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Promoting ethical norms: EU responses to the Arab uprisings

By Chris Meikle

Department of Politics, University of Otago, New Zealand

E-mail: meich931@student.otago.ac.nz

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On 17 December 2010, Tarek Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian street vendor, set himself alight in front of the municipal buildings of Sidi Bouzid. This extreme act of protest, against the perceived injustice of his relationship with the authorities of this small Tunisian city, not only provided the catalyst for a wave of social uprisings that spread rapidly across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), it also symbolised the early grievances of protesters throughout the region. Although the last four years has seen the countries of the “Arab Spring” take a multitude of different directions, from revolution to counter-revolution, dialogue to civil war, the first half of 2011 witnessed a cohesive wave of protest stretching from the Maghreb to the Arabian Peninsula. Much like Mohamed Bouazizi, protesters in Morocco, Egypt and Yemen called for social justice, political accountability and economic opportunities for themselves and their families.

This very vocal, very public articulation of basic rights and values brought in to sharp relief the policies of external actors across the region, not least the European Union (EU). Having long regarded the MENA countries as its southern neighbourhood, the EU found itself responding to a regional conflict between authoritarian regimes that it had largely supported, and an insurgent civil society espousing values that it had long promoted. The newly formed European External Action Service (EEAS) scrambled to provide coherent policy responses, many, as will be shown below, focussed on reinvigorating its commitment to democracy, social justice and respect for human rights.

This paper attempts to provide a theory that explains the EU’s response to the early stages of the Arab uprisings in its southern neighbourhood. Building on Frank Schimmelfennig's rhetorical entrapment theory, I argue that there was a “rhetorical convergence” of values in the early stages of the Arab uprisings that intersected with core principles at the heart of EU identity. Within the context of the Normative Power Europe (NPE) debate, I will show that by presenting itself as a unique international actor, one both ethical and normative, the EU was compelled to align itself with the revolutionary movements in the MENA region, despite their previous support for the authoritarian regimes these movements sought to displace. Such an analysis of EU policy responses to the Arab uprisings provides an understanding about the relationship between value promotion and interests in EU external action, which in turn clarifies the nature of the EU as an international actor.

The European Union as an international actor

From its inception the EU has been the subject of considerable debate regarding how to assess its role on the international stage. This debate has not only centred on the *impact* of both its internal and external policies on other actors, but also on the *status* of the EU in relation to those actors. The complexities of its institutional structures, the ambivalence of some member states to comprehensive integration and the centrality of intergovernmental decision-making in key areas of external policy, have all contributed to a reticence amongst academics and commentators to ascribe “actorness” to the EU.

In framing the EU as an international actor “under construction”, Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler note three intersecting processes that combine to shape the Union’s external activities: the *opportunity* to act within the constructs of the external environment; the *presence* of the EU, in its ability to exert influence beyond its borders, both materially and ideationally; and the *capability* to use appropriate policy mechanisms to formulate effective policies (Bretherton & Vogler, 2006, pp. 24-35). Building on this framework, Björn Hettne ascribes the EU with “actorship”, noting that the presence and capacity of regions are of a similar quality to larger nation-states when the former are understood as processes, or actors in the making (Hettne, 2011, pp. 28-29).¹ All three authors, amongst others,² highlight the importance of constructed identity in the process by which the EU is developing as an international actor.

Understanding the EU as an evolving process influenced by ideational constructions is fundamental to both the type of actor it represents and the ascription of international actorness. As will be shown below, with each subsequent treaty revision the EU has extended its external mandate and reiterated the centrality of core values and principles. In 2006 Fredrik Söderbaum and Luk Van Langenhove argued that despite continuing debates as to its status, that the EU had become, following the Maastricht Treaty, a recognisable force in the international areas of ‘trade, development cooperation, the promotion of regional integration, democracy and good governance, human rights and, to an increasing extent, also in security policies’ (Söderbaum & Van Langenhove, 2005, pp. 249-250). More recently it has been argued that the Lisbon Treaty has

¹ Hettne attributes this understanding to the new regionalism approach (NRA), whereby regions ‘are not geographical or administrative objects but potential subjects (Schimmelfennig, 2001, p. 48).

² For example, many of the key authors associated with the NPE debate in the following section.

redefined the EU's role in international affairs (Buse, 2011), and that with its coming into force the EU has now become an international actor (Howorth, 2012).

The EU remains a unique global entity, in that its on going structural development makes it impossible to conceptualise as a fixed or classically defined actor. When viewed through the constructivist lens, however, it is precisely this process of renegotiation and reinterpretation, both internally and vis-à-vis its external relations, that determines the identity, role and actorness of the EU (Bretherton & Vogler, 2006, p. 22). Furthermore, this process takes place in a mutually constitutive relationship with the changing international environment, which has often provided the impetus for revising and consolidating common external policy positions (M. E. Smith, 2006, pp. 290-291). The EU's considerable presence as a trading power has been employed to achieve a number of foreign policy objectives, such as structural economic reforms and the promotion of core values. Indeed, it has been a central objective of recent EU trade policy to harness the forces of globalisation and 'spread, through the negotiation of trade agreements, the European model of society to the rest of the world' (Meunier & Nicolaïdis, 2005, p. 266)

Normative Power Europe

Much of the discussion as to *how* the EU attempts to spread the European model of society to the rest of the world, specifically, what *type* of international actor the EU represents, has taken place within the context of the NPE debate. In 2002 Ian Manners published his seminal article "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?", which has led to over a decade of academic research exploring the relationship between the promotion of international norms and power within EU foreign policy. Manners characterizes NPE as the ability to shape conceptions of "normal" in international relations' (Manners, 2002, p. 239) and later described the process by which norms are diffused as working 'through ideas, opinions and conscience' (Diez & Manners, 2007, p. 175). Manners' conception of normative power is a clear departure from the traditional dichotomy of military power versus civilian power, and reflects the EU's 'commitment to placing universal norms and principles at the centre of its relations with its member states and the world' (Manners, 2006, p. 176).

A key dynamic within the NPE debate is the intersection (or otherwise) of norms and interests. While many contributions to the literature have followed Manners' lead, focussing on norms

regarding peace, rule of law, democracy and human rights, others have taken the position that the EU's norm promotion is indistinguishable from the achievement of its strategic interests. Richard Youngs has stated that human rights norms are used selectively and instrumentally in the interests of European security (Youngs, 2004), and Thomas Diez has posited that normative power can only be understood as a form of hegemony (Diez, 2013). From a structural-realist perspective, Adrian Hyde-Price argues that the EU's promotion of universal values has been 'used by its most influential member states as an instrument for collectively exercising hegemonic power, shaping its "near abroad" in ways amenable to the long-term strategic and economic interests of its member states' (Hyde-Price, 2006).

It would be uncontroversial to say that the promotion of norms and the advancement of interests are often intertwined, particularly where the EU is concerned. Representing the largest market and trading power in the international arena, the EU clearly benefits from a world in which disputes are resolved according to rule of law, and neighbours achieve stability via their citizens' acquisition of basic rights and democratic accountability. Esther Barbé and Elisabeth Johansson-Nogués note that the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) presents the EU as 'a force for good' while at the same time serving European interests by creating a ring of well-governed democratic states (Aggestam, 2008; Barbé & Johansson-Nogués, 2008). However, the issue concerning whether or not the EU prioritizes norms over interests is more relevant to short-term considerations, as opposed to the long-term achievement of a beneficial global environment reflecting the EU's foundational principles. In this respect it is necessary to distinguish between the promotion of ethical norms, such as human rights and democracy, and the promotion of interest norms, such as security and neo-liberal free market reforms. While the latter clearly benefit the EU in terms of strategic interests, the former are more likely to be framed as altruism based on evolving international standards. Furthermore, it is ethical norms that dominate the rhetoric of EU foreign policy documents, and clearly provide the EU with a sense of legitimacy regarding its external action.

It is no surprise that discussions about NPE have coincided with an increasing rhetorical emphasis on the centrality of ethical norms and values to EU foreign policy. As Richard Whitman notes '[t]he scholarly interest in the normative and value-driven features of the EU can be surely predicated upon the developments in the area of foreign policy cooperation and the

accompanying emphasis on the importance of values and norms for conduct of external relations by EU policy circles' (Whitman, 2011, p. 2). With each subsequent treaty revision the EU has sought to develop a more coherent approach to external action, one that not only represents the interests of its member states, but also attempts to establish a sense of cohesive identity amongst them.

European identity and ethical norms

The origins of the effort to create coordinated foreign policy with an identity linked to community's foundational values can be traced back to the European Political Cooperation (EPC) between member states which began in 1970 and was formally institutionalised by the conclusion of the Single European Act (SEA) in 1987, the first major treaty revision since the founding of the European Economic Community (EEC) with the Treaty of Rome. Although external action remained a primarily intergovernmental concern, the new compact bound member states 'by legal agreement rather than just a political commitment to consult together in the foreign policy sphere and to seek to develop common actions' (Van Oudenaren, 2005, p. 300). Not only did the preamble to the SEA provide an intimation of the member states' evolving appreciation of common interests, but it also hinted at the association of core values with external action:

AWARE of the responsibility incumbent upon Europe to aim at speaking ever increasingly with one voice and to act with consistency and solidarity in order more effectively to protect its common interests and independence, in particular to display the principles of democracy and compliance with the law and with human rights to which they are attached, so that together they may make their own contribution to the preservation of international peace and security in accordance with the undertaking entered into by them within the framework of the United Nations Charter. (European Economic Community, 1987; K. E. Smith, 2003, p. 11)

Although founding principles, such as human rights and democracy, had frequently featured in EEC policy documents as an essential feature of what the Community *is*,³ for the first two decades of the EPC their external promotion had been limited to declaratory diplomacy and dialogue (K. E. Smith, 2003, p. 101). The late-1980s signalled a shift towards a more proactive stance, conflating core Community values with international standards and the associated conviction regarding

³ For example, Article 1 of the Declaration on European Identity lists representative democracy and respect for human rights, as well as the rule of law and social justice, as **fundamental elements** of European identity (Hettne, 2011, p. 29).

duty-bound propagation. Following the conclusion of the SEA, the European Council issued the Rhodes Declaration, stating that the EEC and its member states would:

...demonstrate solidarity to the great and spreading movement for democracy and full support for the Universal Declaration on Human Rights [...] and to promote the Western values and principles which Member States have in common. (European Council, 1988)

This sentiment would be a significant feature of the next major attempt to articulate a unified international position via the Treaty of Maastricht.

With the entering into force of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, formally known as the Treaty on European Union (TEU), the EU 'made unequivocal claims that it would pursue from then on a foreign policy which was intended to be common although not necessarily single' (Ciceo, 2012, p. 39). Motivated by the new political landscape created by the end of the Cold War the TEU established Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), signalling that new foreign and security structures were required to fulfil the widespread expectation that the EU should use its increasing political influence to ensure stability, both around its borders and further afield (Cameron, 2007, pp. 28-29). Although the TEU contained only generally framed objectives for the establishment of the CFSP, such as the promotion of international cooperation and the consolidation of core values such as democracy, rule of law and human rights (European Union, 1992), the official communications which followed set out a progressively coherent articulation of priorities. At the Lisbon meeting of the European Council in 1992, CFSP objectives had already been refined to include:

...promoting regional political stability and contributing to the creation of political and/or economic frameworks that encourage regional cooperation [and] promoting and supporting good government.⁴ (European Council, 1992)

The promotion of good governance and democracy would be a defining feature of the Community's developing relationship with the newly independent states in Central and Eastern Europe. A 1995 communiqué from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament expanded the importance of democracy promotion to all external relations, and clearly outlined the interdependence of democracy, human rights and development:

⁴ Both points are early indications as to the formation and structure of the ENP a decade later, which will be the subject of the following section.

[T]he strict, complementary link between human rights and democracy: if human rights are a necessary condition for the full development of the individual, democratic society is a necessary condition for the exercise of those rights, providing the framework for individual development. (European Commission, 1995b, p. 10)

Furthermore, the communiqué was unequivocal as to the source, legitimacy and universality of the principles it was committing to, stating that ‘no provision of a national, cultural or religious nature can override the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights’ (European Commission, 1995b, p. 10).

Arguably the most significant development in the nature of the EU’s collective relationships with third parties has been the inclusion of a “human rights clause” in all bilateral agreements as part of the CFSP. This clause allows for the termination or suspension of agreements if partners are deemed to have committed violations of human rights, as determined by the EU, and requires signatory parties to enter in to political dialogue regarding the augmentation of EU values (European Commission, 1995a; Horng, 2003). The human rights clause has become an essential feature of almost all the EU’s bilateral agreements since the mid 1990s, and features not only in the EU’s relationships with prospective members, but also its relations with the neighbourhood beyond its borders.

The increasing centrality of ethical norm promotion to EU external action was clearly articulated in a 2001 communiqué by the European Commission:

The European Union is well placed to promote democracy and human rights [...] Uniquely amongst international actors, all fifteen member states of the Union are democracies espousing the same Treaty-based principles in their internal and external policies [...] Furthermore, as an economic and political player with global diplomatic reach, and with a substantial budget for external assistance, the EU has both influence and leverage, which it can deploy on behalf of democratization and human rights. (European Commission, 2001)

As Rosa Balfour notes, there are two implications generated by this claim: ‘firstly, that the EU, by virtue of what it is, can export its principles abroad; secondly that what it can do places it in a privileged position to pursue such objectives’ (Balfour, 2006, p. 114). She goes on to add that much ‘institutional rhetoric has been spent on the EU’s role in promoting principles of democracy and human rights’ (Balfour, 2006, p. 114).

In 2004 the EU experienced its most extensive expansion to date, welcoming two Mediterranean countries and eight of the central and eastern European countries to the Community. More than at any other time in its history the EU found itself in a position to influence, with the prospect of membership, the institutional structures of external actors. The 31 chapters of the *acquis communautaire* not only set out a comprehensive articulation of the EU's legislation and institutions, but also its founding values and principles. As well as deepening the Community's integration in terms of legislation, institutions and identity, the 2004 enlargement resulted in a radical shift of EU perceptions regarding the "near abroad". Furthermore, the far-reaching scope of the 2004 enlargement signalled a shift in momentum by the Community towards future expansion. As early as 2001 the European Convention had proposed formalising a policy by which the EU would 'develop a special relationship with its neighbouring states, aiming to establish an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness characterised by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation' (Van Oudenaren, 2005, p. 328). The ENP was adopted in 2004, with the explicit goal of promoting relationships with neighbours to the south and east of the newly enlarged EU based on shared values and economic cooperation, but without the enticement of membership. What is distinctive about the ENP is the similarity of structure and content in comparison to membership application process. In order to receive the trade, aid and economic benefits on offer by the EU, all of which are clearly aspired to by the neighbours to whom the agreement applies, partner countries must implement extensive Action Plans regarding political, social and economic reforms. As noted above, many of the required reforms are appropriated directly from the *acquis communautaire*, with the expectation that the non-membership benefits on offer are significant enough to warrant them. Unsurprisingly, where the promotion of ethical values is concerned, particularly where those values are culturally contested, this conditional approach has not always proved very successful.

In the most recent move to develop a coordinated foreign policy based on a cohesive identity, the Treaty of Lisbon created the position of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR) and the EEAS as the organisational support structure to enable the HR to fulfil the many requirements of her mandate. It also reiterated the EU's core principles:

The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. (European Union, 2007)

It is these values that that the EU seeks to promote externally, legitimising both its actions and its international identity. This is framed, as Whitman shows, by policy documents such as the European Security (ESS), which show that the projection of core values is the central guiding principle of EU external action:

Spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law and protecting human rights are the best means of strengthening international order. (Whitman, 2011, p. 2)

The HR and the EEAS have succeeded in becoming a notably visible foreign policy actor, principally representing the EU in external affairs and consistently placing the promotion of ethical norms at the centre of EU foreign policy. This has been particularly evident in the Union's response to the Arab uprisings, the outset of which coincided with the latter becoming fully operational.

Responding to the Arab uprisings

The wave of social uprisings that spread rapidly across the MENA region in early 2011 caught almost everyone by surprise. Few commentators, if any, had predicted the advent of a region-wide protest against the entrenched authoritarian governments, based on social, economic and political demands. The term "Arab Spring", which was used widely to capture the sentiment of the protesters at the time, has largely fallen out of fashion as the uprisings in each country developed in dramatically different ways. Suppression, regime change, counter-revolution, constitutional reform and civil wars seemed to have little relationship to one another, as each country's historical, religious, political and ethnic divides shaped the development of the initial protesters. For the first half of 2011, however, their appeared to be coherent relationship between the protests. Although the specific demands varied from place to place, and even within national movements, the values of social equality, economic opportunity, basic rights and political accountability featured strongly across the region. The EU, despite increasingly placing the promotion of these values at the centre of its external action, initially attempted to support many of the authoritarian leaders, with whom they had cultivated 'a "stability partnership" that served both the EU's interests in a stable and western-oriented Mediterranean and the need of Arab regimes to garner external rents and legitimacy' (Behr, 2012, p. 76). However, as the protests

became increasingly vocal, and highly visible, on the international stage, the EU began to strongly reinvigorate its commitment to the promotion of human rights, democracy and rule of law.

In March 2011 the European Commission and the HR issued a joint communication proposing 'A Partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean', promising a new approach rooted unambiguously in a joint commitment to common values:

The demand for political participation, dignity, freedom and employment opportunities expressed in recent weeks can only be addressed through faster and more ambitious political and economic reforms. The EU is ready to support all its Southern neighbours who are able and willing to embark on such reforms... (2011b, p. 2)

This was followed by a second joint communication in May, which again stressed that this new approach 'must be based on mutual accountability and a shared commitment to the universal values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law' (2011a, p. 2). It also highlighted the EU's willingness to support "deep democracy", stating that:

A functioning democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law are fundamental pillars of the EU partnership with its neighbours [...] While reforms take place differently from one country to another, several elements are common to building deep and sustainable democracy and require a strong and lasting commitment on the part of governments. They include:

- free and fair elections;
- freedom of association, expression and assembly and a free press and media;
- the rule of law administered by an independent judiciary and right to a fair trial;
- fighting against corruption;
- security and law enforcement sector reform (including the police) and the establishment of democratic control over armed and security forces.

(2011a, p. 3)

As Timo Behr argues, the EU reacted to the changes in the MENA region 'by advocating a radical shift in the contents of its Mediterranean policies with the aim of creating a "democracy

partnership” that legitimises itself through its support for the on going transition processes in the EU’s southern neighbourhood’ (Behr, 2012, p. 76).

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) also increased its activities across the MENA region in response to the Arab uprisings, with investment through this instrument doubling from 7.4 to 13.7 percent of the EIDHR budget (European Commission, 2011a, p. 7). The EU adopted new instruments, such as the Support for Partnership, Reform and Inclusive Growth (SPRING) programme, to ‘provide support for the Southern Neighbourhood countries for democratic transformation, institution building and economic growth in the wake of the Arab Spring’ (European Commission, 2011b). The total value of this initiative was three hundred and fifty million euros for 2011 and 2012. A further twenty-two million euros was also provided to set up the Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility, ‘designed to strengthen the capacity of civil society to promote reform and increase public accountability in their countries’ (European Commission, 2011b). Support for elections became a key focus for the EU, which:

...deployed full observation missions in Tunisia, Jordan, and Algeria. An Election Assessment Team was sent to Libya. The EU provided technical assistance to help the authorities organise elections in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Morocco and supported civil society organisations (CSOs) in raising public awareness and training domestic election observers. (European Commission, 2013)

Throughout 2011 the EU consistently applied the rhetoric of its ethical norm promotion in its policy responses to the Arab uprisings, reiterating with each new communiqué, each new funding mechanism, each new policy instrument, the centrality of democracy, human rights and rule of law.

“Rhetorical convergence”

What has been the driving force behind the upsurge of ethical norm promotion in response to the Arab uprisings? Although the EU has applied its foundational values to its external policy in the region for many years, particularly, as noted above, since the advent of the ENP, it is now widely acknowledged that prior to the Arab uprisings its approach had been neither consistent nor prioritised. Despite the ENP containing considerable normative content, Behr argues that over the years:

...the EU jettisoned some of the more intrusive normative goals of its original Mediterranean policies for a close relationship with the region’s autocratic, yet

western-oriented, Arab regimes. Not only did these regimes promise to act as a bulwark against the rise of radical Islam and provide a measure of regional stability, but they also endorsed the EU's vision of a Euro-Mediterranean community. (Behr, 2012, p. 76)

Yet when faced with a wave of social uprisings espousing the normative goals of its own rhetoric, the EU has been willing to forego many of those relationships, and to subsequently support the protesters aspirations.

In 2001 Frank Schimmelfennig's published "The community trap: Liberal norms, rhetorical action, and the eastern enlargement of the European Union" in the journal *International Organization*. In it he sought to understand the process by which five Central and Eastern European countries were to open the accession process towards membership with the European Union, rather than being offered association negotiations. Schimmelfennig proposed "rhetorical action" as the intervening mechanism to 'explain how a rational outcome (association) based on egoistic preferences and relative bargaining power was turned into a normative one (enlargement)' (Schimmelfennig, 2001, p. 48). He suggested that:

In an "institutional environment" like the EU, political actors are concerned about their reputation as members and about the legitimacy of their preferences and behavior. Actors who can justify their interests on the grounds of the community's standard of legitimacy are therefore able to shame their opponents into norm-conforming behavior and to modify the collective outcome that would have resulted from constellations of interests and power alone. (Schimmelfennig, 2001, p. 48)

Based on this premise, Schimmelfennig argues that as the ideology of a liberal-democratic, pan-European community of states had legitimated European integration, the Central and Eastern European states were able to rhetorically entrap the EU by aligning themselves with these values. Without sufficient material bargaining power, they based their claims on:

...the constitutive values and norms of the EU and exposed inconsistencies between, on the one hand, the EU's standard of legitimacy, its past rhetoric, and its past treatment of applicant states and, on the other hand, its policy toward Central and Eastern Europe. (Schimmelfennig, 2001, p. 48)

In this way, EU members opposed to enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe were caught in what Schimmelfennig describes as a "community trap":

In the institutional environment of an international community, state actors can strategically use community identity, values, and norms to justify and advance their

self-interest. However, strategic behavior is constrained by the constitutive ideas of the community and the actors' prior identification with them. Once caught in the community trap, they can be forced to honor identity- and value-based commitments in order to protect their credibility and reputation as community members. (Schimmelfennig, 2001, p. 77)

Schimmelfennig's intervening mechanism of rhetorical action can be further developed to explain the EU's reinvigoration of its ethical norm promotion in response to the Arab uprisings.

Although the EU was in now way rhetorically entrapped by the dramatic events sweeping its southern neighbourhood in 2011, the social uprisings did expose inconsistencies between its legitimising rhetoric and its current approach to the MENA region. It had strategically used identity, values, and norms to justify and advance its self-interest, both in the short-term via interest norms relating to neo-liberal economic reforms, and in the long-term in order to pursue a global environment that reflects its foundational values. This strategic behaviour, however, has come to be associated with EU identity, in particular via its own rhetoric. Not only does the international community identify ethical norm promotion as a central tenet of EU external action, but the EU has also increasingly associated itself with a normative identity. Manners and Whitman explain this as a process of reflexive analysis, whereby the normative aspects of the EU polity compensates for the absence of a shared identity given the "ambiguity" and "incompleteness" of the EU' (Whitman, 2011, p. 10).

Having identified itself so closely with ethical norm promotion, the EU found itself in less of a community trap, but more of a community convergence, when faced with the social uprisings in its southern neighbourhood. Not only was there a rhetorical convergence of values in a region where the EU had made strong policy commitments to promote them, but there was also an exceptionally large amount of media coverage of the unfolding events (Badran, 2013, p. 65). The convergence of the EU's prior identification with ethical norm promotion with the extensively covered values of the protestors in the Arab uprisings, rendered it necessary to honour identity- and value-based commitments in order to protect their credibility and reputation as international community members. In short, the "rhetorical convergence" of values in the early stages of the Arab uprisings intersected with core principles at the heart of EU identity. By presenting itself as a unique international actor, one both ethical and normative, the EU was compelled to position

itself on the right side of history, despite longstanding support for the authoritarian regimes these revolutionary movements sought to displace.

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