



Catalyst for Democracy or Compromise? Deciphering the EU's Good Governance Promotion in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa

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Abstract

Although the European Union (EU) sees itself as a normative, and transformative, power contributing to democratization processes around the world, recent moves by the EU suggest that it has been shifting its focus away from democracy promotion in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. Meanwhile, 'good governance' has become a central feature of EU policies towards the region, which is conceptualized as a 'silver bullet' capable of simultaneously furthering democracy, rule of law and human rights promotion, the goals of development cooperation as well as security objectives. However, the rationale behind the EU's good governance promotion is not self-evident: it is unclear whether the EU promotes good governance for the purposes of democratization, or whether other policy objectives are at play. The EU has multiple, and often conflicting, policy objectives in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, ranging from ensuring the effectiveness of its development aid, to promoting democracy, human right and the rule of law, achieving regional security and stability, and stemming migration flows.

Since the Global Strategy was published, the EU has been under pressure to be a pragmatic and coherent actor in its external action, which may influence both the EU's ability and its will to foster democratization in this region.

Using Mali and Ethiopia as case studies, this thesis seeks to determine the rationale behind the EU's good governance promotion in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa - namely, whether or not democracy is conceived as its ultimate end-goal. Through examining the EU's understanding of good governance and the substance of its good governance promotion in practice, it is argued that the EU's attempts to reconcile its conflicting objectives in Mali and Ethiopia have seen good governance emerge as a 'compromise' policy solution which enables the EU to pursue integrated and coherent initiatives, but does not necessarily contribute to democratization processes. Whether it is the case that the EU too readily assumes that "all good things go together" and that democracy will emerge as an eventual by-product of its (often unrelated) good governance promotion, or that the EU consciously uses the label of 'good governance' to camouflage its development and security objectives as democracy promotion, this analysis demonstrates that there is, nonetheless, more to 'good governance' than meets the eye, and that pragmatism and interests may drive the EU's good governance agenda to a greater extent than its transformative ambitions.