



Europe's Contested Democracy and Its Impact on the EU's Democracy Support Policies Toward Its Neighbours

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Executive Summary

Once considered a marginal pursuit in international politics, democracy has come to be a feature of geopolitical competition. The attention that authoritarian states dedicate to Europe's democracy—and to undermining it—suggests that even the realpolitik players par excellence see their success tied to the failings of democracies.

The global democratic recession plays out in the geopolitical tensions in the European Union's neighbourhood where historically, democracy support has been a second order in the broader foreign policy calculus. Simultaneously, in Europe the quality of democracy has been steadily declining and political actors who contest liberal democracy have gained ground within.

Through a bird's eye view of thirty years of EU democracy support, highlighting the controversies in its pursuit as well as its endurance as a foreign policy goal, this paper explores the under-researched question of how democratic contestation inside the EU and its member states influences EU foreign policy and democracy support. The weakening commitment to democracy in the EU has direct and indirect consequences, including reputational damage, obstruction of decision-making, the reorientation of financial resources and support of actors that are not committed to democratic reform. More broadly, it problematises the EU's stated purpose on the global stage, at a time of primacy of geopolitical narratives. At the same time, democracy acquires a new importance in linking effective governance of the EU with a response to the geopolitical challenges of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



1 Introduction

Supposedly at the heart of European Union (EU) international action, support for democracy in the EU's neighbours has never really stood the test of real-world experience. The optimistic rhetoric of the 1990s and the goal of the 2000s to create a "ring of friends" around the Union were over time toned down to embrace, in more recent years, "principled pragmatism" (European External Action Service 2016), "geopolitics" and the "language of power" (European Parliament 2019).

Paradoxically, this shift in narrative towards downplaying democracy occurred as the EU's toolbox for supporting democracy abroad became more sophisticated, more diverse and better financed, raising questions both about democracy's decline and about its survival as a policy goal of the EU. These developments bring a new quality to the long-standing debate, which can be described in simplified shorthand as one between normative and geopolitical Europe.

A snapshot of the countries in what the EU calls its neighbourhood—those in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus—suggests that democracy is still wanting. The hopes of the Arab Spring uprisings in the MENA region have been derailed by conflict and a return to authoritarianism in Egypt and Tunisia; in Eastern Europe, both democracy and authoritarianism have consolidated. Democratic gains have been forcefully opposed by Russia through its invasion of Ukraine, support for repression in Belarus and interference in the South Caucasus.

These regions have simultaneously been a stage for popular demands for change and a theatre for geopolitical competition, military occupation, interference and weaponised democratic narratives. The distancing of the United States from the MENA region has ushered in greater multipolarity and Europe's marginalisation, as is now dramatically playing out in the Israel-Hamas war, which the United States is struggling to contain and which is laying bare the many contradictions of European foreign policy. Eastern Europe has been plagued by great-power rivalry, with China supporting Russia's aggression there. As the EU promises to open its doors to Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, debates about democracy support acquire new salience.

The global backdrop is a two-decades-old democratic recession that has seen an erosion in the quality of democracy and the simultaneous rise and spread of authoritarianism (Diamond 2015). Foreign policy is playing a growing role in connecting the domestic condition of democracy to international politics. Authoritarian states have attuned their foreign policies, viewing their survival in power as tied to an international environment that is favourable to them. Methods include subverting or blocking international or regional institutions, providing military or financial assistance to autocrats, promoting disinformation, commissioning cyber-attacks, carrying out transnational repression and assassinations, interfering overtly in the security and societies of other states, supporting conflict through proxies in the Middle East and conducting direct military invasions, as Russia is pursuing in Ukraine. The closing space for



global civil society means that democratic actors around the world supported by the EU are working in increasingly hostile and dangerous environments (Bouchet 2022).

While democracy support continues to be, at best, a second-order issue for international diplomacy, it takes centre stage in public rhetoric. Democracy has been captured by great-power rivalry, where competing narratives about “democracy versus autocracy” (White House 2021) or China’s accusation that the West uses “the pretext of democracy to form alliances” (Economist 2021) are part of a broader geopolitical struggle. Russia equates the transnational repression it carries out on European soil with Western support for democracy activists (Walker and Ludwig 2017). The moral decay of the West is a repeated trope in Russian President Vladimir Putin’s rhetoric. A narrative about the West’s decline has given additional ammunition to push back against the EU’s support for democracy activists. The spread of authoritarianism has emboldened states to undermine democracy, making it more vulnerable.

Yet, Europe, too, has been undergoing a sharp erosion of its democracy, which cannot be imputed to external interference alone. This paper addresses the question of how the steady decline in the quality of democracy and the rise of political actors who contest the notion of liberal democracy itself combine to influence EU foreign policy and democracy support. The global democratic recession plays out in the geopolitical tensions in the EU’s neighbourhood, where historically, democracy support has been marginalised in the broader foreign policy calculus.

Structural challenges to the inclusion of democracy in EU foreign policy, itself disabled by the intergovernmental nature of the foreign policy machine, persist despite policy reform over time. But the democratic recession in the EU and its member states has amplified existing dynamics in ways that are still under-researched. These contexts conspire against democratic politics and principles in the EU’s international action—but have not killed them. Alongside the challenges to democracy support, its endurance as a foreign policy goal also requires explanation.

Perhaps paradoxically, the geopolitical attack on democracy signals that it does play a central role in international relations, even if great-power strategists have relegated it to window dressing. This makes it all the more important for democracies to get their policies right.

2 The Trajectory of EU Democracy Support

The Treaty on European Union, which entered into force in 1993, established democracy, human rights and the rule of law as objectives of EU foreign policy. In over three decades, democracy has been nominally integrated into many other external policies, such as trade (already since the late 1980s to support the transition to democracy in Latin America) and conflict prevention; diplomacy has more systematically addressed democracy and human rights issues; and EU member states that previously did not engage in democracy support have developed democracy goals in their national foreign policies. Meanwhile, the EU has



introduced new initiatives designed for bottom up support to human rights activists and civil society groups around the world and refined its methods to adapt to changing environments.

Historical events have triggered apparent moments of learning. The first formative turning point was the EU's 2004 enlargement to countries in Central and Eastern Europe, where the conditions to join the EU dovetailed with the process of transformation taking place in the states that had until recently been behind the Iron Curtain. The EU's European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), launched in the same year, was largely shaped in the wake of the enlargement's success and put at its heart the democratic and economic transformations of sixteen countries surrounding the EU.

A period of so-called coloured revolutions in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus in the 2000s sustained the perception of a demand for democratic principles and stronger relationships with the EU; in the Kremlin, conversely, these revolutions were interpreted as foreign interference in the Russian sphere of influence. However, the ENP's democratic headaches—about balancing often conflicting aims, the methods and tools to pursue them—and questions over the EU's credibility as an international actor were identified early on and were only exacerbated over time (Balfour 2007).

In 2011, the Arab Spring uprisings caused another moment of recognition that the EU, rhetoric aside, was in practice pursuing stability and security in MENA at the expense of democracy. EU institutions drew two lessons: first, the goal of deep democracy requires support beyond elections; and second, the EU's approach should prioritise local ownership over one-size-fits-all policies from Brussels (European Union 2011). This somewhat responded to critiques in the literature of the EU's liberal democracy support model as a top-down approach that may not have reflected different conceptions of democracy in recipient countries, its gap between rhetoric and practice, its scant attention to local political dynamics and its prioritisation of stability (Gawrich et al 2024). Ensuing reviews of the ENP emphasised the need to craft tailor-made policies and the EU set aside significant financial resources to support countries that the Union assessed to be making democratic advances. For a decade after the Arab Spring, Tunisia was the largest recipient in the region of EU democracy support.

However, the lessons did not generate a lasting turn in policies. The endurance of competing priorities, be they grounded in security or energy interests and, prominently since the 2010s, migration control, meant that often democracy was on the margins of the specific situation in each country.

An uptick in civil society support, independently of institution building and intergovernmental relations, was another moment on the EU's learning curve, reinforced by the 2013–2014 Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine. During the 2010s, the EU increased funding for civil society, tightened the conditions for budget support to governments in the Eastern neighbourhood and created the European Endowment for Democracy to channel assistance to independent democracy activists, including those working in hostile environments. EU assistance became



more reflective of local conditions and demands and less informed by European notions of democracy before the postcolonial critique became prominent (Bouchet and Balfour 2018).

Over the years, the EU has tried to integrate democracy and human rights goals into its array of foreign relations, from trade agreements to the mandates of security and defence missions abroad. The EU has agreed on strategic guidelines and action plans, deployed election observation missions and approved a new sanctions regime. The Union has introduced new areas of action at home and abroad, such as countering disinformation, protecting media freedom and upholding digital rights. It has also stepped up its support for democracy and human rights defenders. Over time, the Union has increased its funding earmarked for civil society, good governance and human rights, although, hovering at below 10 percent of external assistance, this funding represents a small part of the EU's overall aid.

Recent years saw two shifts in approach. EU support started to target in a more granular fashion communities working on human rights and democracy in third countries and diplomacy worked towards including standards in all external relations. At the same time, security, stability and migration control became ever more politically salient, amid the recognition that the EU's projection of influence in its neighbourhood had declined to the benefit of destabilizing authoritarian states. Indeed, spending on security and migration control has risen far more sharply than democracy support (Lilyanova 2019).

3 Rhetoric vs. Practice

Notwithstanding these developments, empirical research and the academic literature have consistently highlighted the gap between rhetoric and practice. The EU has variously been accused of abandoning its goals in favour of other interests, such as security, energy, commercial/trade, or diplomatic priorities; of double standards in the treatment of third-country nationals, for example on the rendition of terrorist suspects and the handling of migrants and refugees; of camouflaging other interests with empty language about democracy; and of simply paying lip service to its rhetoric.

Most importantly, the EU has struggled to integrate democracy into its foreign policy practices and diplomacy. This challenge is tied to the nature of foreign policy making in the EU and to the cognitive dissonance behind it. Foreign policy remains dominated by the logic of diversity (Hoffmann 2000) that has characterised it since its creation. In the debates and negotiations behind building consensus, hard interests may work against what are seen as softer goals, such as democracy support, while interpretations differ about the ways to pursue democracy, the trade-offs between values and the appropriateness of democracy support (Balfour 2012). In other words, cognitive views and geopolitical concerns shape the outcomes of foreign policy decisions in a multilevel polity (Hooghe and Marks 2001) such as the EU.

Indeed, asking why democracy has survived as a principle in EU foreign policy amid the geopolitical turn is as pertinent as asking why it has not been more prominent. Precisely by virtue of the logic of diversity, the EU foreign policy system is open to so-called norm



entrepreneurs (Bicchi 2007) who can push for policies. The European Parliament has been a vocal actor in promoting democracy support and using its leverage over EU financial assistance to ensure spending is earmarked toward that goal. The EU's 2009 Council Conclusions on Democracy, their updated version of ten years later and the 2020 global human rights sanctions regime were all steered by a group of like-minded countries whose representatives in Brussels lobbied the relevant institutions and committees and networked with communities of experts and activists. In doing so, they used persuasive strategies that focused on the need to strengthen the EU's toolbox and the appropriateness of the policy, thus creating communities of practice (Wenger 1998) that went beyond national and institutional representatives and acting as policy gatekeepers (Bueger and Gadinger 2018).

In a European context in which it is considered appropriate to include democracy, human rights and the rule of law in foreign policy, these principles can endure even if the practice is haphazard. Also, it can be convenient for EU member states to shift the democracy focus onto the EU while pursuing less idealist foreign policy goals bilaterally. When narratives about democracy are dominant, persuasion and shaming can ensure that a majority does not oppose a policy. But this trend raises the question of how resilient these principles are when they become contested at home.

4 Europe's Democratic Recession

Europe has not been immune from the global democratic recession—on the contrary, the region has seen one of the sharpest relative declines since 2006 (Economist Intelligence Unit 2017). Of all the countries globally that declined the most between 2010 and 2020, five are European and three of those in the EU: Turkey, Serbia, Poland, Slovenia and Hungary (International IDEA 2021). Between 2007 and 2017, the V-Dem Institute reclassified Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia from liberal democracies to electoral democracies, while Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania remained electoral democracies. Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes have written of an “anti-liberal revolt” in Central Europe (Krastev and Holmes 2019).

Democratic erosion is not confined to Central Europe: restrictions on civil society, intimidation of the press and limits on freedom of the media have been observed across the EU (Youngs 2022). According to a 2023 report by European Civic Space, twelve EU member states have experienced restrictions, in addition to the obstructed space witnessed in Greece, Hungary and Poland (Narsee and Negri 2023). The EU's Fundamental Right Agency regularly reports rising levels of racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, as well as discrimination against migrants.

There is growing evidence that European citizens today do not consider democracy as important as in the past, that citizens are withdrawing from politics and that growing numbers of Europeans would accept alternative forms of government. According to Fondapol, 34 percent of Europeans agree that having an “authoritarian government would be beneficial for the country (Lenoir 2017).” Large numbers of younger citizens would favour a “green despot” to address the climate crisis effectively (Garton Ash and Zimmermann 2020). In 2016, Roberto



Foa and Yascha Mounk interpreted the results of the World Values Survey as indicative of “democratic deconsolidation,” especially among younger generations (Foa and Mounk 2016).

The EU has been stepping up its action to counter the challenges to its democracies, especially in the field of foreign interference, by creating special units to deal with disinformation and through proposed legislation to regulate the digital space, including social and online media. Rapid advances in artificial intelligence (AI) will represent another new and fast-moving challenge that will disrupt democratic practices.

Yet, there are some paradoxes in these new frontiers of regulating democratic practices and institutions. First, some legislation runs the risk of eroding the democratic space in the EU. Nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) have raised concerns that the monitoring of foreign-funded NGOs in the EU’s Defence of Democracy package is eerily similar to the foreign-agent rules put in place in countries such as Egypt, Hungary and Russia. Civil society organisations risk being exposed to smear campaigns, as has been reported in Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovenia and Sweden (Brooks and Butler 2023). There are also preoccupations about the legislative proposal for a European Media Freedom Act, where the bone of contention is government control over investigative journalism (Brogi et al. 2023). And concerns are spreading over the policy treatment of climate activism (Lakhani et al. 2023).

Second, a focus on interference from foreign governments and corporations risks overlooking the domestic sources of the democratic recession. These are arguably as important as the technological revolution and the rise of authoritarian states that are emboldened to interfere in the domestic politics of democracies.

As a consequence of these trends, classical concepts of democracy in Europe have been fundamentally challenged in theory and in practice. Of all the populist and radical-right political leaders in Europe, Hungary’s Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has been the most deliberate in articulating an alternative view of the representative liberal democracy that has historically flourished in Europe.

Orbán’s pursuit of “illiberal democracy” is not confined to Hungary, where he has systematically captured institutions, but also extends to relations with other European countries, national and European foreign policy, EU enlargement and ties with the EU’s neighbourhood, including through Hungary’s European commissioner, Olivér Várhelyi (Szelényi 2022).

The radical-right’s illiberalism is the antithesis of liberal democracy, which Orbán considers multicultural, favourable to immigration and open to nontraditional family values. An illiberal democracy is an ethnocracy where a “nominally democratic regime in which the dominance of one ethnic group is structurally determined” (Mudde, 2019: 115). The international linkages that connect Orbán’s rule in Hungary can be found in his praise of the economic successes of China, Russia, Singapore and Turkey—countries that are neither liberal nor necessarily democratic but are seen as a viable model for Europe, too (Hungarian Spectrum 2014). This



further underscores the connection between domestic and international agendas in the context of the global democratic recession, where the Chinese model of authoritarian modernization is seen as attractive and viable.

5 The Impact of the Democratic Decline on EU Foreign Policy

It is debatable to what extent the contestation of the EU's democratic principles in its foreign policy is a significant departure from long-standing practices. Studies on populism and European foreign policy show that populists' actual impact is more negligible than the noise they make (Balfour 2016). The effect of populism is felt far more in domestic debates and public opinion than in collective European foreign policy. Ultimately, the EU's intergovernmental decision-making process and the scant attention that populism gives to foreign policy have insulated policymakers' choices from the public debate (Chryssogelos 2021).

Others argue that the intent of the EU's action in its neighbourhood was never really to support democracy, despite official claims and that unintended consequences included the strengthening of illiberal regimes there (Dandashly and Noutcheva 2019). What is more, the obstruction of EU foreign and security policy is not new thanks to intergovernmental decision-making, which has enabled national vetoes and prevented the emergence of shared views and common policies since the inception of EU foreign policy making in the 1990s. In other words, EU foreign policy is hampered by member states regardless of their democratic quality.

There are direct and indirect ways in which the departure from democratic standards is challenging the EU's normative positioning, hampering the mechanics of its decision-making and accentuating existing problems in its democracy support. First, the democratic recession in Europe leads indirectly to contested domestic debates over foreign policy choices, influencing government options. Second, illiberal actors in power can obstruct the decision-making processes in the EU. Third, the reputational damage to the EU is increasingly undermining the Union's influence abroad beyond rhetorical accusations of double standards.

The challenge to democratic principles is taking place in a European context that has seen a surge in populism and radical-right politics, where majoritarian concepts of democracy and antiliberal views of society have gained ground. Shifts in the universe of democratic values—human rights, women and LGBTIQ rights, pluralism and a preference for multilateralism—can be detected behind the retreat from humanitarian principles in the field of international migration and asylum policy. Under pressure from the electoral success of right-leaning populists, the debate on migration has moved far from the normative and legal framework that supposedly governs European states and the EU. In other words, to respond to some of the anti-immigration instances put forward by illiberal, right-wing populists, governments and mainstream political parties have normalised those positions.

In foreign policy, this trend translates into the prioritisation of migration control and the securitisation of the movement of people. This is particularly salient in the Middle East and



North Africa both because it has been a transit route for immigrants and refugees from conflict zones in Africa and the wider Middle East and because of the rise of the counter-terrorism agenda in Europe since September 11, 2001.

EU cooperation with third countries has increasingly focused on border management and the Union has mobilised financial resources to that end. Development aid budgets have been cut or redirected towards migration control, be it to seek cooperation in managing returns of immigrants or to prevent people from leaving. In recent years, the EU has concluded two deals with hybrid or authoritarian governments in its neighbourhood—Turkey in 2016 and Tunisia in 2023—that have highly questionable human rights records. The practice of conditioning development aid to cooperation on migration control has become widespread by EU member states with many countries beyond the EU's neighbourhood, as well as providing security cooperation for border control, regardless of the democratic conditions in the cooperating country. Thus the EU has been supporting the security forces of authoritarian states in Africa, motivated by its singular focus on migration control (Koch, Weber and Werenfels 2018). In June 2023, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development published guidelines on the principles of official development assistance (ODA), specifying that supporting forced returns of migrants or border controls in third countries cannot be financed through ODA and warning about the legal ambiguities in addressing irregular migration (OECD 2023).

The impact of populism here is indirect, because it was mainstream political parties that adopted the populist anti-immigration agenda to keep populists out of power. As a result, immigration policies that are not rooted in humanitarian principles have become morally accepted. However, the far right has been strengthened rather than weakened, as the mainstream had presumably intended.

Outsourcing migration control to third countries has limited the EU's autonomy in foreign policy by making the Union susceptible to pressure from countries that agree to cooperate on migration policy. Far from exercising conditionality with a view to supporting democracy, the EU stands open to reverse conditionality from governments that have agreed to address the European demand for managed migration flows.

The decline of democratic standards in Europe and the questioning of democratic principles amplify the long-standing accusation of double standards that has run through EU democracy support. The deal with Tunisia, in particular, flies in the face of the EU's previous backing for the country's democratisation before it regressed into authoritarianism under President Kais Saied. If, in the past, the criticism of double standards referred mostly to the gap between words and deeds, then this position is increasingly relevant to EU domestic politics, not just foreign policy, calling into question Europe's moral authority. More recently, Europe's divisions over the war in Gaza and its ambiguous responses to the loss of lives of Israelis and Palestinians have been globally scorned as a flagrant example of double standards, also drawing attention to the discrepancy between the unity of response against Russia's invasion



of Ukraine and the dissonant approach to international law with respect to Israel's response to Hamas's attack and to humanitarian law with respect to Palestinian victims.

These themes – 'the moral decay' and hypocrisy of the West - are close to the narratives embraced by China and Russia as well as to postcolonial critiques of European paternalism.

Those, mostly Eurosceptic, European leaders who contest the EU's democratic principles at home and abroad and downgrade the EU's value-based international agenda also challenge the notion that the EU should function as a political actor on the global scene in the first place. They prefer national autonomy in foreign policy and thus pursue a disruptive agenda within the EU institutions. These actors have managed to gain power in the EU system through growing representation in the European Parliament, among the heads of state and government in the European Council and with national nominees in the European Commission. Through its national veto, Hungary has repeatedly blocked human rights statements and any document with the words "international migration" in the text and has worked to sabotage EU unity on a wide array of issues, including European responses to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Commissioner Oliver Várhelyi, who is in charge of the EU's enlargement and neighbourhood policies, has a track record of pursuing migration control above all other priorities, blocking aid to the Palestinians (causing consternation most recently after Hamas's October 2023 attack against Israel) (Bounds et al. 2023), diverting funds from independent civil society to entities agreeable to questionable governments, engaging in diplomatic activities with illiberal leaders in the Western Balkans and generally acting as an emissary of Hungary's national interests (Wanat and Bayer 2021).

Hungary has been investing in building a web of foreign relations, with a strong focus on its neighbours. Ideological affinity and pragmatic interest have underpinned growing bonds with Serbia's President Aleksandar Vučić; Republika Srpska's President Milorad Dodik; former North Macedonian prime minister Nikola Gruevski, who avoided a prison sentence for corruption by finding refuge in Hungary; and, more recently, Georgia's Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, who participated in the latest annual Conservative Political Action Conference (Georgian Government 2023). Business interests play a part in these relations, as do efforts to strengthen Hungary's leverage in the region and in Brussels, where Budapest can use its connections with disruptive leaders as bargaining chips vis-à-vis the EU institutions and influence the EU's enlargement process more broadly (Cvijić et al. 2023).

In the debate on Europe's role in its neighbourhood, the needle has shifted away from democratic principles. This trend has been driven by an adverse international context, structural problems tied to the EU foreign policy system and Europe's own democratic recession, which has given illiberal actors opportunities to increase their influence over collective policies. These developments have eroded the influence of the community of policy entrepreneurs, even marginalized as far as migration policy is concerned—the governments



and parliaments that have pushed the democracy agenda in the EU; networks of experts, practitioners and civil society representatives; the media; and democracy activists around the world. But the community's resilience and democracy's continued salience in the politics of Europe and its neighbourhood mean that democracy support cannot be eliminated from the EU agenda.

6 Conclusions

The dominant narrative about the geopolitical turn in international relations and the need to embrace *realpolitik* weighs heavily in the debate about a geopolitical or normative EU. This narrative validates the argument that the EU ought to focus more on its core interests at a time when democracy support is contested by authoritarian regimes, postcolonial critiques of Eurocentrism and illiberalism.

Other insights reveal the enduring importance of focusing on democracy at home and in international relations and democracy support. The democratic recession is not just about the rest of the globe—an imagined European Eden against a dangerous world. Democratic contestation has come from multiple corners within and outside the EU: from those who embrace the *realpolitik* of geopolitical competition to those resigned to a new narrative that constrains idealist attempts to shape the world in Europe's image.

The attention that authoritarian states dedicate to Europe's democracy—and to undermining it—also suggests that even the *realpolitik* players par excellence see their success tied to the failings of democracies. If Europe still has some soft-power attractiveness in the rest of the world, it is tied to the European model: the peace, democracy and prosperity that were founding narratives of the EU. The attractiveness of the authoritarian model and the ultraconservative values of China and Russia are still limited to financial or military coercion. If Europe wants to compete in this geopolitical world, it may do well to invest in its key assets, including its democratic model.

Democracy and geopolitics meet again in Europe's neighbourhood with the response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The EU's next enlargement to Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine will transform the Union's policy toward its Eastern neighbourhood – a prospect that is not available to the countries to its South. Although this enlargement is driven by the geopolitical imperative of countering the threat of Russia, its success will require ensuring the EU's democratic underpinnings—lest the EU itself is undermined. The illiberal democratic model espoused by some in the EU would entail a wider union governed by weaker institutions in a looser arrangement based on the single market and economic exchanges without the elements of political union, a common foreign policy and the supranational governance of the rule of law. The Cinderella of international relations, democracy acquires a new importance in linking effective governance of the EU with a response to the geopolitical challenges of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



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