundamental principles – most notably that of non-interference - that are to be followed in relations between ASEAN member states effectively prevent such ‘domestic concerns’ from being an issue. The detention of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2003, however, and the international reaction to it, has forced ASEAN to respond – though cautiously.

In June 2003, at their regular ministerial meeting, ASEAN foreign ministers ‘urged Myanmar to resume its efforts of national reconciliation and dialogue among all parties concerned leading to a peaceful transition to democracy. [They] welcomed the assurances given by Myanmar that the measures taken following the incident [of 30 May 2003] were temporary and looked forward to the early lifting of restrictions placed on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD members.’ There were reports that the language used behind the scenes was even stronger. But there is absolutely no indication that ASEAN would back the EU’s negative measures or that south-east Asian countries would impose similar restrictions. In July 2003, Malaysia threatened

17 Youngs, *The European Union and the Promotion of Democracy*, p. 139.
20 See, for example, ‘Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II)’, 7 October 2003, http://www.aseansec.org/15160.htm.
to expel Burma from ASEAN, a proposal immediately rejected by Thailand. At the fifth ASEM foreign ministers’ meeting in July 2003, the ten Asian and fifteen EU states called for the immediate release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other NLD members. Apparently, however, there was delay in issuing the statement because of disagreements over wording. In October 2003 at the ASEAN summit in Bali, Cambodia wanted to call for the immediate release of Suu Kyi, and the ASEAN Secretary-General also urged ASEAN to look at the issue because of the negative effects it was having on ASEAN’s international standing. The final statement, however, avoided criticism of Suu Kyi’s detention, and even “welcomed the recent positive developments in Myanmar and the Government’s pledge to bring about a transition to democracy through dialogue and reconciliation…The Leaders also agree that sanctions are not helpful in promoting peace and stability essential for democracy to take root.” And ASEAN has been insisting that Burma attend ASEM meetings in 2004. It is thus clear that there is considerable resistance to the EU’s stance on Burma, but also that the EU has not pressed ASEAN very hard for support.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe’s slide into autocratic rule became an issue for international actors, including the EU, only from the late 1990s. Throughout 2000 and into early 2001, the EU (along with other states and the UN) expressed concern at developments in Zimbabwe, but did not formally take action against the government. In June 2000, an EU delegation observed the parliamentary elections, with the agreement of the Zimbabwean government. It was the largest foreign observation team, headed by a Swede, Pierre Schori. The team criticised the violence and intimidation that took place during the election campaign, but declared that the polling process itself was

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good. The EU Council presidency welcomed the outcome of the elections, but called on the government to prevent further acts of violence, and to work with opposition and civil society. The report still generated criticism in Harare: Zanu-PF’s campaign manager, Jonathan Moyo, called it ‘an insult to the people of Zimbabwe’.

The UK then led attempts to harden the EU’s policy, and in June 2001, the EU Council pressed Zimbabwe to improve its human rights and democracy record and threatened ‘appropriate measures’ if it did not. In October, developments in the country had not improved, and the Council launched consultation procedures under article 96 of the Cotonou agreement. But the EU was still keen to ensure ‘coordination and complementarity with the efforts of SADC [Southern Africa Development Community] and the Abuja process vis-à-vis Zimbabwe.’ In the same month, the EU began an informal dialogue with Nigeria, South Africa and Malawi, as representatives of the Abuja contact group and SADC task force, on the Zimbabwe crisis. A ‘regional approach’ remained, therefore, one of the prongs of the EU’s approach.

In contrast to ASEAN, African countries have paid at least lip-service to ‘western’ values, primarily through their large pan-African organisation. The Organisation of African Unity (now the African Union), has increasingly declared that democracy, human rights and good governance are important objectives — though this is admittedly largely in response to external pressure. The constitutive act of the

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30 Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the elections in Zimbabwe’, 5 July 2000, document no. 00/147, European Foreign Policy Bulletin online (www.iue.it/EFPB).
33 Under article 96, a party to the Cotonou Convention can call for consultations if it considers that the other party has failed to fulfil an obligation with respect to human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law. If consultations do not result in progress on these obligations, then appropriate measures can be taken.
34 General Affairs Council, ‘Conclusions on Zimbabwe’, 29-30 October 2001, Press Release no. 12391/01 (Presse 390). The Abuja agreement was worked out in September 2001 under Commonwealth auspices (and backed strongly by SADC), in which Britain would help finance land reform. Not even two months later, however, land invasions were continuing and the agreement was effectively dead.
36 Christopher Clapham notes that the 1981 African Charter of Human And People’s Rights was an attempt to modify conceptions of sovereignty (in a more defensible way) in response to the human
African Union, agreed in July 2000, declares that the AU’s objective include the promotion of democratic principles and institutions, and the promotion of human rights (article 3). Governments which come to power through unconstitutional means will not be allowed to participate in AU activities (article 30). In July 2001, the OAU approved a strategic framework document for a ‘New Partnership for Africa’s Development’ (NEPAD). NEPAD is essentially a trade-off: to attract foreign investment and aid, African countries will adopt and implement principles of democracy and good political, economic and corporate governance, and protect human rights. A voluntary peer review mechanism will promote adherence to NEPAD principles. The EU thus had good reason to believe that African countries would support EU measures against a country that was manifestly not adhering to NEPAD principles. In practice, however, Zimbabwe’s neighbours and other African countries could not be convinced to back EU negative measures.

The article 96 consultations, held in early January 2002, did not go well, but the member states were divided, with some southern member states still favouring engagement, and northern states pushing for the imposition of tough measures. On 28 January, the Council concluded that the ‘essential principles’ of the Cotonou agreement were not being respected, that consultations had not remedied the situation, and that targeted sanctions would be implemented if Zimbabwe did not take immediate measures such as allowing the deployment of EU observers. When Mugabe then stated that EU observers could be deployed, the EU put the threat of sanctions on hold. But Zimbabwe still insisted that it would not allow in monitors from Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands or the UK, whom it accused of favouring the opposition.

Pierre Schori, the head of the election observation mission and already unpopular in Harare since the 2000 observer mission,
was refused accreditation. When he entered the country anyway on a tourist visa, he was expelled on 16 February. This forced the EU’s hand, and on 18 February the EU imposed targeted sanctions and withdrew all EU electoral observers in Zimbabwe. \(^{42}\) That left a small contingent of foreign observers, notably from the Commonwealth.

The EU suspended all financial aid except for aid in direct support of the population, imposed an arms embargo, banned twenty Zimbabwean officials, including Robert Mugabe, from entering into or transiting through the territories of the EU member states, and froze their financial assets. \(^{43}\) The Zimbabwean government lambasted the EU, accusing it of imposing the observation mission on Zimbabwe. \(^{44}\) Other African countries, including South Africa and Nigeria, criticised the move, and Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo even declared that Mugabe was not abusing democratic principles. \(^{45}\)

A month later, in March 2002, the EU introduced a draft resolution expressing concern about Zimbabwe to the UN Commission on Human Rights (CHR). In a serious blow to the EU’s attempts to draw African countries into the isolation of the Harare regime, Nigeria, on behalf of the Africa Group, tabled a no-action motion on the resolution, which was carried by the CHR. This ‘marked a stark reflection of North-South division on the approach of the CHR in addressing human rights country situations’: Nigeria used strong language to indicate that human rights could only be resolved in Zimbabwe if the land question was solved; other developing countries – including China, Cuba and Algeria – all pointed to the legacy of colonialism as the root cause of human rights problems in the country. \(^{46}\) In March 2003, the EU again sponsored a resolution on Zimbabwe, which was again defeated in the CHR.

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\(^{44}\) EU Agrees Zimbabwe Sanctions’, BBC News online, 18 February 2002 (news.bbc.co.uk).

\(^{45}\) EU Sanctions Move “Baffles” African Nations’, BBC News online, 19 February 2002. South Africa’s diplomacy vis-à-vis Zimbabwe has been criticised as being not so much quiet as silent.

Conflicting discourses between North and South were blocking the international management of the Zimbabwe crisis.

In July 2002, the EU extended its sanctions to cover more Zimbabwean officials, although some member states were still hoping that a November EU-SADC meeting would prompt movement towards a solution. The EU had already agreed to move the meeting from Copenhagen to Maputo, so that Zimbabwean officials could attend it. In yet another example of conflicting discourses, the EU-SADC meeting could not reach an agreement on Zimbabwe, and the EU issued its own statement afterwards, reiterating its deep concern regarding the situation in Zimbabwe.

The EU’s rhetorically tough stance, however, was more difficult to implement in practice. Only £500,000 of Zimbabwean officials’ assets were found and frozen. The member states had considerable leeway to circumvent the travel ban by granting exemptions, for example for officials attending international meetings. And several Zimbabwean officials were allowed to attend meetings in EU countries. Mugabe himself attended a World Food Summit in Rome in June 2002. The European Parliament protested, and when Belgium granted visas to two Zimbabwean MPs, who were on the travel ban list, so that they could attend the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in November, the EP forbid them from entering its premises. Yet ACP members objected, pointing out that the EU had failed to follow established procedure, and the joint assembly had to be cancelled.

It was, however, the French invitation to Mugabe to attend a Franco-African summit in Paris on 19 February 2003 that brought matters to a head, and illustrated

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48 ‘Communique of the Ministerial Conference between the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the European Union (EU)’, Maputo, 8 November 2002, Press Release no. 14106/02 (Presse 349).
50 Article 3, paragraph 3 of ‘Council Common Position of 18 February 2002 concerning restrictive measures against Zimbabwe (2002/145/CFSP).’
51 Two government ministers entered the UK in early May; in August, the Zimbabwean police commissioner, Augustine Chihuri, was granted a visa by France to attend a meeting of Interpol (the international police organisation), of which he is a vice-president; and Trade Minister Samuel Mumbengegwi entered Belgium in September 2002, May 2003, October 2003 to take part in EU-ACP talks. Chris McGreal, ‘Mugabe police chief beats EU ban to enter France’, The Guardian, 27 August 2002; Ian Black, ‘Mugabe’s minister avoids ban’, The Guardian, 26 September 2002; ‘Mugabe’s ally flouts EU ban’, The Guardian, 17 May 2003; European Voice, 2-8 October 2003.
the severe limitations of EU collective action. The EU’s sanctions were due to be renewed on 18 February, and France threatened to veto their renewal if the other member states did not agree to the exemption. This combined with the disquiet of other member states – including Greece, Italy and Portugal – which preferred engagement to isolation and argued that the sanctions only further entrenched the Mugabe regime.\textsuperscript{53} France justified its move by claiming that the Franco-African summit would discuss human rights and democracy, and was therefore a permissible exemption to the travel ban. But it seemed instead to be an attempt by France to expand its influence in Africa.\textsuperscript{54} In the end, after the shambolic exposure of internal divisions (just as differences exploded over the looming war in Iraq), the Council reached agreement to renew the sanctions and grant the travel exemption. However, an EU-Africa summit scheduled for April 2003, had to be postponed indefinitely because several EU member states (led by the UK) refused to allow Mugabe to attend, while several African leaders declared they would not attend if Mugabe could not.\textsuperscript{55} Once again, then, the divisions within the EU were coupled disastrously with a much wider North-South split on the issue of Zimbabwe.

The renewed diplomatic sanctions provide even more leeway to member states to grant exemptions, and if a member state objects to an exemption, then the Council may act by qualified majority to grant it anyway.\textsuperscript{56} Since February 2003, the EU’s attention has drifted even further away from Zimbabwe, given the lack of progress on the ground and continuing divisions between the member states over the utility and desirability of sanctions. The Greek presidency of the EU in the first half of 2003, for example, sought to encourage ‘African solutions to African problems’.\textsuperscript{57} The EU has, however, so far failed to encourage African solutions to this particular African problem.

\textsuperscript{54} Robert Graham, ‘Chirac seeks to widen French role in Africa’, \textit{The Financial Times}, 20 February 2003; Jon Henley, ‘France flexes its muscles in Africa’, \textit{The Guardian}, 29 January 2003. French officials admitted that if Mugabe had not been allowed to come, several other African leaders would not have attended, and that would have been a failure for French policy towards Africa.
Conclusion
In the cases examined in this paper, the EU has not successfully exported norms of human rights and democratic principles. While the EU has not been consistent in its own actions, and has refrained from taking strong action due to intra-EU divergences, this paper pointed to an additional reason for the EU’s failure to achieve its policy objectives: it has not been able to convince partners in the regions surrounding the targeted countries of the merits of its actions.

Those partners have been able to resist EU pressure to back EU policy because they are members of strong regional groupings, which can lead resistance to ‘imposition’ of western values (and act as a shield to protect states from EU demands). The transformation of sovereignty, so as to allow ‘interference’ in the name of promoting human rights and democracy, is yet to be accepted across regions. Despite the apparent rhetorical commitment – strong in the case of Africa, much weaker in the case of ASEAN – in favour of human rights and democracy, it is quite clear that adherence to such norms is superficial, particularly when outsiders ‘gang up’ on a partner state for violations of those norms. As Andrew Hurrell and Louise Fawcett have warned, ‘far from slotting nicely into a neat pattern of global subsidiarity, regionalism and regional cooperation may form the political framework for conflict over the definition of human rights and over the means by which they should be enforced internationally.’ Paradoxically, of course, the EU encourages regional cooperation – and has been particularly active in supporting ASEAN, SADC and the African Union.

There is a conflict of norms here, with post-sovereign norms conflicting with more traditional norms of sovereignty and non-intervention. It is clear that among many African and Asian countries, the traditional conception of ‘self-determination’ still has an external dimension only: countries must be free from interference, particularly by the former colonial (or current ‘neo-colonial’) powers. The harder the North appears to be pushing an agenda of interference, the louder the South defends the traditional non-intervention principle, often invoking the liberation struggles of old. The fact that much northern policy to promote post-statist norms is riddled with

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double standards and inconsistencies does not alleviate concerns that it is actually a
cover for old-fashioned political and economic control.

The implications for our conceptualisation of the EU as an international actor
are important. While the EU – and various analysts – may view its actions as the
product of a rather enlightened, post-sovereign, post-modern, distinctive entity in
international relations, outsiders – particularly in the developing world – may have
quite a different perspective. The EU, with its interventionist yet inconsistent policy,
appears to be acting more like the ‘great colonial powers’ of the past. The EU
therefore might not be, as Jan Orbie points out, ‘the leading and benevolent identity’
that it presents itself as.\(^{59}\)

Enlargement – with all the risks it entails in terms of effective decision-
making – may only exacerbate this perception, because it will increase the EU’s
‘global weight’. Likewise, the development of an EU defence dimension could appear
to outsiders as the latest addition to the EU’s arsenal of coercive instruments.\(^{60}\)
Perceptions matter, as the perception of the EU as a less-than-well-intentioned
coercive actor can generate – and indeed has generated – resistance to EU policy,
even where actors may share the EU’s aims (at least rhetorically). Under such
conditions, exporting norms such as respect for human rights and democratic
principles will be difficult.

How then can the EU export norms successfully? Consistency in the use of
conditionality would probably help, because it would at least reduce the impression
that the EU picks on countries randomly, and only when its interests would not be
unduly compromised. Consistency in the use of other instruments – such as political
dialogue on human rights – would also probably help. Dialogue could be used to try
to build consensus on how norms should be pursued. If the EU is to be seen as a ‘new
international actor’, with ‘new roles’ (post-colonial above all), then it will need to try
to overcome the North-South divide that is so damaging to its own policy.

\(^{59}\) Jan Orbie, ‘EU Development Policy Integration and the Monterrey Process: A Leading and

\(^{60}\) And Robert Cooper argues that if the EU is to protect its post-modern paradise and promote its post-
modern principles, it must play by the rules of the jungle outside. Robert Cooper, The Breaking of