“We need both”
Identifying the different stages of norm promotion

The European Union as a promoter of values: the case of the Eastern Partnership
1. Introduction

The reputation of the EU in the world is a good one, based on our strong values of freedom and democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights [...] The EU must pull its weight in areas of crisis and conflict. This is the responsibility of a global actor, but is also sound policy for the security of Europe.1

In a few sentences Catherine Ashton, the European Union’s (EU) new High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, accentuates two core features of the Union’s self conception: 1) the EU is an important actor in global affairs and 2) the values of democracy and human rights are essential to its identity. Since its origin, the EU has been transformed from an economic community to a political union, consisting now of 27 member states and covering a broad range of policy areas. And although the extent (and desirability) of the Union’s impact in an international context remain subject for discussion, academic and political observers alike seem to agree that the EU’s significance should not be underestimated.2 It is evident that the EU is actively seeking to strengthen its role in international affairs. For example, giving the EU a stronger voice in the world was one of the top priorities of the previous Barroso Commission and expanding the zone of “...prosperity, stability and security” remains a core aim of the Union.3 These ambitions are equally apparent in the Treaty of Lisbon: Establishing two new posts – a permanent President of the European Council and a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy – the Treaty seeks to grant the EU a clearer voice in global affairs.4 But what does the EU want to obtain in its relations with other countries?

Values such as democracy and human rights have long been important dimensions of the Union’s internal identity and since 1993 they are part also of its external policies.5 According to the so called Copenhagen political criteria (one of the accession criteria) all states wishing to join the EU must guarantee the respect for democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the rights of minorities.6 Including a human rights clause is mandatory in all trade and other agreements between the EU and third part countries and with the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force in December 2009 the Union has adopted its very own Charter of Fundamental Rights.7 The Charter declares the principles on which the Union is founded and underlines as such what values to prioritise and the EU’s degree of devotion. The Treaty furthermore makes promoting human rights and democracy an explicit goal: “Promoting these values, as well as peace and the well-being of the Union’s peoples are now the main objectives of the Union.”8

However, while undeniably sending an important symbolical message about the Union’s priorities, political goals say little about how to attain and ensure their fulfilment. Political goals set the agenda but must be filled with substance and turned into functional policies in order to be useful in the day to day work. Previous research suggests that much of the work to transform goals into to policies occurs on ‘policy’ rather than the ‘political’ level and that the civil servants involved in these processes are key actors. Hence, if we want to understand how the EU seeks to spread values looking at the political goals solely is not enough: we need also consider the actual strategies and, more specifically, the motivations behind them.

This paper seeks to contribute to the theoretical understanding of norm promotion by focusing on the process of formulating the EU’s newest tool for norm promotion, the Eastern Partnership (EaP).

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1 Ashton, 2009
2 Not least is the EU considered to have been a crucial actor working for reform in the post communist states in Eastern Europe. See for example Dannreuther, 2006, p. 183ff. Bildt, 2010 and Schimmelfennig et al, 2005, p. 2ff.
4 EC, Treaty of Lisbon: The EU in the world. Apart from the symbolic importance of having clear representatives, one of the main motivations has been to ensure consistency in the Union’s external action. The High Representative will also serve as Vice-President of the Commission.
5 Wood, 2009, p. 117.
6 EC, Enlargement, Accession Criteria
7 Activities of the EU, Policy Areas: Human Rights.
8 European Parliament, 2000 and EC, Treaty of Lisbon: The Treaty at a Glance. Some theorists separate between norms and values. In this paper, however, the two terms are used synonymously.
The EU as a Foreign Policy actor – what kind of policy?

The EU’s tendency to focus on values in its relations with other countries has caused some observers to argue for an understanding and conceptualisation of the EU as a “normative” or “civilian” power. The Union is said to represent something qualitatively new in international relations, acting as a changer of norms rather than trying to gain impact through ‘traditional’ hard power means. According to this line of reasoning, the external actions of the EU are value driven rather than interest driven and the normative goals are pursued through normative means.\(^9\) While not questioning the existence of a value promotion dimension in EU foreign policy, realists have criticised the normative power-thesis for neglecting that the EU is essentially made up of rational states. Because they are rational in the sense that they try to maximise their interests based on the information at hand, the promotion of values should be seen as yet another means to obtain certain (often material) goals rather than an expression for a new kind of foreign policy.\(^10\)

Leaving the objective accuracy of these analyses behind, the question that springs to mind is whether or not this makes any difference – or, rather, if the European Union makes a difference. The significance of the European Union’s external actions in general and its devotion to norms in particular has been questioned with reference to the fact that most foreign and security policy matters remain subject for member state competence. This limits its freedom for manoeuvre and vouches for a weaker role for the EU as a foreign policy actor. Although academic research and mainstream media frequently point at the Union’s lack of a common foreign policy worth its name, most seem to agree that from a regional – or perhaps rather Eastern – point of view the EU is an actor of crucial importance. Especially through the enlargement procedures the Union is considered to have gained a forum for and instruments to influence non member states. By letting the prospect of membership serve as an incentive for these countries to reform and adopt EU values, the EU has contributed to the stabilisation of these countries while at the same time been able to spread its core norms. Thus, the accession procedures are often described as the EU’s most successful tool for promoting values (irrespective of its motives) thus far.\(^11\)

The launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2004 was accompanied by a growing sense that the EU should be precautous of relying too much on enlargement as a foreign policy strategy because, as formulated by the former European Commissioner for external relations and the ENP, Benita Ferrero-Waldner “… it is clear that the EU cannot enlarge ad infinitum”.\(^12\) Despite the fact that the desire to join the Union remains strong, it is becoming increasingly clear that further enlargements are at least currently off the EU-agenda.\(^13\) The ENP as well as the Eastern Partnership, have been interpreted as responses to the challenge of finding new ways for EU engagement and norm promotion in the Eastern Europe.\(^14\) The policies appear to follow the enlargement-logic, establishing frameworks for cooperation and offering the neighbours incentives (commonly phrased as a stake into the internal market) in return for reforms and adherence to EU norms and values.\(^15\) Political association and economic integration are of course attractive enough benefits, but the absence of the EU’s most powerful incentive yet (membership of the Union) has caused some observers to question the potential efficiency of the ENP and EaP as means to EU influence alternative to that of enlargement.\(^16\) Although this critique is in itself problematic – it builds on the rationalist assumption that the neighbouring states are just interested in the incentives offered rather than the norms and/or reform processes as such, and it presumes that promoting norms is the goal that the EU wants to obtain – it raises the question of how the Union perceives strategies for promoting norms.

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\(^9\) Manners, 2002, p. 252f. See also Sjursén 2006.
\(^12\) Ferrero-Waldner, 2006, p. 139
\(^13\) This is for example indicated by the fact that the EU describes its ‘absorption capacity’ an issue that must be considered in future enlargement discussions. See Activities of the EU, Policy Areas: Enlargement.: I does however seem likely that the already ongoing membership negotiations with Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Turkey will be continued. See for example Haukkala, 2008, p. 1602, 1611ff.
\(^15\) Haukkala, 2009, p. 5.
Defining the problem

As outlined above, academic research as well as official EU documents indicate that the EU wants to be perceived as a Union built on values (as opposed to military power) and as a “force for good” in international relations. It is furthermore evident that the EU seeks to promote its core principles by establishing them as conditions for EU-membership and including them in trade and cooperation agreements. But what about the actual strategies for spreading values? The question of how and why agents promote norms and the empirical effects of different strategies have been addressed by a number of scholars, emphasising both the importance of external incentives and processes of socialisation and social learning.\(^\text{17}\) Less attention, however, has been directed towards how norm promotion and the relevance of different strategies are \textit{conceived by the norm promoter itself}. More specifically, previous research has failed to take that the interrelation between the choice of strategies and the conceptions held by civil servants. I argue that there are two important reasons why this lack is problematic: First, institutions do not talk. This means that we cannot investigate how the EU perceives its role as a norm promoter without talking to the people who make up and \textit{represent} the institution. Second, although political leaders are the most apparent representatives they are by no means the only ones involved in realising political goals. Rather, this responsibility is shared with the officials assigned to contribute expertise concerning how visionary goals can be converted into functional policies.\(^\text{18}\) By leaving the preparatory phase aside and merely investigating the goals and policies or talking to the political leaders, one runs the risk of missing essential dimensions of why certain strategies are preferred above others. The aim of the paper at hand is to bridge this gap. Seeking to do so, I focus on the internal process of developing the Eastern Partnership. According to the European Commission, the EaP

…should bring a lasting political message of EU solidarity, alongside additional, tangible support for their democratic and market-oriented reforms and the consolidation of their statehood and territorial integrity. (…) The EaP will be based on mutual commitments to the rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights, respect for and protection of minorities, and the principles of the market economy and sustainable development.\(^\text{19}\)

This indicates that promoting values is a core dimension of the EaP-initiative. This together with the scarcity of the existing research about the Partnership makes it a suitable case to study; both as an example of a policy-making process in which norm promotion can be expected to have played an important role \textit{and} as a unique object for analysis.

Hence, the overarching question can be summarised as follows: \textit{how is the issue of norm promotion and strategies for becoming a successful norm promoter conceived in the internal policy-making process of the EU?}

Elaborating the argument

The academic literature suggests that the civil servants assigned to put political goals into practice play key roles in most political processes. Because of a significant increase of power delegation from the political to the administrative level, politicians are no longer the only ones involved in policy-making.\(^\text{20}\) Some claim that this tendency is even more evident in the EU context since the greater degree of depoliticisation of (at least some) political issues augments the need for expertise which, increasing in turn the bureaucrats’ potential influence.\(^\text{21}\) Examining the internal process of policy-making is therefore relevant from a theoretical as well as empirical point of view. First, in contexts where previous experiences exist, policy-makers can be expected to have opinions about which strategies that are deemed to be successful and which are not. Focusing on the goals and outcomes without taking the process into account, previous research has failed to acknowledge the important fact that these conceptions form the foundations for the policy choices.\(^\text{22}\) Consequently, I argue that the civil servants’ perceptions should be taken into account \textit{irrespective of their objective truth.}

\(^{17}\) See for example Schimmelfennig et al. 2005

\(^{18}\) In accordance with the academic literature, “officials”, “bureaucrats” and “civil servants” are used synonymously.

\(^{19}\) European Commission, 2008, pp. 2-3

\(^{20}\) This argument is elaborated in chapter 3. For an introduction to the subject, see for example Aberbach et al. 1981


\(^{22}\) See for example Rothstein, 2001, p. 15
Second, examining the process rather than just the declared goals and/or policy content can increase our understanding of the dynamics between intentions and restrictions: is there resonance between what is sought for politically and what is possible in terms of policy? It might well be that certain goals are considered utterly important but turn out impossible to realise due to lack of resources and/or trade-offs between conflicting goals: In extension, this could result in new empirical insights about the EU’s role as a norm promoter. Admittedly, as Sjursén points out, reaching “…to the ‘hearts and souls’ of policy makers” in order to discover the ‘true’ motives is hardly doable. However, by investigating the hands-on policy level and illuminating the (perceived) degree of devotion directed towards norm promotion we can learn more about the extent to which this goal is prioritised and actively pursued within the EU-system.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the policy-making process is not the subject for analysis in itself, but rather serves as an instrument to gain a more multifaceted picture of the EU’s (in its capacity as a norm promoter) understanding of norm promotion. This infers that although the officials’ conceptions are the main object of analysis, it is not the civil servants themselves who are of primarily interest. Rather, this paper builds on the assumption that they as representatives for the EU can tell us something about how strategies for value promotion are conceived within the EU system as a whole.

Defining the aim and the specific research questions

With this paper I seek to increase the theoretical and empirical understandings of norm promotion and how strategies for spreading values are conceived within the EU-system. The purpose is thus twofold: on a theoretical level I want to contribute to the theories about norm promotion/compliance by shifting focus from the target to promoter, adding the perspective of the people involved in the internal process of policy-making. On an empirical level, the aim is to increase the knowledge of how the civil servants assigned to convert the EU’s foreign policy goal of promoting values into functional policies understand strategies for doing so. Building on existing theories about norm compliance and focusing on the internal process of policy-making, I aim to bridge what seems to be a gap in previous research.

How strategies for promoting values are understood is explored through interviews with civil servants representing the European Commission (EC) and the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) involved in the Eastern Partnership preparations. The following specific research questions are addressed:

-How do the civil servants involved in the preparatory work of the EaP understand the intentions behind and objectives of the Eastern Partnership?
-How are strategies for promoting values conceived in the internal policy-making process?
-Can the way the civil servants reason about norm promotion be understood in terms of the social learning and the external incentives models respectively?

Structure of the paper

Having defined the area of interest and the problem and purpose at hand, a more thorough exposition of the empirical as well as theoretical context is called for. Thus, chapter two lays down the empirical context by discussing the EU’s freedom for manoeuvre in foreign affairs and by addressing the background and development of the EaP. Chapter three sets the theoretical framework, elaborating the argument for focusing on the internal process of policy-making and introducing the theoretical model that form the foundation for the forthcoming analysis.

Chapter four discusses some methodological considerations and chapter five offers a brief overview of the content and setup of the Eastern Partnership. Linking the interview results to the key concepts of the theoretical model, chapter six addresses the specific research questions introduced above. Building on this analysis, the model is evaluated and a figure illustrating how the officials conceive the ideal strategy for norm promotion is developed. The last chapter discusses the implications and significance of the study and presents some suggestions for future research.

23 Sjursén, 2002, p. 496
2. Empirical context: the European Union in international affairs

Few would oppose that the European Union is an actor that needs to be taken into account in any analysis of current international relations. As the world’s biggest trader with trade- and partnership agreements that cover almost all regions of the planet, the EU is indisputably important in economic terms.24 The EU’s political weight, however, remains controversial. Aiming to provide the reader with a general understanding of the empirical context in which the EaP has been initiated and developed, this chapter gives an overview of the particularities of EU foreign policy. The official EaP-documents are examined in chapter five.25

Setting the frame: possibilities and restrictions for the EU as a foreign policy actor

Is it at all plausible to talk about the European Union as one actor? After all, the organisation is made up of 27 sovereign states and the fact that unanimity is still required in many policy sectors limits its ability to pursue a coherent agenda. This infers that any examination of the EU’s role must inevitably consider the internal relationship between the powers of the EU-institutions on the one hand and the member states on the other. Doing so there are particularly two dimensions that merit attention: whether a given policy sector is a community (EU) issue or not, and what principle for decision making that is applied. To a great extent, these two aspects determine the freedom for the EU as an independent actor by defining its room for manoeuvre. The first dimension concerns the EU’s possibility to act at all, ranging from far-reaching within sectors subject for community competence to very limited in sectors where member state competence prevails.26 The second dimension is important as it illuminates both the degree of integration and how efficiently decisions can be expected to be made. Although the EU’s freedom for manoeuvre in foreign policy related issues remains limited, it has been significantly strengthened since the introduction of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in 1992.27 With the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force, the supranational features of the Union’s foreign policy have been additionally increased. Through the abolishment of the pillar structure the EU has gained one single legal personality and the capacity to conclude international agreements and to join international organisations.28 According to the EU this change together with the establishment of a permanent President of the European Council and a High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy will enable the Union to be more efficient and visible on the international stage.29

Hence, the EU has come a long way from the intergovernmental economic community it once was. Today it is an organisation with strong supranational features and an agenda of its own – mainly driven by the “promoter of the general interest”, the European Commission.30 The possibility for the EU to be(come) the global actor it aspires continues to be strengthened and with the two new posts mention above in place, it might even be that Henry Kissinger’s famous question about who to call when wanting to talk to Europe has been given an answer. For this reason, I argue that it is reasonable to talk about the Union as one actor, separated from the wills and powers of the member states.

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25 For a more thorough exposé, see Andersson 2010
26 Nugent, 2006, p. 355, pp. 39-40. Today, however, there are few policy areas in which the EU is not at all involved.
27 Nugent 2006 p. 483ff. Admittedly, enlargement, the ENP and the EaP are related to all policy sectors that make up the EU’s external relations. Yet, previous research suggests that the CFSP is particularly important. See Andersson 2010.
28 The Treaty of Lisbon strengthens the supranational features of the EU’s setup in general, establishing qualified majority voting as voting principle in most policy sectors and expanding the EP’s impact in the decision-making. The essence of the structure is nonetheless kept the same. See Nugent 2006, p. 155, 558ff
29 EC, Treaty of Lisbon: The EU in the world. Herman van Rompuy has been appointed President of the Council and Catherine Ashton High Representative for Foreign Affairs.
30 Nugent, 2006, p. 166 For this reason, the Commissioners are assigned to represent the EU rather than their member states and is to look beyond national interests. How likely it is that they do in fact manage to shield themselves from national influence can of course be questioned.
Background of the Eastern Partnership: enlargement and the ENP

Apart from being important for the EU’s role as a foreign policy actor in general, enlargement and the ENP are important backgrounds to the newly initiated Eastern Partnership. Thus, in order to understand the motivations behind the EaP we need first consider the motivations behind these two policy areas.31

Enlargement is generally perceived as a crucial dimension of the EU’s foreign policy and as the context in which the Union has been most successful in its ambitions to promote norms. Although the EU has enlarged a number of times since its foundation, seemingly it was not until the beginning of the 1990’s that enlargement was explicitly emphasised as a means to expand the EU’s influence in international relations. Admittedly, preventing Greece from falling back to authoritarian rule has been described as one important motivation for granting it membership of the Union in 1981, but the gravitational power of the EU is generally discussed with reference to the 2004 and 2007 Eastern enlargements.32

There is widespread agreement among academic as well as political observers that the EU played a key role in the reform processes of the former Communist states of Eastern Europe and that the political accession conditionality was a crucial aspect. Membership was offered in return for adherence to and adoption of EU norms and standards, giving thereby the EU a forum for influencing the internal development in the non member states. Presented with the offer of EU-membership (and the benefits associated with it) they were encouraged to carry out rapid reform processes and to adopt the EU’s core values.33 Dannreuther describes the 2004 and 2007 enlargements as key success stories for the EU giving “…greater credibility to the EU’s ambitions to be treated as a global actor in world politics”.34 Apart from increasing the number of member states, population and size of the economy, enlargement has resulted in greater political weight for the Union. In a similar manner, Haukkala points at enlargement as the context in which the EU has become most successful in its attempts to spread its core norms:

…the enlargement process acts as a conduit through which the EU as a normative power Europe…can project its norms and values in a way that is both efficient and legitimate. (…) The key here is to appreciate the fact that EU enlargement is not only about drawing geographical boundaries; it is also about establishing, or imposing, an EU order in Europe through the transference and diffusion of EU norms, values, rules and regulations.35

The very success of enlargement strengthened the EU’s claim to possess a capacity to influence the internal development of other states using moral persuasion rather than military power. 36 This leads to the conclusion that through enlargement the EU has managed to expand in territorial as well as political terms; establishing itself as a powerful foreign policy actor and giving greater impetus to the (at least self-pursued) understanding of the EU as an actor founded on norms and values rather than military means. Moreover, it seems like the EU itself is very well aware – and wishes to make use of – the double function of enlargement as a foreign policy tool. The former Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner summarises it in the following manner:

The EU’s aim is to expand the zone of prosperity, stability and security beyond our borders. The question is how to use our soft power to leverage the kinds of reforms that would make that possible. The answer…was Enlargement. This has been a tremendously successful policy (…) EU enlargement has made an extraordinary contribution to peace and prosperity, thanks to our strategic use of the incentives on offer.37

The 2004 enlargement did not merely result in a ten countries larger EU and a significant increase of its sphere of influence; it also created a whole new neighbourhood for the Union. It is evident that

31 The Euro-Mediterranean partnership is an additional forum for norm promotion. Due to its lack of relation with the EaP as well as practical limitations this regional strategy is however not considered here. 32 See for example Schimmelfennig et al. 2005 and Dannreuther, 2006, p. 188ff. The importance of the enlargements following on the fall of the Berlin wall have additionally been underlined by the former Commissioner for External Relations and ENP, Benita Ferrero-Waldner. See Ferrero-Waldner, 2006, p. 139
33 Haukkala, 2008, p. 1603 and Schimmelfennig et al. 2005
35 Haukkala, 2008, p. 1604
37 Ferrero-Waldner, 2006, p. 139
these change casts new light on the EU’s understanding of its relations with the formerly very distant (in geographical as well as political terms) but soon to be close countries. According to the European Commission, the accession of the ten new member states made enhancing the EU-Eastern neighbourhood relations more urgent. Yet, how this was to be done, what was the ideal nature of the sought for enhancement was not evident. Already existing forms of cooperation (the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs), and the Association Agreements) were considered inadequate and, due to so called “enlargement fatigue” and growing popular and political opposition, continuing to enlarge was not perceived a feasible option. The European Neighbourhood Policy was presented as a solution to this challenge, establishing a framework for strengthening the EU’s relations with those neighbouring countries that do not have the perspective of membership of the Union.\(^3\) While admittedly not solving the basic dilemma of enlargement (the ENP neither provides for nor rule out a membership perspective) it provides the EU with additional tools to foster friendly neighbourhoods.\(^4\) With the often quoted creating “…a ‘ring of friends’” as its overarching purpose, the ENP builds on the (good) experiences of enlargement, offering the neighbour countries incentives in return for reforms and adherence to EU norms:

In return for concrete progress demonstrating shared values and effective implementation of political, economic and institutional reforms, including in aligning legislation with the acquis, the EU’s neighbourhood should benefit from the prospect of closer economic integration with the EU.\(^5\)

But why was increased engagement in the Eastern neighbourhood called for? Naturally, one explanation is the political implications stemming from the 2004 enlargement: it is evident that the EU felt that the increasing nearness of the less stable countries of Eastern Europe might threaten its internal security. Improving the relations was thus motivated from a geopolitical point of view.\(^6\) Yet, it is equally possible to interpret the purpose of the ENP in more idealistic terms. The ENP-documents and webpage all stress the commitment to shared values in addition to the ambition to promote security and it is explicitly stated that the cooperation’s level of ambition depends on the receptiveness of the participating countries.\(^7\) For this reason, the ENP has been interpreted as the EU’s most promising new forum and/or instrument for promoting norms. As Tocci notes, the ENP has put “…greater and more explicit emphasis on democracy and human rights compared to previous initiatives towards the neighbouring south and east”.\(^8\)

As regards the empirical effects of the attempts to spread values outside the context of enlargement the academic research point in two directions. On the one hand, some claim that previous experiences suggest that the norm promoting-ability is intimately linked to the provision of the incentive of (full) membership.\(^9\) On the other hand, McDonagh’s empirical study of international organisations’ efforts to promote democracy in Moldova shows that although the prospect of membership is a very powerful incentive it is by no means the only effective tool.\(^10\) This leads to the conclusion that although the absence of the membership perspective challenges the potential efficiency of EU-policies, it should not in itself be regarded a hindrance to successful value promotion. While recognising the advantages of offering incentives, the European Commission appears hopeful about the potential of strengthened cooperation as an instrument for increased influence, arguing that “…enhanced interdependence – both political and economic – can itself be a means to promote stability, security and sustainable development both within and without the EU”.\(^11\) The question is, however, if the absence of powerful incentives should be understood as the result of a conscious choice or an inability


\(^4\)Smith, 2005, p. 757. In its ENP-communication the Commission states that the aim with the ENP is to provide a framework for the “…development of a new relationship which would not, in the medium-term, include a perspective of membership or a role in the Union’s institutions”. European Commission, 2003, p. 5

\(^5\)European Commission, 2003, p. 4. For more information about the incentives offered, see p. 10ff

\(^6\)This is not least illustrated by the launch and content of the European Security Strategy (ESS) in 2004, stating that “…integration of acceding states increases our security but also brings the EU closer to troubled areas”. The Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 8

\(^7\)European Commission, 2003 and EC, External Relations, European Neighbourhood Policy.

\(^8\)Tocci 2007, p. 24 See also Cremona et al. 2007.

\(^9\)Haukkala, 2008, p. 1604

\(^10\)McDonagh, 2008, pp. 158-159. Schimmelfennig et al 2005 come to a similar conclusion.

or even reluctance to make the necessary concessions. This is one of the issues that will be explored in the examination of how the civil servants involved in EU foreign policy-making conceive strategies for norm promotion.

The process of developing the Eastern Partnership

The EU’s approach towards its Eastern Neighbourhood post-enlargement can be characterised as a work in progress that, according to some observers, has been marked by uncertainty and the member states’ diverging interests in the region.\(^{47}\) It is perhaps therefore not too surprising that when Poland first suggested a specific “Eastern Dimension” of EU Foreign Policy in the end of the 1990’s it did not gain much support from either the Commission or the other member states. Not until 2007 with the French president Sarkozy’s continuous efforts to establish a “Mediterranean Union” for the Southern EU-members and their neighbours, did an Eastern initiative become viable.\(^ {48} \)

When Sweden and Poland made a joint proposal in the European Council in May 2008, suggesting an Eastern Partnership the aim was to reinforce EU-Eastern relations and to complement and enhance the ENP. It was widely agreed that the already existing ENP was insufficiently tailored to meet the realities of the Eastern neighbourhood and, what is more, that it did not recognise their different aspirations towards the EU.\(^ {49}\) Michalski describes the proposal as a deliberate attempt by Sweden and Poland to strengthen the Eastern non-EU members’ position vis-à-vis other countries “…in the competition for the attention of the Brussels bureaucracy, the Union’s financial resources and political support”.\(^ {50}\) Moreover, she claims that the “thinly veiled” ambition to “…create an antechamber for those Eastern countries which had clearly stated their aspiration to join the EU (…) but to whom the EU was becoming increasingly reluctant to accord membership perspectives” was yet another important motivator.\(^ {51}\) Growing opposition to further enlargements made any efforts to actively promote full membership unrealistic and the Eastern Partnership could serve as an alternative means to support the modernisation of the Eastern Neighbours and in this manner facilitate future EU-integration. Concurrently, the times was deemed favourable because of the presidency schedule: the upcoming presidencies of the Czech Republic, Sweden and Poland – all proponents of strengthened relations with Eastern Europe – could be expected to support and carry the process forward.\(^ {52}\)

Albeit initially supported by the other member states, the initiative soon became subject of a number of criticisms. It was pointed out that the EaP would overlap with other frameworks for regional cooperation in Eastern Europe (the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the EU’s Black Sea Synergy) and that it risked diluting existing policy processes such as the ENP. The initiative was additionally criticised for the risk of cementing the regionalisation-tendency of EU foreign policies as well as for competing with other regional partners for the EU’s already scarce resources. However, with war breaking out between Georgia and Russia in autumn 2008, the situation was altered. Illuminating the vulnerable position of the Eastern neighbours, lying between Russia and the EU and, as Michalski notes, the war made clear that the “…former CIS republics (…) were in fact essential to EU’s foreign policy aims of stability and prosperity in the neighbourhood”.\(^ {53}\) This meant that the calls for enhancing the EU-Eastern neighbourhood relations were given new impetus. And, as the one-size-fits-all-logic underpinning the ENP was considered making it an inadequate response to this challenge, the idea of an Eastern Partnership was rendered highly relevant.

The Georgia-Russia conflict underlined the importance of EU presence as such and the urgency of enhancing EU-Eastern neighbourhood relations. Yet, it should nevertheless be pointed out that though the conflict speeded up the process of developing and adopting the Eastern Partnership, it was not the causal factor. The European Council of 19-20\(^ {th} \) June 2008 had invited the European Commission to prepare a proposal for a new policy directed towards the Eastern Neighbourhood to be presented in spring 2009. The Extraordinary European Council of 1st September 2008 “…asked for this work to be

\(^ {47}\) Haukkala, 2009, p. 2

\(^ {48}\) Hillion et al., 2009, p. 5, Haukkala, 2009, p. 5

\(^ {49}\) The EaP includes the Eastern neighbours of Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan

\(^ {50}\) Michalski, 2009, p. 2. Se also Hillion et al. 2009, p. 4ff

\(^ {51}\) Michalski, 2009, pp. 1-2 (quote from p. 2)

\(^ {52}\) Michalski, 2009, p. 2

\(^ {53}\) Michalski, 2009, p. 2
accelerated, responding to the need for a clearer signal of EU commitment following the conflict in Georgia and its broader repercussions.\textsuperscript{54} Hence, when the Commission presented its communication in December 2008 it did so three months earlier than initially anticipated. After having been discussed and negotiated among the EU-member states, the Eastern Partnership was finally officially launched and adopted by all EU member states in May 2009.\textsuperscript{55} Since then, the work to implement the Partnership has commenced and a so called Task Force Eastern Partnership assigned to coordinate and monitor this process has been established. By initiating a completely new section the Commission wants to signalise the “particular importance” that the EU attaches to the Eastern Partnership.\textsuperscript{56}

Even though the process of developing the EaP was marked by a slow beginning and lack of enthusiasm from some member states, it is clear that the EU is convinced of the necessity of engaging in the Eastern neighbourhood. The partner countries (PCs) are considered utterly important; not only because of their geostrategic positions, but also because the strong desire (in at least some of them) to integrate with Europe make them more susceptible for EU-influence than other non-member states. Hence, engaging in the Eastern neighbourhood can be interpreted as a means for the EU to confirm and strengthen its (self-understood) reputation as a global actor.

\textsuperscript{54} European Commission, 2008, p. 2
\textsuperscript{56} EC official 5. Before the establishment of the Task Force, DG RELEX was the responsible unit.
3. Theoretical framework

Politicians and bureaucrats

“…politicians make policy; civil servants administer. Politicians make decisions, bureaucrats merely implement them”.57

In this manner Aberbach et al. succinctly summarise the commonly held conception of the ideal relationship between politicians and bureaucrats. Whereas politicians formulate visionary goals and set the political agenda, civil servants are assigned to convert these goals into concrete policies operable in the day to day work. From one point of view the dichotomy of politicians/civil servants is obvious – there are important differences in terms of appointment procedures, roles and legitimacy that make them analytically separable. At second glance, however, this distinction is less clear cut. In his classical analysis of the modern bureaucracy, Max Weber acknowledged the complicated relationship between politicians and bureaucrats, pointing at the power asymmetry generated by politicians’ needs for bureaucratic expertise. Because politicians lack the resources (in terms of knowledge, information and time) to transform policy goals to realistic plans and to implement them they become dependent on their civil servants for doing so. For this reason, Weber deemed the ideal type pictured above improbable – regardless of its normative desirability.58

Today there is wide agreement in the academic literature that the civil servants play key roles in policy-making as well as implementation. David Easton’s figure of the flow in a political system elucidates the interplay between political goals and policy output and, in extension, the role played by civil servants:

![Figure 1: A model of the political system, based on Easton, 1979, p. 112](image)

As figure 1 suggests, political goals must pass through what has been called the “black box of policy-making”. It is the civil servants’ organisational position within this very box that makes them crucial actors in the policy-making process. This implicates that in current political systems

...countless important policy decisions are made by the bureaucracy rather than the legislature. By delegating decisions, the legislature takes advantage of the bureaucracy’s expertise in the policy area under consideration.59

Moreover, Bennedsen et al. point to the fact that civil servants tend to possess a fair amount of autonomy in relation to the explicitly formulated political goals – a phenomenon commonly conceptualised as “bureaucratic autonomy”. But why are politicians willing to compromise with their power? This simple, but yet very important question is often answered with reference to the growing complexity of governance. The mere amount of policies and their often detailed nature is claimed to set limits for politicians’ involvement: the degree of expertise needed in order to transform all political

59 Bennedsen et al, 2006, p. 643
goals into concrete policies is simply too high. There are in other words good reasons for delegating (at least some degree of) authority to the administration; bureaucrats are needed for the political systems to function. Yet, the reason for granting this autonomy – the officials’ expertise – is also potentially problematic. Huber et al. pinpoint the core of the potential problem, describing bureaucratic expertise as a “…double-edged sword, creating both the incentive for legislatures to give policy-making power to bureaucrats and the opportunity for these bureaucrats to act counter to legislative preferences.” According to this line of reasoning, whether or not a certain political goal gets the effect sought for is equally dependent on the bureaucrats’ responsiveness as on the politicians’ intentions. From a democracy point of view this is of course questionable: whereas politicians can be held accountable in the general elections, there is no corresponding mechanism for civil servants. On the other hand, it can be claimed that politicians can and should be held accountable for civil servants’ actions as it is they who are responsible for the decision to delegate power. What is essential, however, is that any attempt to understand the dynamics of political processes requires that the internal process of policy-making is taken into account.

Bureaucratic autonomy in the European Union

Mainstream media and political debaters sometimes picture the European Union as an unwieldy organisation of administration, made up of bureaucrats more concerned with the shape of cucumbers than urgent political questions. To some extent this description can be written off as scurrilous portraits stemming from lack of knowledge and/or EU-scepticism, but the fact is that academic research indicate that there is some relevance to this image. As mentioned in the introduction, it has been claimed the nature of EU-politics make the EU-level more dependent on civil servants compared to the national level. Because EU policies tend to be regulatory – as opposed to ‘political’ – in character they demand a high degree of expertise in order to be put into practice. This, it is argued, makes them more suitable for technocratic (bureaucratic) decision-making than the more politicised policies of the member states. Consequently, the civil servants staffing the Commission (the EU’s highest executive authority) are considered to be key actors in the EU policy-making process, setting the agenda for the policy-setups.

While not challenging the reasons for nor the importance of taking the administration into account in political analyses, Beyers et al. nuance the image sketched above. They argue that their empirical analysis of how different interests affect EU policy processes suggests that the degree of depoliticisation has been exaggerated. Since EU policy-making is marked by a wide range of internal variations, it cannot be concluded that the bureaucratic autonomy is by definition greater in the EU context than the national. The dichotomy of politicians/bureaucrats usually employed is ill suited to fit the EU context given that the civil servants’ freedom of manoeuvre is highly dependent on their location within the EU policy system. For this reason, Beyers et al. propose a distinction between technical bureaucrats (who come close to the Weberian ideal type) and political bureaucrats (who are to combine technical expertise with politicians’ legitimacy concerns). While the former type can be found in the Commissioners’ Directorate Generals, the latter is typically situated in Commission cabinets as well as the member states’ foreign ministries and permanent representations. The most important implication is that whereas political bureaucrats enjoy – and tend to make use of – a high degree of autonomy, technical bureaucrats tend to simply act in accordance with the frames given. Whether or not the organisational belonging affects how the civil servants reason about strategies for promoting values or not will be explored further on.

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60 Huber et al. 2002, p. 19
61 Huber et al. 2002, p. 19
64 Beyers et al., 2004, p. 1120. Given that the Commissioners are appointed by the member states’ governments and (the Commission as a whole) must be approved by the European Parliament they are indisputably linked to the European citizens. Notwithstanding this, they are very far from being directly democratically elected.
65 Beyers et al, pp. 1119-1226, p. 1147
The argument for considering the internal policy-making process

The discussion above shows that there are good reasons for exploring the conceptions of the civil servants involved in the process of developing new policies. This has certainly been acknowledged by a number of scholars who have attempted to open the “black box of policy-making”. Yet, the importance of the internal policy-making process seems to have been overlooked in international relations’ research about norms and value promotion. I argue that we will hardly understand how and why the EU acts in certain ways in its attempts to spread values without taking into account the motivations behind the choice of strategies. Through talking to the officials assigned to convert political goals into policy practice we gain access to this dimension. It should nevertheless be pointed out yet again that it is neither the policy process as such nor the extent of bureaucratic influence that are objects of interest in this paper. Rather, the conceptions of the civil servants serve as *instruments* to examine how strategies for norm promotion are conceived in the EU system. Put simply, the importance of the internal process of policy-making is presumed rather than examined.

Norms in international relations

The concept of norms is frequently used but rarely explained: what do we mean when we refer to “norms”? In order to lay down the theoretical basis for the analysis to come a brief introduction to how norms and normative power have been conceptualised in international relations’ research seems called for. I then direct my attention to the theories about norm promotion/compliance.

It has been questioned why political theory and international relations should at all study norms: after all, most would agree that there is a vast difference between what *is* in the world and what *ought to be*. Finnemore et al. give a powerful answer to this question, pointing to the fact that empirical research “…documents again and again how peoples’ ideas about what is good and what ‘should be’ in the world become translated into political reality.” In other words: if we want to understand the *is* of international relations, also perceptions of what *ought to be* needs to be taken into account. There seems to be general agreement on the definition of norms as “…a standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity.” Elaborating this definition, different categories of norms have been recognised. The distinction most commonly made is that between *regulative* norms (which order and restrain behaviour) and *constitutive* norms (which create new interests, actors or categories of action). Yet, as Finnemore et al. note the concept’s very essence is perhaps best captured by the category of *evaluative* or *prescriptive* norms since

…it is precisely the prescriptive (or evaluative) quality of ‘oughtness’ that sets norms apart from other kinds of rules. Because norms involve standards of ‘appropriate’ or ‘proper’ behaviour, both the intersubjective and the evaluative dimensions are inescapable when discussing norms.

The obvious – but yet rarely acknowledged – implication of this is that from a norm promoter’s perspective there are no *bad* norms. Norms are established, accepted and become powerful as norms exactly because people believe in their goodness and/or appropriateness. Additionally, norms do not appear out of thin air. Rather, they tend to be *actively built* by agents with strong opinions about what is appropriate and/or desirable. This is certainly illustrated by the manner in which norms and values are described and referred to in official EU-documents; not least in the newly adopted *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*. Stating that “…the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity” the *Charter* makes it utterly clear that the EU regards its core values as universal and nonnegotiable. Promoting these very values is thus, by definition, good. The implication of this is discussed further in chapter 4.3, addressing methodological considerations.

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66 Easton, 1979. See for example Uhrwing 2001
67 For similar reasons I will not go discuss further the normative desirability of bureaucratic autonomy.
68 Finnemore et al. 1998, p. 916
69 Finnemore et al. 1998, p. 891
70 Finnemore et al. 1998, p. 891
71 Finnemore et al. 1998, p. 894ff
72 European Parliament et al. 2000, p. 8
The concept of normative power and the “normative power Europe”-thesis

How can power be normative? The concept seems to suffer from a built in contradiction: on the one hand “power” indicates an ability to make someone do something they would not do otherwise; on the other, “normative” alludes to legitimacy. On second glance, however, the concept highlights important dimensions of how agents of international affairs can influence others in the absence of (or serve as an alternative to) hard power means. It moreover enables us to acknowledge that while traditional sources of power imposes observance, normative power builds on a higher degree of voluntariness as it presupposes willingness to comply from the target. So, while recognising its complicated nature I nonetheless argue that it is meaningful as an analytical concept.

The lack of military means is frequently mentioned as a core aspect of normative power but is not synonymous to nor in itself enough to capture the essence of the concept. Rather, normative power refers to the power of ideas, the ideational impact or the ability to influence what is conceived as normal.73 Or, put differently, the “power” is composed of a right to define the appropriate. Yet, the ability to do so is dependent on how the norm initiator/promoter is conceived by the recipient part. In order to become a “normative power” able to influence and shape other actors’ conceptions of what is appropriate behaviour, the agent promoting norms (and the norms that are promoted) must be perceived as legitimate.74

This paper took the EU’s attempts to portray itself as a promoter of norms as point of departure. By continuously referring to the importance of respecting principles such as human rights and democracy in its foreign policies and by adopting a Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Union seeks to strengthen its identity as a community based on values. There is a growing bulk of research discussing whether these attempts have resulted in a de facto change; should the EU be regarded a normative power or not? Some claim that the EU represents something qualitatively new in international relations, acting as a changer of norms rather than relying on employing traditional (“hard power”) foreign policy instruments. According to the main proponent of the (new) “normative power Europe”-paper, Ian Manners, the EU is not only constructed on a normative basis, but this moreover “…predisposes it to act in a normative way in world politics”.75 On the other hand, opponents have pointed out that EU foreign policy is marked by ambiguity and that the ambition to promote norms is far from the sole motivator for EU-involvement in the neighbourhood.76 Since it is not objectively true description of the EU’s norm promoting role that is the subject of interest here I will not go deeper into this discussion. It should nevertheless be noted that irrespective of how the effectiveness (and desirability) of EU norm promotion is conceived, most scholars agree that value promotion is a core feature of the EU’s identity.77 This, in turn, makes examining how the officials responsible for converting the political goal of spreading values reason about strategies for doing so highly relevant.

Strategies for norm promotion

The issue that has attracted most attention in recent research about norms in international relations is the issue of change. What motivates agents to adopt new norms? And, switching from a target to an initiator perspective; what strategies do norm promoters employ to spread values? Most theories aiming to describe and explain norm promotion/norm compliance make use of two “logics of action” motivating change: the logic of consequence and the logic of appropriateness. This distinction follows the broad debates between rationalism and constructivism in international relations (or rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism in comparative politics). The rationalist approach is actor-centred and builds on the assumption that agents are interest driven and rational in the sense that they seek to maximise their benefits based on the information at hand. Constructivists, in turn, acknowledge that agents have interests but claim that these interests are the results of the structures (made up of ideas, norms and identities) surrounding them rather than being determining factors themselves. Among alternative courses of action, actors tend to choose the most legitimate or

74 Sjursén, 2006, p. 236ff, 245. See also Finnemore et al 1998 and Schimmelfennig et al. 2005
75 Manners, 2002, p. 252
76 See for example Wood, 2009 and Barbé et al, 2008
77 Sjursén, 2006, p. 238
appropriate one, seeking to act in accordance with what is expected from them given their identity.  

These basic assumptions lead to different interpretations about how – and why – agents are motivated to adhere to new norms. While the former approach views consequentiality as the main mechanism, the latter emphasises the mechanism of socialisation.

Aiming to account for both these interpretations, the theoretical model developed in this paper largely builds on Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeyer’s framework for analysis. Albeit intended to be applied in the context of European integration, their model represents a ‘mainstream’ among international relations’ theories about norm promotion and compliance. They offer three explanatory models of how and why norm (rule) adoption occurs: the external incentive model, the social learning model and the lesson-drawing model. The models differ on two key dimensions: the logic of action that applies (logic of consequence or logic of appropriateness) and whether the process of rule adoption is EU-driven (norm initiator driven) or CEEC-driven (target driven). As table 1 illustrates, both the external incentives model and the social learning model are classified as norm initiators-driven, whereas the norm recipient is regarded the principal actor in the lesson-drawing model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal actor in the rule adoption process</th>
<th>Logic of rule adoption</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU-driven</td>
<td>Logic of consequence</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Logic of appropriateness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEEC-driven</td>
<td>Lesson-drawing model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social learning model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Alternative mechanisms of Europeanization from Schimmelfennig et al. 2005, p. 8

Given that the aim here is to examine how strategies for norm promotion are conceived in the process of developing policies to promote values, the principal actor is presumed rather than object of investigation. Because the focus lies on the norm initiator (the EU) as opposed to the target perspective the target-driven lesson-drawing model is left aside for the benefit of the external incentives and social learning model.  

These, in turn, have been elaborated with the aid of McDonagh’s conceptualisation of strategies for democracy promotion as she offers a more easily applicable description of the concrete instruments.

Building on the assumption that agents are rational interest-maximisers, the rationalist external incentives model interprets norm adherence as the result of cost-benefit calculations carried out by agents who aim to minimise costs and maximise benefits. The rationale of the process is the logic of consequence. Essentially, this means that norms are viewed and treated as alternatives between which the agent can choose. Whether or not norms are adopted essentially depends on how well they correspond to a given agent’s interests. Hence, acting

…on the basis of the logic of consequentiality…includes the following steps: a. What are my alternatives? b. What are my values? c. What are the consequences of my alternatives for my values? d. Choose the alternative that has the best expected consequences.  

The main mechanism through which norms are promoted is conditionality and the instruments incentives: the target is presented with positive and/or negative incentives in return for norm compliance. Negative incentives typically comprise (the threat of) sanctions whereas positive incentives range from trade and/or cooperation agreements to full membership of a given organisation. The core assumption is that agents comply with political conditionality because – and when – the “…positive incentives (‘carrots’) on offer are crucial for them, or the costs of negative incentives (‘sticks’) exceed the costs of compliance”. Moreover, the external incentives model understands the interplay between norm promoters and recipients as a bargaining process in which information, threats and promises are exchanged. The outcome of this process is determined by the relative bargaining power of the actors involved. This, in turn, depends on the asymmetrical distribution of “…(1) information and (2) the...
benefits of a specific agreement compared with those of alternative outcomes or ‘outside options’.”

Thus, a norm promoter’s success largely depends on how the target country perceives the relation between expected benefits for adopting norms on the one hand, and the internal situation as well as alternative external interests on the other.

The constructivist social learning model, on the other hand, concentrates on the interplay between agents and structures and builds on the assumption that actions are identity-based and driven by rules of appropriateness rather than cost-benefit calculations. The rationale of the process of norm adoption is the logic of appropriateness. Because agents seek to live up the obligations defined by their role as members of a certain group, norms are adopted only if and when doing so is considered to correspond to what is expected behaviour for them in a given situation. Acting on the logic of appropriateness means asking oneself: ‘What kind of situation is this? What kind of person am I? What does a person such as I do in a situation like this?’ This infers that, similarly to the rationalist interpretation, norm adoption is conceived as a result of a conscious choice; the difference lies in the reasons motivating the choices made. In purpose to initiate and facilitate the three stage process of norm adoption – exposure, habituation and internalisation – norm promoters make use of the mechanisms of socialisation and normative pressure. Instead of linking norm compliance to specific incentives value promoters rely on the instruments of persuasion and social influence (naming and shaming). Persuasion is employed to change the minds and ideas and in extension even the identity of the norm recipient. Making use of the social influence-instrument, on the other hand, means praising or pressurising the recipient into adopting norms, building on the assumption that

…actors will conform to policy change requests from the outside because they value certain social rewards
(such as status, legitimacy, a sense of belonging) or want to avoid social punishments (such as shaming, shunning, exclusion).\(^\text{84}\)

It can be noted that just like norms never appear out of thin air, they rarely enter a normative vacuum: rather, they emerge into a space in which they compete with other, alternative norms. This infers that norm advocates trying to motivate new norms through invoking the logic of appropriateness (must) contest existing standards of appropriateness. In extension and paradoxically enough, in order to challenge the existing standards, norm promoters may need to be explicitly “inappropriate”.

Hence, the core of the social learning model is that a government will adopt a given norm if/when it is persuaded about the appropriateness of doing so.\(^\text{85}\)

What can be said about the empirical effectiveness of the strategies discussed above? Building on their analysis of how norms and standards of the candidate countries were affected by the 2004 EU-enlargement, Schimmelfennig et al. come to the conclusion that incentives in general and the incentive of EU-membership in particular are crucial aspects of the Union’s ability to promote norms. Yet, even though

…EU incentives become a sufficient condition for rule adoption and trump all alternative mechanisms once
the EU provides a credible membership perspective and spells out its requirements, EU incentives are not a
necessary condition for rule adoption.\(^\text{86}\)

Employing the logic and mechanisms of the external incentives model should in other words not be interpreted as the sole means to become a successful norm promoter. Additionally, Schimmelfennig et al.’s result suggest that whether or not external incentives alone are what motivates the acceptance process have important consequences for the form and impact of norm adoption. Perhaps hardly a surprise, rules adopted through social learning and lessons learned tend to be less contested in the domestic context and therefore more likely to be viable and sustainable in a long-term perspective. The potential of using strategies other than conditionality should in other words not be underestimated.\(^\text{87}\)

\(^{82}\) Schimmelfennig et al. 2005, p. 10ff
\(^{83}\) March et al, 2004, p. 4, p. 3ff
\(^{84}\) McDonagh, 2008, p. 145
\(^{85}\) Finnemore et al. 1998, p. 894ff
\(^{86}\) Schimmelfennig et al, 2005, p. 18
\(^{87}\) Schimmelfennig et al, 2005, p. 218
\(^{88}\) Schimmelfennig et al. 2005, p. 219
Foreign policy: interest-driven or milieu oriented?

But why do agents choose in certain ways in international relations and, more specifically, why do they engage in norm promotion? International relations theory largely separate between three main perspectives seeking to explain state (or organisation) behaviour: realism, liberalism and constructivism. The realist school of thought view states as the key actors of international affairs and assumes that states are 1) rational in the sense that they seek to optimise their interest based on the information at hand and 2) motivated by a combination of drive for power and the pursuit of national interest(s). However, the anarchic nature of the international system renders the main interest – security – utterly hard to obtain. Because of the absence of a sovereign authority to enforce the rule of law and punish wrongdoers and because of the assumption that international politics is a zero-sum game, realists claim that states can never trust each others intentions. The quest for security thus becomes a constant struggle and conflict an ever present reality; states can never be secure enough. This, in turn, makes international cooperation a highly complicated issue and something that will happen for balancing/bandwagon reasons only. Similarly to realists, liberals acknowledge that states are central actors of international relations. Yet, according to the liberal perspective states are by no means the only relevant actors; also international organisations determine the dynamics of the system. Building on the assumption that moral universal values exist (the main ones being individual liberty and human rights) and that international politics are marked by harmony of interest rather than anarchy, liberals argue that international cooperation is both likely and rational. Actors are certainly considered to be motivated by interest but from the liberal point of view their interest is guided by preference (determined by domestic factors and international norms) rather than egoism.

Constructivism on the other hand, builds on the assumption that no social features are given and focuses on the interplay between structures and agents, emphasising the impact of norms and institutions on international politics. Foreign policy is considered to be “…not only a matter of national interest, but also of acceptable behaviour in the international society.” While acknowledging the importance of interest, constructivists argue that identity and culture are key determinants of an agent’s actions, pointing at the context dependency of preference formation.

Depending on the perspective taken, different conclusions as regards the motivations behind and objectives with an agent’s foreign policy actions can be drawn. Whereas realists underline security concerns as both the starting point and goal for international politics, liberals and constructivists instead point at the importance of preference. But while liberals hold that the preference for universal moral values is given, constructivists point at context and identity as explanations. How do these grand theories help to examine how strategies for norm promotion are conceived in the internal process of policy-making? I argue that understanding why certain strategies are preferred over alternative ones requires linking the very choice of strategies to the overarching goal of the given actor and/or policy. If the main goal of the European Union is to employ the Eastern Partnership as a forum for obtaining the liberal/constructivist goal of promoting values, it appears reasonable to assume that the perceived efficiency of the possible strategies was a key determining factor in the policy preparations. If the EU’s intention with the EaP is more in line with realist objectives (increased energy security for example) then it can be expected that other aspects guided the policy-making choices. But simply, taking also the goals into account we are likely to get a more multifaceted picture of how the officials understand the issue at hand than what otherwise would have been possible.

In an attempt to elucidate the different motives underlying states’ foreign policies, Tocci distinguishes between possession and milieu goals. Milieu goals aim at transforming the international context through the promotion of peace and democracy as well as principles such as human rights and the rule of law. Possession goals on the other hand, aim at protecting and advancing narrower (often material) interests such as commercial relations, border management or energy security. Clearly, the pursuit of possession goals can be interpreted in terms of the realist conceptions of how states act.

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89 Steans et al, 2005, p. 49ff
90 Steans et al, 2005, pp. 21-46
91 Steans et al, 2005, p. 185
92 Steans et al, 2005, pp. 181-189. The principal difference between the liberal and the constructivist interpretations of preference is thus that while liberals view preferences as predetermined, constructivist emphasise that they emerge in specific contexts and are linked to specific identities.
Milieu oriented goals, on the other hand, correspond both to the liberal notion of harmony of interest and the constructivist emphasis on international norms as a key determinant of state behaviour. However, empirical analyses indicate that most foreign policy choices are guided by both milieu and possession goals and that the extent to which milieu goals are pursued tend to depend on the importance of alternative (possession oriented) objectives. Barbé et al. claim that because material gains and moral impulses are so closely intertwined, foreign policy is about balancing possession and milieu goals rather than choosing one approach. Moreover, although the pursuit of a possession oriented foreign policy often conflicts with milieu goals, this is far from always the case. As Tocci notes, milieu and possession goals can even be combined:

The advancement of allegedly milieu goals may underlie the pursuit of narrower possession objectives. Imposing sanctions or waging war in the name of democracy or human rights can cover aims such as protecting energy security. (...) Moreover, milieu and possession goals may well be compatible if not mutually reinforcing in the long-term.

This leads to the conclusion that drawing a fixed line between the two types of goals is a fairly complicated issue and something that is perhaps not even desirable. The point is, however, that the analytical distinction enables us to acknowledge and examine the logical chain between intentions, goals and policy choices. In purpose to allow for this to be taken into account in the forthcoming analysis, the two ideal types of foreign policy goals are included in the theoretical model of strategies for norm promotion presented below.

### Theoretical model of strategies for norm promotion

The theoretical perspectives outlined above indicated the key concepts of the external incentives model and the social learning model respectively. Aiming to make these concepts applicable in the forthcoming analysis, figure 1. Strategies for norm promotion, has been developed to clarify the interconnections between assumptions, mechanisms and instruments.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 2: Strategies for norm promotion**

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The external incentives model builds on rationalist assumptions and explains norm compliance with reference to the logic of consequence: agents will adopt norms if and when doing so is considered beneficial. Employing the instrument of (positive and/or negative) incentives norm promoters build on the mechanism of conditionality in their attempts to promote norms. Their success depends on the degree to which the benefits of adopting new norms outweigh the costs of doing so. The point of departure of the social learning model, in turn, is a constructivist approach which emphasises the process of socialisation as the change provoking mechanism. Building on a logic of appropriateness, it interprets norm compliance as a consequence of normative pressure. Norms are promoted through persuasion about their intrinsic goodness and appropriateness and through shaming and praising the norm recipient into norm acceptance.

As discussed earlier, the lack of previous research about how strategies for norm promotion are conceived in the internal process of policy-making mean that there are no theoretically grounded expectations to guide the analysis. By employing the theoretical model as a framework for analysis, the ambition is to elaborate our understanding of strategies for norm promotion by adding the perspective of the civil servants involved in the policy preparations. How can the concepts and assumptions of the social learning and external incentives model help us understand how the civil servants reason about the choice of certain strategies? And, in extension, are there aspects that the model developed above fails to take into account?
4. Methodological considerations

Exploring the internal process of policy-making is a fairly complicated issue: negotiations and policy drafts are rarely made available for public scrutiny. In general then, the only way to gain access to the process and information about the motivations behind the choices made is through the civil servants assigned to convert political goals to functional policies. Talking enables us to reach at least one bit into the black box of policy-making. Hence, this study builds on a qualitative approach and employs a mixture of respondent and informant interviews.

I concentrate on two of the main actors involved in developing the Eastern Partnership: one of the initiators, the Swedish MFA and the owner of the process, the European Commission Directorate General (DG) responsible for coordinating the EaP. Including representatives from all EU-institutions and member states would have been the ideal approach but limitations in terms of resources made this impossible. This admittedly limits the generalisability of the study but I argue that the scarcity of previous research within the area renders also a small sample highly relevant. Moreover, the choice of agents (country/institution) and specific interviewees have been made strategically in purpose to allow for possible discrepancies to be discovered.° Beyers et al.’s analysis (discussed in chapter 3.1) predicts that technical bureaucrats interpret their role differently than do political officials. By including representatives from the Swedish MFA and the Commission we can explore whether institutional belonging affects how the officials reason about norm promotion as well as potential differences between member state and community-views.

The choice of specific interviewees was guided by an intensity rationale; expected knowledge and organisational position being the key determinants. Put simply, I wanted to talk to the persons who could be expected to possess as much knowledge about the policy as a whole as well as the process of preparing it as possible. Of the eight persons I contacted, all but one were willing to participate. In total I interviewed five persons from the Commission and two from the Swedish MFA. In preparing, conducting and analysing the interviews I followed the advices and principles of the Swedish Research Council. Aiming to increase the reliability – and thereby the credibility – of the study, I asked the interviewees for permission to record the interviews. None declined. Because of the sensitivity of the subject and given that institutional belonging (the EC or the Swedish MFA) rather than organisational position is the relevant divide I choose to let the participants be anonymous in the analysis. By promising the respondents maximum I judged that they would feel able to speak more freely than what otherwise would have been the case.

I argue that there are above all two reasons why the Eastern Partnership is a suitable case to study. First, because the EaP builds on a similar logic as does the enlargement procedures it seems reasonable to assume that the EU seeks to transfer the (good) experiences of enlargement to the EaP-context. However, the lack of enlargement’s main incentive – membership of the EU – means that the EU has made an important lapse from its previous strategy. This in turn, makes it plausible to assume that the question of how to best influence others to adopt EU values was present in the policy preparations. In other words, the civil servants will likely have reflected upon and discussed alternative strategies for norm promotion. Second, the great emphasis put on commitment to shared values in the Partnership documents indicate that milieu rather than possession goals guided the policy-making choices. Given that there are a number of strategic reasons (energy security to name but one) for increased EU-engagement in Eastern Europe, it is far from evident that this is in fact the main motivation. Hence, the process of preparing the Eastern Partnership is fitting also because the interplay – or trade off – between milieu and possession goals is likely to have affected the policy setup.

**Analysing the result: a motives analysis dimension**

As indicated in chapter 3.2, the taking for granted character of norms complicate the crucial issue of how to detect and study their existence and in extension, renders it difficult to investigate how norm

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95 For a more thorough discussion, see Andersson 2010
96 Beyers et al, p. 1119, pp. 1225-1226, p. 1147
98 Vetenskapsrådet, 2002
promotion is conceived. Because norms tend to be assumed rather than problematised it is possible that the civil servants assigned to realise the political goal of spreading values have not reflected upon neither the content of nor the ambition to promote the Union’s core values. Questions about strategies for norm promotion may for this reason take the officials by surprise and, in the worst case scenario result in “none” answers. This insight must necessarily be borne in mind when preparing as well as conducting the interviews.

I argue that one way of concretely addressing the question of how strategies for norm promotion are conceived is by investigating the motives for and/or motivations behind the setup of a given policy. Admittedly, gaining access to the “true” motivations is impossible – the motives we discover are the motives chosen and put forth by the agents themselves. Yet, investigating the logical chain between motives and goal make us better equipped to understand why certain strategies are preferred above others and what assumptions guided the policy choices. Following Esaiasson et al.’s advice the analysis builds on the assumption that by solely mentioning an aspect the agent sends two important signals: this issue is 1) present in the agent’s mind and 2) something that she wants us to acknowledge. For example, for the EU to be regarded as an actor building on the logic of consequence, the civil servants should emphasise the importance of providing incentives rather than mechanisms for socialisation. Moreover and in purpose to analyse the relative importance of different aspects the manner in which they are expressed are “weighed”. Aspects strongly emphasised are interpreted to be of greater importance than those mentioned more in passing, as are those mentioned frequently and/or early/late in a reply.99

Relevance and limitations of the study

Finally, some remarks about the relevance and limitations of the study are called for. The intra-scientific relevance concerns the theory testing/developing part: several existing studies examine the preconditions for norms to be adopted, but less attention has been directed towards how norm promoters conceive strategies for norm promotion. More specifically, previous research has failed to take the importance of the civil servants’ conceptions into consideration. Hence, I aim to contribute to the theoretical understanding of strategies for norm promotion by directing attention to the rationale for and motivations behind choosing certain strategies over others.

The societal relevance in turn, concerns the relation between the European Union’s goals and the politics pursued. If norm promotion is one of the Union’s main foreign policy objectives (which the Lisbon Treaty states that it is) it is of course essential that the day to day practice corresponds to this objective. As the EaP has been presented and interpreted a tool for spreading values, the European citizens clearly have an interest to know to what extent the ambitions to do so actually guided the policy outcome. Is the EU credible in its claims of spreading values such as democracy and human rights?

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99 Esaiasson et al. 2005, pp. 317-330
5. The Eastern Partnership: setup and content

Examining the EaP there are two official documents of particular interest: the European Commission’s communication on an Eastern Partnership and the heads of governments’ Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership from May 2009. The intention with this chapter is to give a very brief overview of the EaP, highlighting how the issue of values is framed.

The European Commission’s take on the Eastern Partnership is certainly an ambitious one, stating that

The EaP should bring a lasting political message of EU solidarity, alongside additional, tangible support for their [the Eastern neighbours] democratic and market-oriented reforms and the consolidation of their statehood and territorial integrity. This serves the stability, security and prosperity of the EU, the partners and indeed the entire continent.

Directed towards the European Union’s Eastern neighbours – Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Belarus – the EaP is presented as a response to challenges common to the entire continent. Consisting of two separate tracks – a bilateral and a multilateral – it is intended to provide a concrete framework for cooperation between these countries and the EU and, in the long term perspective, to strengthen the relations among the partner countries themselves. While acknowledging that all PCs share a common wish to deepen their relations with the EU, the Commission points out that there are important variations among them; both in terms of internal (economic and democratic) development and as regards their motives for wanting to engage with the EU. If the EaP is to be a successful response to the PCs’ challenges it must take the different preconditions into consideration. For this reason the EaP-cooperation is “...tailored to each partner’s specific situation and ambition” and the agreements will “...evolve according to the EaP countries’ level of ambition to comply to [sic] EU’s standards.” Similarly to what has been the case in the enlargement contexts, the principle of differentiation is linked to the mechanism of conditionality. The provisions of the EaP are depends on the partner countries’ performances; more ambitious countries will be rewarded with more integration than their less ambitious counterparts.

Shared values?

It is obvious that values are an essential dimension of the EaP. For example, one of the portal paragraphs of the joint declaration states that the EaP

...will be based on commitments to the principles of international law, and to fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedom, as well as to market economy, sustainable development and good governance.

The importance of respecting values such as democracy and human rights – and in extension the ambition to promote these very norms – is similarly signalised by the Commission’s communication. The Commission clarifies that not only is the EaP based on “...mutual commitment” to the values just mentioned but that the “...level of ambition of the EU’s relationship with the Eastern Partners will take into account the extent to which these values are reflected in national practices and policy implementation”. Describing the values in questions as “shared values”, the Commission indicates that the EU member states and the PCs are equally responsible for identifying and respecting them:

101 European Commission, 2008, pp. 2-3
102 EC, External Relations, Eastern Partnership. Albeit formally included among the EaP countries, Belarus takes a somewhat special position. Besides from being the only PC not fully covered by the ENP and lacking PCAs, all EU-Belarus relations are conducted on expert rather than the political level.
105 Michalski, 2009, p. 3. Michalski points at the differentiated approach as the main motivation behind Ukrainian decision to support the Partnership despite the fact that it perceives it as very bleak alternative to full EU-membership – the explicitly and frequently stated goal of Ukraine’s relations with the EU. See p. 5.
The Eastern Partnership is launched as a common endeavour of the Member States of the European Union and their Eastern European Partners…founded on mutual interests and commitments as well as on shared ownership and responsibility. It will be developed jointly, in a fully transparent manner.\textsuperscript{109}

Yet, it can be questioned whether the values in question are in fact shared in the sense of having been commonly defined – as opposed to being defined by the EU alone. Several wordings indicate that the choice of values (democracy, human rights etc.) was \textit{pre-defined} rather than the result of negotiations. This is not least illustrated by the Commission’s communication explicitly stating that

A sufficient level of progress in terms of democracy, the rule of law and human rights and in particular evidence that the electoral legislative framework and practice are in compliance with international standards, and full cooperation with the Council of Europe, OSCE/ODIHR and UN human rights bodies will be a \textit{precondition} for starting negotiations and for deepening relations thereafter.\textsuperscript{110}

This together with the fact that the Commission promises to assist the PCs to meet the conditions suggests that the EU interprets the Partnership as a forum in which the Union and \textit{not} the partner countries is in the position to define the preconditions for cooperation and judge the degree to which they are fulfilled.\textsuperscript{111} The fact that the values of democracy and human rights are framed as the \textit{nonnegotiable} foundation of the EaP adds a dimension of ambivalence to the Partnership since there is an obvious dissonance between the concepts of conditionality and joint ownership. As Kochenov succinctly points out

\begin{quote}
...either the partners are equal and own the process together, or, conditionality is employed by one of the partners, requiring that others be subject to compliance checks, while also being dependent on the conditionality-related progress findings.\textsuperscript{112}
\end{quote}

Finally, it might be tempting to interpret the focus on norms in the EaP as an indicator of milieu oriented objectives. Promoting norms is however not in itself enough evidence of a milieu oriented foreign policy – the reasons for wanting to spread values can be possession oriented just as well. Without going too deep into the discussion about the motives behind the EaP, it can be noted that it is presented with reference to both possession oriented \textit{and} milieu oriented goals. For example, increased EU security is mentioned in parallel to strengthening democratic reforms in the partner countries.\textsuperscript{113} The question is thus how the officials involved in the Partnership-preparations reason about the initiative: do they perceive it as mainly milieu- or possession oriented?

\textsuperscript{109} Council of the European Union, 2009, p. 5
\textsuperscript{110} European Commission, 2008, p. 4. Emphasis added.
\textsuperscript{111} European Commission, 2008, p. 4
\textsuperscript{112} Kochenov, 2009, pp. 16-17
\textsuperscript{113} European Commission, 2008, pp. 2-3
6. Result: going into the black box of policy-making

Political or technical bureaucrats?

According to Beyers et al.’s conclusions discussed in 3.1.1, the technical officials of the European Commission can be expected to interpret their room for manoeuvre as more limited than the political civil servants of the Swedish MFA. Although the interviews indicate that there is some truth to this image, no general conclusion as regards the objective accuracy of their analysis can be drawn. On the one hand, the Swedish MFA officials seemed at ease talking about their contribution to the EaP-preparations while (at least some of) the EC representatives were more reluctant to do so, underlining that the Commission was asked to develop an initiative. By suggesting that they simply proposed what had been asked for, these officials appeared to want to describe their role in terms of the technical bureaucrat-ideal type. On the other hand, two of the EC officials expressed a clear sense of ownership, stating that because the European Commission “held the pen” in drafting the proposal it was only natural that they felt a sort of authorship. The general opinion, however, was that although the Commission owned the process of developing the Partnership, its ability to pursue an agenda of its own was (and tends to be) highly limited.

The other division following from institutional belonging concerned how the officials reasoned about the relation between the EaP and the umbrella policy of the ENP. The EC officials acknowledged the ambition to ameliorate the ENP as an important background to the launch of the EaP but it is nonetheless apparent that they want the Partnership to be interpreted as an “…integral part of the ENP”. The EaP was repeatedly described as a complement and a “boost” to the existing framework, and the EC civil servants continuously referred to similarities between the policies’ goals and setup. The Swedish MFA officials did not express any deviant opinions but the rare mentioning of the ENP indicates that the interrelation between the ENP and the EaP is considered to be of less importance from the Swedish point of view. Given the apprehensions that the EaP and the Union for the Mediterranean might together render the ENP superfluous, it is perhaps not surprising that the Commission – the “owner” of the ENP – emphasise the continuous need for maintaining the policy. For Sweden on the other hand, the importance of doing so is probably less apparent.

Overall, however, the dividing lines following the bureaucrats’ institutional belonging were few and no clear pattern regarding their perceptions about strategies for norm promotion could be deduced. This implicates that Beyers et al.’s argument cannot be confirmed nor refused.

The objective of the Eastern Partnership

I argue that understanding why certain strategies are preferred over alternative ones requires that the choice of strategy is linked to the overarching goal of the policy at hand. This renders investigating how the officials perceive the intentions behind the EaP highly relevant.

The issue of motives was addressed with reference to two aspects: the political context and the policy content. Confirming the description given in chapter 5.1, the officials pointed at the widespread wish to ameliorate the ENP (and the, albeit less widespread, desire to upgrade the EU’s offer to the Eastern neighbours) together with the launch of the Union for the Mediterranean as the key factors rendering the EaP possible. The Polish-Swedish joint proposal was considered to have created the final push for the process to be initiated. The Swedish MFA officials moreover mentioned the will to facilitate future EU-membership as yet another important motive, underlining that the Swedish

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114 EC official 4, 5, SE MFA official 1, 2
115 EC official 1, 3
116 EC official 5, p. 2
117 EC official 1, 2 and 4.
118 SE MFA official 1
119 EC official 4, and 5, SE MFA official 2
political leadership has since long expressed a clear appetite for extending the EU’s offer to the Eastern neighbours. \(^{120}\)

As regards the policy substance, the officials described the will to integrate the six Eastern neighbours more closely to the EU as the main factor behind the chosen setup: the intention was to make a stronger and more attractive offer than what was possible through the ENP-framework. When asked to elaborate why the EU seeks to enhance its engagement in the region above all two aspects were raised: the need for sending a clear(er) signal about the EU’s commitment to the region and the ambition to support reform efforts. Stating that the policy preparations were guided by the goal of creating an “all-embracing” form of cooperation one of the Swedish MFA officials described the core of the EaP in the following manner:

…the Partnership is not a Partnership à la carte in which the partner countries can choose to cooperate concerning energy and trade...this is a wide Partnership which includes also human rights, the rule of law, anti-corruption, reforming the legal system... You cannot simply choose what you want while leaving the rest aside.\(^{121}\)

Similar to this civil servant, several of the interviewees appeared to understand the EaP as a framework for influencing the internal development of the PCs – a framework through which best practices can be exchanged and reforms encouraged.\(^{122}\) Some, albeit not all, even made an explicit reference to the EU’s overarching foreign policy goal to promote values, stating that the EaP is a forum for spreading values and a means for making sure that the countries develop in the desired direction – that they democratise and guarantee the respect for key principles such as human rights and the rule of law.\(^{123}\) Encouraging the partner countries to become more integrated with the EU was generally perceived as the key instrument for the EU to support reform processes. The officials seemed to regard internal development as a natural effect of EU-integration, something that might explain the emphasis put on the need for combining economic integration with integration in terms of values.\(^{124}\) Furthermore, even though the two processes were described as parallel and equally important, some of the officials’ reasoning suggests that rapprochement in terms of values is considered more fundamental than economic integration. One of the Swedish MFA officials stated that drawing the partner countries closer to the EU is

…not only about making them adopt as much of the trade acquis as possible. Rather, the big, or one of the big parts of the acquis we want them to adopt concerns human rights, democratic government, rule of law, market economy.\(^{125}\)

Correspondingly, one of the EC officials highlighted the crucial importance of including values, arguing that

…the efforts to….essentially extend the acquis communautaire to other countries wouldn’t be worth it or might prove unsustainable if there isn’t an accompanied political process of democratisation, respect for human rights, rule of law, all these things that go under the banner of values.\(^{126}\)

Hence, even if economic development/integration without an equivalent progress in terms of values is objectively possible, this is not conceived as a plausible alternative within the EU-system. It is symptomatic that a majority of the interviewees were taken by surprise when asked to elaborate on the intentions behind including values in the Partnership; doing so was simply too self-evident to be questioned. Values were “fundamental” in the policy preparations and are the “foundation for the Eastern Partnership”.\(^{127}\) And, as one of the EC officials pointed out, the aim to promote values is not specific to the EaP but rather “…it is the policy of the EU in general to set preconditions for engaging with other countries…respect for common values, democracy and human rights, the rule of law.”\(^{128}\) This suggests that the ambition to spread EU values was the given point of departure for the EaP-

\(^{120}\) SE MFA official 2
\(^{121}\) SE MFA official 1
\(^{122}\) EC official 1, 3, 4 and 5, SE MFA official 1 and 2
\(^{123}\) EC official 3, SE MFA official 1
\(^{124}\) EC official 1, SE MFA official 1
\(^{125}\) SE MFA official 1
\(^{126}\) EC official 1
\(^{127}\) EC official 2, SE MFA official 1
\(^{128}\) EC official, 2
policy preparations. But was it the only motive? While recognising that all member states are eager to express their commitment to value rhetorically, the interviewees indicated that some tend to be unwilling to make the necessary concessions when converting this commitment into practice. One of the EC civil servants described it as a “...constant struggle because on the one hand you have the need to have a more realpolitik approach which is based on interest rather than values and on the other...there is this struggle for promoting values”. Although this particular civil servant claimed that the EaP-process was rather uncomplicated in this regard, some of the others seemed to think that the EaP preparations were (at least partly) marked by a tension between foreign policy goals and economic interests – or, put differently, milieu or possession oriented objectives. Whereas the value of the EaP was considered obvious from a foreign policy point of view, the fact that the economic benefits of enhanced commitment were deemed less evident rendered agreeing on the width and degree of ambition complicated. Should the value of increased political influence in the region be prioritised over (short term) economic interests or the other way around? The interviews suggest that this internal divide was present both in the member state context (between the MFAs and the Ministry of Finance) and within the European Commission itself. To what extent did the tension affect the policy outcome? The Swedish MFA officials implied that they would have preferred an even more ambitious EaP, yet, the common opinion was that in the end, the political value of the EaP outweighed the economically motivated hesitations.

Hence, it seems reasonable to conclude that the civil servants conceive the Eastern Partnership as milieu rather than possession oriented. The goals of spreading values and contributing to the internal development in the PCs were emphasised much more frequently than was other potential goals. Whether the fact that the motive to advance EU-interests was not at all raised in the interviews means that it was absent in the policy preparations or not is impossible to say. What we can assume, however, is that because the civil servants view spreading values as a core objective with the Partnership, the efficiency of strategies for norm promotion should have been a key determining factor in the policy preparations.

Strategies for promoting values

Addressing in turn the key concepts of assumptions, rationale, mechanisms and instruments, this section aims to answer the main question of how the officials involved in the EaP-policy preparations conceive strategies for norm promotion.

Assumptions

Why do the officials believe that agents adopt new norms? The interviews suggest that the civil servants build on both constructivist and rationalist assumptions in their reasoning about motives for norm adoption. On the one hand, several gave expression to clearly rationalist ways of thinking, describing the process of norm compliance as a trade-off between costs and benefits. Pointing at the rationality of states and the short-term perspective of politicians, these officials argued that the EU must balance expected costs for adopting new norms with concrete benefits. Because politicians’ future is on the short-term (e.g. the next election) they tend to regard the kind of long term benefits resulting from value adoption subordinate to the immediate costs of undergoing reforms. Offering “concrete deliverables” is therefore considered necessary to raise the partner countries’ interest in integrating with the EU, making adopting norms a more attractive and hence likely choice. Moreover, the interviews indicate a tendency of linking the PCs’ degree of receptiveness to their

129 EC official 3
130 SE MFA official 1. Another conflict that was frequently mentioned concerned the financial aspect, following the usual and expected the South versus East-divide.
131 EC official 2, 3, 4, 5. SE MFA official 1 and 2
132 EC official 1, 4. SE MFA official 1. Indeed, the democratic deficit in the PCs raises questions about the relevance of this line of reasoning: do their political leaders really care about elections and legitimacy? While recognising the huge difference between how the PCs’ versus the EU-members’ leaders understand the need for legitimacy, the interviewees argued that the PC-leaders consider some degree of legitimacy necessary. The general opinion was therefore that the balance between concessions and concrete benefits are of crucial importance also in these contexts.
additional (mainly economic) needs. For example, when talking about the potential of the EaP to become a successful forum for spreading values, one EC official put forth Azerbaijan as a particularly hard case. Stressing the Azerbaijan richness of oil and gas resources, the official questioned the motives for and the extent to which Azerbaijan is really interested in integrating with Europe – they do not need Europe. The fact that this and other officials linked the needs of the target to the interest in integration indicates that the reward is assumed to be the main motivator behind norm adoption. Yet another EC official seemed to suggest that the Commission in general builds on rationalist understandings of what motivates change. Commenting on the implications of not including the membership perspective in the EaP, the official stated that

Of course you can always argue that if they [the PCs] would have an accession perspective then their collaboration would be better but this is something that is decided by the heads of states and not the Commission.

Albeit not explicitly spelled out, the quote indicates a conviction that including the membership perspective would have rendered the EaP more effective. This, in turn, suggests that the official believes that agents change because they see benefits with doing so.

On the other hand, there were also clear indicators of constructivist assumptions. For example, both of the Swedish MFA officials linked the receptiveness of the PCs to their internal identity. According to them, the strong sense of “Europeanness” in many of these countries infers that they are more likely to change and adopt norms when doing so is perceived as strengthening their European identity. Likewise, several of the officials underlined that the EU cannot impose values; the will to change and to adopt new norms must come from within. As one of the EC representatives formulated it:

...either you are convinced or you are not convinced. I mean, there is not something that we can do a lot to change. (…) this is not something the EU can impose; it has to come from within and, basically, the only thing we can offer is the example of Europe.

The necessity of reforms being driven from within was frequently raised with reference to sustainability. All of the interviewees evidently believed that forced reform does not last. Confirming the understanding of norm adoption as a result of internal processes rather than external impositions, one of the Swedish MFA officials argued that the EU should

...implant values not on official political level but in the society. This is done through contacts between students and scholar exchanges...these things are equally important. It doesn’t have to be activities with an explicit political purpose; it is just about exposing these countries for our values.

The emphasis on the targets’ willingness to change together with the fact that exposing them to the EU core values is considered a potential efficient means for promoting norms suggest that the officials build on constructivist assumptions about why and how agents adopt new norms. Additionally, the general expectation among all officials (even the more rationalism-oriented ones) was that the EaP would be a successful framework for norm promotion in the long term. Value adoption was more frequently underlined as an effect of slow processes of socialisation, habituation and internalisation rather than the result of interest-maximising and cost-benefit calculations. Thus, while the officials seem to assume that the target countries are rational in the sense that they tend to balance the expected benefits of adopting norms against the expected costs for doing so, they appear to consider the impact of this balancing subordinate to the identity-based receptiveness of the state in question. This indicates that they regard the ideas and perceptions of the partner countries as the key determining factors: agents will not adopt new norms unless they are convinced. The conclusion is thus that constructivist assumptions appear to play a more fundamental role than rationalist ones.

133 EC official 4
134 EC official 5
135 SE MFA official 1 and 2
136 EC official 2
137 EC official 1
138 EC official 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and SE MFA official 1, 2
139 SE MFA official 2
Rationale

How do the civil servants perceive the rationale of the norm adoption process? It is clear that all of the interviewees regard the logic of consequence crucially important when promoting norms, not least because offering incentives in return for rule/value adoption proved so efficient in the pre-accession negotiations. For this reason, the policy-preparations were guided by an ambition to make use of previous experiences and transpose the enlargement methods to fit the EaP-framework. As one EC official noted “…we feel that even without offering membership there is still quite a lot into it”.140 The interviews indicate wide agreement about countries tending to become more willing to make the necessary sacrifices involved in adopting new norms if/when offered concrete benefits for doing so. One EC official described this in the following manner:

…I’m not really sure whether they are willing to adopt these norms; they say that they are and they adopt them to a certain degree because they want to get the fruits of the economic dimension of the EaP…this motivates them a little bit to make also concessions on the human rights and good governance component.141

Claiming that the concrete benefits rather than the values as such which motivate norm adoption, the official expresses a belief in the promise of invoking the logic of consequence – a belief that seems to be shared several of the interviewees. For example, another EC official argued that

…there needs to be progress in values but we need incentives also to… basically to indicate to them [the PCs] that by integrating more in Europe they are also going to have concrete benefits.142

While suggesting that progress in terms of values is the (implicit) main goal of integration, this official suggests that in order for the PCs to be (come) willing to work towards this goal, they need also see concrete benefits with doing so. Moreover, many referred to offering incentives as a means to manipulate the trade-off between long-term goals and short-term sacrifices. Given the indicators of the logic of consequence-rationale, it should perhaps come as no surprise that there is a clear element of linking norm adherence to the provision of incentives in the Partnership. As one of the officials summarised it: “How well you live up to the EU’s expectations affects the concrete support, the concrete economic assistance”.143 Concurrently, the interviews indicate that the officials see important limitations to the usefulness and potential of the logic of consequence in the EaP-context. They underlined that its effectiveness essentially depends on the extent to which the incentives offered are considered attractive enough; a factor highly dependent on the context in and ambitions of the target country. For this reason, it was widely agreed that whereas invoking the logic of consequence can be expected efficient in the PCs for which the incentives are right, it may be inoperable or even counterproductive for others.144

Additionally, several of the interviewees pointed at the importance of changing mentalities in the society as a whole in order to create the fundamentals for change – as opposed to solely promoting change as such. There was a clear sense that, pushed to discuss democracy, human rights etc. the PCs will become habituated with and eventually more receptive for the promoted values. In this regard, the Civil Society Forum was described as particularly promising, providing a framework for socialisation and network-creation.145 This suggests that also a strong belief in the logic of appropriateness-rationale guided the policy choices. Furthermore, the fact that two of the officials argued explicitly for directing norm promoting efforts towards the administrative level indicates that the ambition to invoke such a rationale shaped the policy choices.146 One of the Swedish MFA stated that:

…..above all, it’s about gaining access to the civil servants…we believe in injecting inspiration and ideas about change in the administration. For these ideas to work inside the current political system, fostering change from within.147

140 EC official 3
141 EC official 5
142 EC official 3
143 EC official 1, 3, 5. Quote by SE MFA official 1
144 EC official 1, 4, 5, SE MFA official 1, 2
145 EC official 1, 2, 3, 4, SE MFA official 2
146 EC official 2, 3, 4, 5 and SE MFA official 2
147 SE MFA official 2
This tells us two things. First, by pointing at the administration as a target, the interviewees recognise that the PC officials do in fact influence the political development. Not only does this mean that they acknowledge also their own power over the political process (confirming thereby the relevance of this study). It moreover infers that, in the long term perspective, changing the officials’ ideas and conceptions about key values is equally or even more important to converting the minds of the often short-term appointed and therefore short-sighted political leaders. Second, it is evident that they follow the logic of appropriateness in their understanding of the value adoption-process as a result of mentality-changes and identification rather than (solely) cost-benefit calculations. As noted by the official quoted above this is however

...not really something one can write in a paper (...) but the choice to involve these countries’ administrations on a fairly technical level in order to foster an awareness, for them to be acquainted with how the EU works...that is a foundation pillar. I guess that’s how we reasoned about it. 148

All interviewees expressed similar opinions; the other Swedish MFA official noting that the importance of altering ideas was assumed rather than discussed in preparing the EaP. 149 This means that the extent to which the two rationales are explicitly reflected in the EaP-documents should not be interpreted in terms of strong/weak support for the logic of consequence versus the logic of appropriateness. I argue that it rather should be seen as an expression for the fact that the officials appear to understand the role and the meaning of the two rationales quite differently. There was a clear tendency of the logic of consequence being linked to the more instrumental/strategic dimensions of the EaP (e.g. how to provoke concrete change). The belief in the logic of appropriateness-rationale on the other hand, seems to have served as (the given) point of departure, impregnating the officials’ reasoning about the contexts in and the mechanisms through which norms are adopted. Put differently: while the effectiveness of the former was object for discussion, the importance of the latter was taken for granted. The conclusion is thus that the officials do not perceive the rationales of the logic of consequence and the logic of appropriateness as alternative or conflicting. Rather, they regard them as complementary. How this affects their conclusions about mechanisms and instruments for promoting values is the question to which we now turn.

Mechanisms and instruments

As could be expected given the discussions above, the interviews suggest that the EaP-preparations were guided by an ambition to combine the mechanisms and instruments of the external incentives- and the social learning model respectively. The mechanism of socialisation was frequently referred to as a crucial factor when promoting values, seemingly understood as creating the foundation for norms to be adopted. The general expectation seems to be that if the partner countries are continuously exposed to the values the EU seeks to spread, they will become habituated with them and eventually come to regard them as natural. In the long term perspective, the hope is that this will result in value internalisation. 150 Acknowledging that the ambition to foster socialisation processes shaped the EaP-policy choices, one EC official described the intentions and approach in the following manner. The EaP provides

...some ways of creating networks for socialisation among these countries and the EU that we hope can in the longer term lead also to adoption of these values, to change in the mentalities, socialisation, to foster socialisation process. (...) This can help them, inspire them to reform...based on the model of others. That’s the whole idea. 151

Similarly, many expressed hopes that the Civil Society Forum will facilitate network-creation and value-as well as rule rapprochement, explicitly linking it to the concept of socialisation. Although the officials mainly argued for the persuasion-instrument, particularly the Swedish MFA officials expressed support for making use also of the social pressure-instrument. Pointing out that the PCs have publicly declared their commitment to the shared values underpinning the EaP by signing the joint declaration, one of them described this as an indispensable source of influence:

148 SE MFA official 2
149 SE MFA official 2. Also the other officials gave expression to similar opinions; for example EC official 3
150 EC official 2, 3, 4, 5. SE MFA official 2
151 EC official 2
...in every pledge they make in high level political contexts [about their commitment to the shared values] they expose themselves to a considerable risk of being conceived as failing to live up to the declared commitments. And we believe in the philosophy of naming and shaming (...) I mean, it is the absolutely worst thing that can happen; that you participate in a fancy meeting, invited, and someone openly criticises you.152

Because these countries want to be perceived as members of the EU-club and because political leaders generally wish to avoid negative attention, they are sensitive for criticism. Thus, by drawing attention to discrepancies between their (self-declared) theory and practice, the EU can pressurise the target countries to improve. Yet, it was also emphasised that the potential of socialisation mechanisms depends on the partner country’s degree of receptiveness. Whereas fostering socialisation processes was put forth as a promising strategy in the Ukrainian context (which’s strong sense of Europeanness together with its explicitly declared ambition to join the EU makes it fairly receptive) the officials expressed doubts about its potential in the less EU-oriented Azerbaijan (which, because it does not identify with Europe to the same extent that does Ukraine was considered substantially less receptive).153

Notwithstanding the strong support for fostering socialisation, it is apparent that the officials believe also in the consequentiality mechanism and the potential of incentives. One EC official argued that because politicians – who are the ones best positioned to initiate real change – tend to be short-sighted they generally find it hard to see the value with long term benefits. And even if they do, they tend to be reluctant to make the short-term sacrifices necessary to obtain it. Incentives in the form of “concrete deliverables” are thus needed to manipulate the trade-off between short-term costs and long-term benefits.154 One of the Swedish MFA officials expressed a similar opinion when talking about the concrete EAP-setup, stating that because EU-values are the foundation of the partnership “…any lapse from respecting them must have consequences. How to do this, in what stage backlashes should lead to consequences (…) is something that we must continuously discuss”.155 This indicates that the conditionality-mechanism both is and is understood as a core feature of the value promoting-dimension of the Partnership. Interestingly enough, although some of the interviewees referred to the idea of sticks and carrots as underpinning the EaP, incentives were clearly interpreted in terms of carrots. Only one of the officials openly reflected on the possibility of using negative incentives, albeit concluding in the end that since the EaP builds on voluntariness and joint ownership, employing sticks would send the wrong signals and even risk undermine rather than support the attempts to promote values.156

The interviews indicate that using incentives is regarded utterly efficient. Yet, similarly to their reasoning about the potential of the socialisation-mechanism, it is evident that the officials see important limitations also to the consequentiality-approach. All of the interviewees pointed out that though this logic has proved efficient before, it is by no means a guarantee to success. First, in order for conditionality to be effective it is crucial that the EU is “…coherent in withholding those carrots if the countries do not reach the necessary conditions”, or it will undermine its own influence.157 Recognising the potentially diverging interests of the member states, the officials described obtaining coherence as utterly difficult. Second, the ambiguity of the EaP (neither offering nor ruling out future EU-membership) was put forth as a challenge: the uncertainty about the desired nature of future EU-PC relations risks to weaken the link between efforts and incentives.158 Third, the civil servants strongly emphasised that conditionality requires that the right incentives are offered: less attractive carrots will result in less ambitious/willing target countries. This “rightness”, in turn, is contextually determined. Describing the EaP-incentives as “fairly weak”, one of the Swedish MFA representatives took the issue of aerial cooperation to illustrate her point. If cooperating on rules for air service is

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152 SE MFA official 2
153 EC official 4, SE MFA official 1, 2
154 EC official 1
155 SE MFA official 1
156 EC official 4
157 EC official 1
158 EC official 3, SE MFA official 1. Yet, the common opinion was that there is not much to be done about this. One of the EC officials succinctly summarised the situation stating “…and you may argue is it right or is it wrong [to exclude the membership perspective], is it a good choice on the side of the EU, is it short-sighted…but at the moment that is the position”. EC official 2
considered beneficial then the offer to increase it will be a powerful incentive. If the target country instead seeks to secure the interests of their national airlines, then increased cooperation will have the rather opposite effect. 159 Although this official went farthest in her critique of the EaP-incentives, all of the interviewees underlined the essential importance of taking the context-dependency into account when developing a strategy for norm promotion. 160 The officials pointed out that although the EU can influence the development by increasing the willingness to reform (though offering incentives and foster processes of identification) the EU cannot impose change – the will to reform must come from within. Thus, the officials perceive the EaP as a potentially powerful tool for value promotion irrespective of the strategy chosen as long as the partner countries are rhetorically and practically committed to the EaP-visions. 161

Given the above discussions, what can be concluded about the officials’ understanding of instruments for spreading values? It is clear that neither offering incentives nor fostering socialisation is regarded unambiguously efficient. Rather, the strategies’ potential effectiveness is considered dependent on the relation between the incentives/identity offered on the one hand and the context/ambitions of the target state on the other. The socialisation mechanism will only work if and when the target is already interested in and identify with the EU. The effectiveness of the consequentiality mechanism, in turn, depends on the attractiveness of the incentives offered and the EU’s ability to hold the line. Moreover, confirming Schimmelfennig and Sedelmaier’s notion that rule adoption motivated solely by benefits tend to be less sustainable than norms adopted through a combination of the socialisation- and consequentialy mechanisms, several of the officials argued that offering incentives without persuading the targets about the norms’ goodness risked resulting in lip-service adoption rather than true internalisation of values. 162 Because of these limitations, none of the strategies was deemed sufficient in itself: accomplishing true and sustainable value adoption requires both the methods of offering incentives and fostering socialisation. That the officials regard combining the strategies of external incentives and social learning the ideal approach did not least become evident in the end part of the interviews when they were asked to elaborate on the key of becoming a successful value promoter. All of them made explicit references to both dimensions of the theoretical model, arguing for providing incentives and encourage socialisation. Finally, when seeking to explain the suces of enlargement in terms of value promotion, one of the EC officials captured what appears to be understood as the foundation for and the core of the EU’s norm promoting-ability. The key to success

…is the success of the model and the power of attraction of the EU and that, I think is first in terms of respect of the various identities of the EU members…be that national identities, regional identities, minority identities, I think we’ve got that in the EU. The fact that everybody contributes and counts in the EU is a striking difference in relation to what they had under the communist or the Soviet system. Of course, the fact that economically it has been successful and that there are some mechanisms to promote economic solidarity between states, I think that is also important. 163

Essentially, the European Union’s potential as a norm promoter is considered intimately linked to its perceived attractiveness – in ideational and economic terms. As long as this attractiveness is maintained, the EU will continue to be influential in the countries which identify with and aim to gain access to the economic dimensions of the Union.

Putting it together: how are strategies for norm promotion conceived in the internal process of policy-making?

Returning to the specific research questions presented in chapter 1.4, it can be concluded that the officials interpret the Eastern Partnership as milieu- rather than possession oriented and that the ambition to spread values underpins the policy setup. Linking their reasoning to the key concepts of

159 SE MFA official 2
160 EC official 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and SE MFA official 1, 2. The common understanding was that the EaP-incentives are ambiguous: too ambitious for some, not ambitious enough for others.
161 EC official 5, SE MFA official 1, 2
162 See chapter 3
163 EC official 2
the theoretical model elaborated in 3.2.4 made clear that they find both the strategy of external incentives and social learning relevant. The theoretical model helped elucidate the core dimensions of how the officials understand motives for adopting norms as well as the logic behind the concrete way of action: though the EC and the Swedish MFA representatives build on rationalist and constructivist assumptions about what provokes change, the constructivist ways of thinking appears to weigh heavier. The general opinion was that the EU’s potential source of influence lies in its ability to increase the likeliness for value adoption by making it a more attractive choice. It was strongly and repeatedly emphasised that the EU cannot impose change: agents will not adopt norms unless they are convinced of their benefits and inherent goodness. Concerning the concrete strategies, it is apparent that the civil servants consider both external incentives and social learning valuable. Aiming to invoke the logic of consequence- and the logic of appropriateness-rationales, the policy choices appear to have been guided by an ambition to promote norms through both the consequentiality and socialisation mechanism. The civil servants argued for the need and potential of offering incentives as well as persuade and (publicly) pressurise the partner countries to adopt the EU-core values. Finally, although all officials acknowledged the EU’s ability to make the target states more receptive, there was wide agreement that in the end, the context and ambitions of the norm recipient are the key determinants for the Union’s potential influence.

Hence, the overarching question of this paper – how is the issue of norm promotion and strategies for becoming a successful norm promoter conceived in the internal policy-making process of the EU? – can be answered in the following manner: The civil servants involved in the policy preparations understand norm promotion as a core dimension of the milieu oriented Eastern Partnership. Supporting the logic of consequence and the logic of appropriateness, they consider both the model of external incentives and social learning relevant. The ideal strategy for becoming a successful norm promoter is therefore one that takes into account the context of the target state and which combines the mechanisms and instruments of consequentiality and socialisation.

One additional ambition in this paper was to explore potential differences between how values are framed in the EaP-documents and how promoting these values are conceived by the civil servants assigned to prepare the policy. The picture of how the EU seeks to promote values is considerably more “flat” and univocal in the official documents than when elaborated by the officials. This is hardly surprising: conceptions do tend to be complex rather than perfectly coherent. Yet, the comparison indicates that some aspects of their understandings of the process of norm promotion/adoption are so taken for granted that they are rarely discussed and even more rarely written down. Above all, constructivist assumptions about motives for adopting new norms appear to have been crucial in the policy preparations – a fact hardly visible in the official documents. That there are additional dimensions to the EU’s attempts to promote values than what is explicitly spelled out is important to bear in mind when considering all EU-policies. The main finding, however, is that the officials conceive the strategies of external incentives and social learning as complementary rather than alternative. This means that some adjustments of the theoretical model are called for.

Evaluating the theoretical model

Naturally, a theoretical model consists of ideal types and will therefore never give a perfect description of reality. For this reason and as previously pointed out, the expectation was not that the conceptions held by the civil servants would be possible to conceptualise solely in terms of the external incentives model or the social learning model. Rather, the aim with the model was to elucidate key aspects and logical links in the officials’ reasoning. The discussions above indicate that the model is a good foundation for understanding how the officials of the Swedish MFA and the European Commission perceive strategies for norm promotion. However, there are two aspects that the model does not account for. First, in presenting the two strategies as alternative, it does not consider the interplay between them. Reluctant to choose between the strategies of external incentives and social learning, the officials emphasised the potential of and even need for combining the consequentiality and socialisation mechanisms. Albeit not explicitly spelled out, they appear to understand norm promotion (and adoption) as a process divided into different stages. Because theses stages require different approaches to maintain and strengthen the target states’ interest in and receptiveness for the promoted
values, the officials argued for offering incentives and persuading/pressurising them to change. Second, it does not acknowledge the important aspect of context-dependency. It was repeatedly and strongly underlined that any strategy for norm promotion must consider the needs and ambitions of the target: there is no such thing as a strategy universally applicable. The conclusion is thus that the theoretical model should be complemented to account also for the context-dependency of and interplay between strategies.

The ideal strategy for norm promotion: combining socialisation and incentives

As discussed above, the officials regard combining and making use of the interplay between the strategies of external incentives and social learning as keys in becoming a successful value promoter. But how do they conceive the nature of this interplay? The interviews suggest that value promotion is interpreted as a process divided into stages, each of these stages requiring different approaches. First, the target’s interest must be raised in order for its receptiveness for external influence and the promoted norms to be increased. Second, this receptiveness must be maintained and strengthened. Third, the norm promoter must help the target over the “edge”, making adopting the promoted values attractive enough to outweigh potential costs by adding a final boost. The requirements of the different stages infer that the norm promoter cannot rely solely on one of the strategies: it must make use of different mechanisms and instruments. Figure 3 illustrates how the civil servants understand the optimal interplay between the strategies of external incentives and social learning:

As indicated by figure 3, the first step is to offer incentives. Although some degree of identification with/interest in the EU is considered a precondition for value promotion to be possible, identification

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164 It should be pointed out that the focus here is on norm promotion directed towards states – how to affect ideas of the political opposition and/or the civil society is in other words not considered. Examining the relation between requirements and target for the norm promoting efforts is however an important task for future studies.
alone is not regarded a sufficient motivator. The norm promoter must therefore raise the target’s interest by offering incentives, increasing thereby its receptiveness for the promoted values. Once interest has been established, it must be maintained and supported. Thus, fostering and engaging in socialisation is perceived as the next necessary step. Through including the political leaders and bureaucrats of the target state in contexts where the promoted values condition the cooperation, the promoter can argue for and persuade the target about their universal goodness. The more the target-representatives participate in these meetings, the more they get used to the “European” way of seeing things and the more likely it becomes that they adopt and finally internalise the promoted values. Moreover, by making use of the social pressure instruments, naming and shaming the agents that do not live up to the standards set, non-compliance is rendered even less attractive. However, because reforming and adopting values to the extent desired and requested by the norm promoter tends to be extremely costly (in terms of time and financial resources as well as political capital) an extra boost is deemed needed. In order to push the target over the final edge, the third stage requires that incentives are offered once again. Complementing the socialisation-process, the norm promoter can make adopting new norms an even more attractive choice by balancing the costs of adoption with concrete benefits.

Although it is evident that the interviewees perceive the interplay between external incentives and social learning as the key aspect of norm promotion, an additional conclusion is that there is no strategy universally applicable nor can there be one. What emphasis should be put on the different instruments as well as their optimal content is highly dependent on the needs and ambitions of the target. Furthermore, also the abilities and ambitions of the norm promoter must be acknowledged as they define the frames for what strategies are liable. Because contextual factors are of crucial importance, the norm promoter’s strategy must necessarily allow for a certain degree of pragmatism in order to be effectual. For this reason, also the dimension of context-dependency has been included in figure 3. Yet, “context-dependency” is a very broad concept which tells us little about the relation between contexts on the one hand and strategies on the other. To what extent does the context affect the potential of different strategies and are there some factors that are more important than others? Since these aspects were not included in the theoretical model, they were explored only to a very limited extent in the interviews. The degree to which and how the dimension of context-dependency affect the process of norm promotion/adoption is therefore something that should be explored in future research. Figure 4 illustrates the interaction between the contextual factors put forth by the interviewed officials. As such, it lays the foundation for future studies.
Figure 4 suggests that both the process of promoting and adopting norms is context-dependent. Acknowledging the context of the value promoter and the context of the target for norm promotion, a number of factors are considered to affect these processes. From the norm promoter’s view, the internal capacities in terms of financial and political resources as well as the balance between milieu and possession oriented foreign policy objectives are determining factors. For the target it is above all its degree of identification with the norm promoter together with the (mainly economic) needs and general foreign policy goals that are aspects of extra importance. The dynamics of the international system – and particularly other potential norm promoters – affect both the promoter and recipient agent. The main conclusion to be drawn from figure 4, however, is that contextual factors are key determinants because they affect the degree to which the promoter/target is committed to/receptive for value promotion.

This paper set out to examine how strategies for norm promotion are conceived in the internal policy-making system of the European Union. The interviews have increased our knowledge about how the officials assigned to put the EU’s political goal of spreading values into policy practice understand the motives behind and mechanisms in adopting new norms. We have also elaborated our understanding of how instruments for norm promotion are perceived; the main conclusion being that they are regarded complementary and mutually reinforcing rather than alternative. Promoting norms is interpreted as a process divided into stages requiring different approaches: being pragmatic is therefore a necessity. Hence, according to the officials, the ideal strategy for promoting norms is one which acknowledges the requirements of the process’ different stages, takes into account the issue of context-dependency and which combines offering incentives with fostering socialisation.
7. Conclusions

With the European Union’s much repeated ambition to be(come) a value-based global actor as point of departure, this paper set out to explore how the norm-promoter EU understand strategies for norm promotion. Pointing at the administration’s key role in policy-making, I argued that a full understanding of the dynamics of norm promotion requires taking into account the conceptions held by the civil servants assigned to translate the political goal of spreading values into policy practice. So, what are the lessons from going in to the black box of policy-making?

First and foremost, the result suggests that there are good reasons for considering the conceptions held by civil servants – the need for doing so was even explicitly confirmed by the interviewees themselves. By describing the recipient states’ officials as promising – or even crucial – targets for norm promoting efforts, they recognised all civil servants’ potential impact on policy-making. The main reason, however, is the discovered breach between theorists’ and policy-makers’ understanding of norm promoting strategies. The interviewed officials emphasised other aspects than does the academic literature. It is evident that, contrary to the general theoretical understanding, the officials do not interpret the external incentives and the social learning models as alternative. Instead, they are regarded complementary and mutually reinforcing. Incentives must be supported by socialisation-processes in order for value adoption to be sustainable, and socialisation must be complemented by incentives in order for the targets to be(come) willing to make the necessary concessions. Admittedly, the literature does recognise the possibility of more than one factor motivating norm adoption. Yet, the interplay between socialisation and consequentiality is generally treated as just a possibility rather than a potentially essential component of the process. Even though this study’s design does not allow for any general conclusions to be drawn concerning the strategies’ empirical effectiveness, the discrepancy between the officials’ and the literature’s assessments nonetheless indicates that previous research may have underestimated the importance of this interplay. Investigating the interrelation between and the extent to which the mechanisms affect each other is therefore an important task for future studies. Figure 3 (presented in 6.5.2) offers an alternative understanding of the process of norm promotion and can therefore serve as starting point for such an attempt.

However, the result also supports the argument for examining civil servants’ perceptions irrespective of the objective accuracy of their conclusions. As pointed out in the introduction, officials do not merely execute what they have been assigned to do – their conceptions form the foundation for and guide the policy choices. To a large degree, it is how they conceive the motivations and mechanisms behind value adoption that determines the norm promoter’s final choice of strategy. The discovered breach discussed above confirms that we can hardly understand the dynamics of norm promotion by solely looking at theoretical conceptualisations and assessments of different strategies’ effectiveness. Consequently, this study’s findings are important also from an empirical point of view; increasing our understanding of how the relevance of and the strategies for norm promotion is perceived in EU-policy-making. In extension, this makes us better equipped to understand the EU as a norm promoter in general.

The question is thus if the result provides any new empirical insights in this regard? The interviews show that the EC and Swedish MFA officials all understand and handled norm promotion as a core objective when developing the EaP. When asked about the motives for including values, the interviewees were taken aback: the goodness of EU-values as well as the importance of spreading them appears to be so taken for granted that including them was self-evident. In some sense, this was quite expected. The very essence of norms (their taken-for-granted-character discussed in chapter 4.2) infers that they are rarely or never reflected upon. Yet, the fact that the officials actually do describe the Partnership as a norm promoting instrument is essential since it indicates that the officially declared ambition to spread values is more than just rhetoric. Returning to one of the issues raised in the introduction – to what extent are the declared goals perceived as de facto goals – it can in other words be concluded that there is accordance between the political ambitions and policy practice. Hence, from a societal point of view the perhaps most important finding is that the high-toned spreading values-objective is strongly reflected also in the EU-administration.
Another important lesson concerns the motives for promoting norms. The result suggests that norm promoters are less “single-tracked” than described by the academic literature, motivated by other aspects than merely achieving the quickest change possible. Above all, the ambition to promote sustainable value adoption seems to be considered a key factor guiding the policy choices. This contrasts with the approach taken in previous research in which there is a clear tendency of picturing the (measurable) effectiveness as norm promoters’ main goal. Given that this finding supports both the claimed link between norm promotion and milieu oriented foreign policy goals; and the normative power Europe-paper it is important from a theoretical as well as empirical point of view.

Going into the black box of EU-policy-making we have increased our understanding of the dynamics of norm promotion in general and the European Union as a norm promoter in particular. Civil servants are key actors in the policy process and their conceptions should therefore receive more attention in future research. I argue that doing so is particularly important in the context of EU-norm promotion: proven efficient, the efforts to spread values will affect not only the citizens of the Union but (potentially) have ideational impact in the whole of Europe.

The way forward? Suggestions for further research

Although this paper has advanced our understanding of how norm promoters view strategies for spreading values, the result indicates that fully understanding how and why norms are promoted (and adopted) requires that we increase our knowledge about 1) the interplay between strategies and 2) the interplay between strategies and contexts. As pointed out above, previous research does recognise that norm adoption can be the result of incentives- and socialisation-based strategies, but this has been stated as a fact rather than been explored. Therefore, examining the objective accuracy of this description as well as the extent to which the different instruments are needed are important tasks for future research. The officials’ understanding of the norm promoting process presented in figure 3 can serve as point of departure for such an attempt.

Moreover, although much international relations-theory point at the issue of context-dependency, its importance has (similarly to how the interrelation between strategies has been treated) been noted rather than investigated. Additionally, because of the tendency to focus on norm compliance rather than norm promotion, contextual factors have mainly been discussed in hindsight when seeking to explain why a certain rule was adopted. The result of this paper suggests that the degree of influence and nature of the issue of context-dependency should be further explored. Figure 4 lays the foundation for future studies by pointing at some contextual factors affecting the process of norm promotion/adoption.

Final reflections

In laying out the empirical framework of this paper, I argued that fully understanding the significance of enlargement, the ENP and now also the EaP requires considering the EU’s general foreign policy-abilities. The restrictions within the CFSP-area (discussed in chapter 2.1.2) renders the EU’s potential of becoming the globally important actor it aspire to be highly limited. It is symptomatic that the Union has turned out most successful in fulfilling its foreign policy-objectives through policies not formally part of the CFSP. The policies just mentioned are therefore essential not only from a regional-security point of view: providing the EU with alternative forums and instruments they can in fact be interpreted as means to side-step the limitations of the EU’s room for manoeuvre in foreign affairs.

Verifying the conclusions drawn in previous research, this study shows that the European Union’s potential impact is considered intimately linked to its perceived attractiveness. Thus, as long as the EU-model is considered ideationally and economically appealing, its source of influence can be expected to be maintained. Yet, in order to make use of this potential impact, there must be a framework within which the EU can communicate and cooperate with target states. Given the dim future for further enlargements and the perceived limitations of the ENP it is therefore essential also for the EU’s general foreign policy aspirations that the Eastern Partnership turns out successful.
Hence, value promotion seems to be a core dimension of the Eastern Partnership. But why does the EU seek to spread values? From an idealist point of view, the emphasis on values and internal development can be interpreted as an expression for milieu-oriented foreign policy objectives: the motive for engaging in the neighbour countries is simply that the EU wants to be a force for good; expanding the zone of prosperity. Notwithstanding this, a more subtle interpretation is that norm promotion is a means of expanding the Union’s zone of influence. Not merely focusing on the actual development but aiming to change what is conceived as normal enables the EU to increase its impact also in a long term perspective. Spreading values is essentially about convincing others of the universal goodness and superiority of one’s own ways of thinking. Whether or not the EaP turns out successful in this regard remains an issue to be seen. The main conclusion, however, is that its potential impact should not be underestimated.
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