

## Between norms and interests: US and German democracy promotion in comparison

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Arbeitspapier / working paper

Zur Verfügung gestellt in Kooperation mit / provided in cooperation with:

Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung (HSFK)

### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Wolff, J., Spanger, H.-J., & Karakas, C. (2012). *Between norms and interests: US and German democracy promotion in comparison*. (PRIF Working Papers, 15). Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-455198>

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## **Between Norms and Interests: US and German Democracy Promotion in Comparison**

Jonas Wolff/Hans-Joachim Spanger/Cemal Karakas

November 2012

# Between Norms and Interests: US and German democracy promotion in comparison

Jonas Wolff, Hans-Joachim Spanger, Cemal Karakas

## Abstract

Academic interest in democracy promotion notwithstanding, there is still little research that systematically compares different democracy promoters with a view to identifying the factors that explain variance in democracy promotion policies. The paper presents results of a research project that set out to contribute to filling this gap by analyzing the democracy promotion policies of two “donors” (USA, Germany) towards six “recipient” countries (Pakistan and Turkey, Bolivia and Ecuador, Russia and Belarus). It studies how “donor” states react to specific challenges that arise from “recipient” countries and that lead to conflicting objectives on the part of the democracy promoters. The paper asks how democracy promoters, across the twelve cases, deal with conflicting objectives and assesses the overall national patterns that characterize U.S. and German democracy promotion. With a view to both tasks, the paper offers causal explanations that are based on a theoretical framework that combines power-, interest- and norm-based determinants. While the mainstream view argues that “hard” interests regularly prevail over “soft” norms in cases of conflict, the analysis shows that the causal effect of the individual determinants on democracy promotion is not uniform, but depends on both the configuration of determinants and on the specific conditions in the “recipient” country.

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

George W. Bush’s Freedom Agenda has elevated democracy promotion to an undisputedly important topic for the discipline of International Relations (IR) and beyond.<sup>2</sup> There is a wide range of studies dealing with different questions related to the international promotion of democracy.<sup>3</sup> Research on the behavior of actors that are promoting democracy around the world has arrived at a diverse picture.<sup>4</sup> Different democracy promoters prefer quite different strategies and instruments and pursue rather different goals. At the same time, the policies of one and the same democracy promoter may also vary greatly – depending, in particular, on the specific circumstances in the “recipient” countries. There is, however, still little research that would systematically analyze the

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- 1 This working paper presents results from a four-year research project jointly conducted by PRIF and Goethe University Frankfurt which received generous funding from the German Research Foundation (DFG). Further members of the research team included Hans-Jürgen Puhle, Aser Babajew and Iris Wurm. In the course of our work we have benefited from comments by many colleagues including Peter Burnell, Thomas Carothers, Jörg Faust, Tina Freyburg, Esther Skelley Jordan, Milja Kurki, Wolfgang Merkel, Harald Müller, Marina Ottaway, Annika E. Poppe, Peter W. Schulze, Juliana Viggiano, and Laurence Whitehead. The authors also thank Vera Rogova, Daniel Schewe, Bentje Woitschach and Niels Graf for research assistance. An earlier version of the paper was presented at the 2012 Annual Convention of the International Studies Association (ISA). The overall results of the project are published in Wolff et al. (2012, forthcoming).
  - 2 For a selection of articles on democracy promotion from major IR journals, see Bueno de Mesquita and Downs (2006); Finkel et al. (2007); Finlay (2007); Ish-Shalom (2006); Lo et al. (2008); Monten (2005); Scott and Steele (2011); Wolff and Wurm (2011).
  - 3 Scholars, for instance, have dealt with the specific democracy promotion policies employed by the US (cf. Azpuru et al. 2008; Carothers 1991, 1999; Cox et al. 2000; Monten 2005; Peceny 1999; Robinson 1996; Smith 1994) and the EU (cf. Jünemann and Knodt 2007; Schimmelfennig et al. 2006; Wetzel and Orbie 2011; Youngs 2010); tried to assess the impact of democracy promotion in the ‘recipient’ countries (cf. Finkel et al. 2007; Scott and Steele 2011); and (critically) examined the ideological and/or conceptual underpinnings of democracy promotion (cf. Ish-Shalom 2007; Kurki and Hobson 2012; Smith 2007).
  - 4 See Burnell (2000); Carothers (2009); Herman and Piccone (2003); Kopstein (2006); Magen et al. (2009); Schraeder (2002, 2003); Youngs (2004).

policies employed by different democracy promoters in order to comparatively assess and theoretically explain the existing variance.<sup>5</sup>

This paper presents results of a research project that casts a different look at democracy promotion by systematically comparing U.S. and German democracy promotion policies with a view to theoretically identifying the factors that shape democracy promotion (see Wolff et al. *forthcoming*). Empirically, the project analyzes U.S. and German policies towards six “recipient” countries: Pakistan and Turkey, Bolivia and Ecuador, Belarus and Russia. In each case, the focus is on particular instances in which political developments in the recipient countries led to conflicting objectives on the part of democracy promoters. As will be argued below, analyzing the ways in which democracy promoters handle conflicts of objectives is a particularly promising strategy in order to assess the motives and drivers behind democracy promotion.

The paper starts by outlining the research design (2.). In the section on the theoretical framework (3.), five determinants are presented that are hypothesized to account for differences and commonalities in democracy promotion policies and, in particular, in democracy promoters’ reactions to conflicting objectives: a power-based determinant (relative power position); two interest-based factors (security and economic interests); and two normative determinants (relating to national political culture and international norms).

In Section 4, we look at the different kinds of reactions to conflicting objectives across the cases. As main finding, we identify a common causal dynamic that holds for both the U.S. and Germany and their patterns of reaction: While the mainstream view argues that “hard” interests regularly prevail over “soft” norms in cases of conflict, our analysis shows that the causal effect of the determinants listed above (whether power-, interest- or norm-based) on democracy promotion is not uniform, but depends on both the configuration of determinants and on the specific conditions in the recipient country. The result is what we call “alternatively conditioned double standards”.

In Section 5, we focus on the national patterns that characterize U.S. and German democracy promotion. We describe commonalities and differences between the two across the different dimensions of democracy promotion (from electoral observation and foreign aid to the use of sanctions). The analysis shows that German democracy promotion – cooperative, politically cautious and long-term in orientation – can be heuristically grasped by the ideal-type conception of a “Civilian Power” (outlined in 3.1). U.S. democracy promotion, by contrast, only partially corresponds to the opposite ideal type – the assertive “Freedom Fighter” – and also encompasses Civilian Power-type activities. This difference between the coherent “Civilian Power” Germany and the much less consistent pattern of the U.S. can be explained by different configurations of interests and norms, which in the German case are quite harmonious across the recipient countries but regularly colliding in the case of the U.S.

## 2. The Research Design

According to official self-understanding, the foreign and development policies of “North-Western” democracies are invariably guided by “liberal” norms, i.e., by democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. At the same time, the promotion of democracy, at least since 1990, is commonly presented as serving all relevant “national interests”.<sup>6</sup> As long as norms and interests do indeed coalesce in democratic foreign and development policy, it is hardly possible to identify the determinants of democracy promotion. For this reason, the case studies focus on those instances in which democ-

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5 Most existing comparative studies on democracy promoters are largely descriptive (cf. Burnell 2000; Youngs 2004; Herman and Piccone 2003). Comparative studies with more theoretical ambitions include the edited volumes by Magen et al. (2009) and Schraeder (2002); but, when it comes to explaining variance in democracy promotion policies, also these two books are not based on an explicit theoretical framework. Notable exceptions are two relative dated studies that focus entirely on the U.S. (Peceny 1999; Robinson 1996).

6 This refers, in particular, to democracy’s instrumental value in terms of peace/security (as the Democratic Peace thesis has it; cf. Smith 2007) and in terms of development/poverty reduction (as the current mainstream view in development theory and policy argues; cf. Sen 1999).

racy promoters are confronted with conflicting objectives.<sup>7</sup> Analytically, we distinguish between *extrinsic* conflicts – when the aim to promote democracy clashes with other donor interests – and *intrinsic* conflicts – when different sub-goals of democracy promotion such as stability and participation collide. The analysis and comparison of situations in which democracy promoters have to deal with competing objectives and make tough decisions promises powerful evidence as to the motives and factors that drive democracy promotion which allows to draw theoretical conclusions. The focus on democracy promotion by the U.S. and Germany deliberately implies a state-centered perspective. One reason is the observation that nation states are arguably still the most important type of actors in democracy promotion (cf. Magen and McFaul 2009: 2-4; Schraeder 2003: 34-40). The second reason is methodological: in order to contribute to theoretically guided causal research, it is reasonable to start with a comparative look at one type of democracy promoters only. Given the differences in “actorness” between states, international and non-governmental organizations, trying to identify the determinants of state, non-state and multilateral democracy promotion on the basis of one inclusive theoretical framework and one general design of structured, focused comparison does not promise sound results.

Among states the U.S. is the most important actor in democracy promotion. As “the world’s most powerful democracy with unrivalled global reach and capabilities” (Herman and Piccone 2003: 212), the U.S. has decisive influence on the overall discourse and practice of democracy promotion. Last not least, the U.S. is the world’s largest provider of democracy assistance (cf. Azpuru et al. 2008). Germany was chosen as a second donor country to be compared to the U.S. because it ranks among the most important European donors in democracy assistance (Youngs 2008: 160-1). In addition, German foreign policy – including German democracy promotion – is often contrasted to the U.S. While the U.S. is regularly associated with strong security interests and an assertive, proactive or missionary style of promoting democracy, Germany is typically considered a “Civilian Power” whose foreign policy is characterized as multilateral and oriented towards international values and rights; as driven rather by economic than by security interests; and as much more cautious and reluctant when it comes to meddling in the internal affairs of other states (cf. Schraeder 2003: 33-38; Spanger and Wolff 2007: 280-4).<sup>8</sup>

U.S. and German policies on six recipient countries are analyzed, grouped into three regional pairs: Pakistan and Turkey, Bolivia and Ecuador, Belarus and Russia. The three regions – the Greater Middle East, South America and the post-Soviet space – were chosen because they represent different kinds of challenges to democracy promotion (see below). The individual countries were selected because they share two central features: some basic form of democratic rule, at least temporarily;<sup>9</sup> and at the beginning, in the early 1990s, U.S. and German relations with none of the recipient countries were characterized by outright confrontation. These characteristics are important because, in order to trace reactions to *emerging* conflicts of objectives, the starting point for democracy promoters had to be relatively benign. In all countries, however, political developments have turned out considerably more difficult and contradictory than expected (by most) in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War. In this sense, the six recipient countries, like many others, demonstrate the failure of the “Transition Paradigm” (Carothers 2002). In contrast to teleological conceptions of transition, these countries were confronted with instances of political change in which the dilemmas that are inherent to democratization arose in different forms and compositions.<sup>10</sup> On the part

7 On conflicting objectives in democracy promotion, see also Leininger et al. (2012).

8 Research usually compares U.S. and “European” or EU democracy promotion efforts (cf. Carothers 2009; Kopstein 2006; Magen et al. 2009; Youngs 2004). This comparison is, however, problematic given the heterogeneity of “Europe” and the very peculiar “actorness” of the European Union.

9 Each of the countries – at least temporarily – scored 7 on the Polity IV scale (cf. Marshall and Jaggers 2006).

10 We broadly distinguish three dilemmas of democratization (Spanger and Wolff 2007: 266-270): (1) Democratic regimes – and, in particular, political regimes in a process of democratization – can be threatened by escalating conflicts destabilizing democratic institutions (“democracy” vs. “stability”). (2) Multiple and contradictory societal demands may render an effective *and* democratic governance impossible (“democracy vs. “governability”). (3) Democratic procedures can lead to majority decisions that threaten core (constitutional) principles of democracy (“democracy” vs. “majority”).

of the external actors, these episodes meant that democracy promotion was challenged by (combinations of) serious conflicts of objectives.

Pakistan and Turkey represent challenges to democracy promotion that are characteristic of the (broadly defined) Greater Middle East. The political rise of Islamic and Islamist movements “from below” challenges not only the political regimes in the region but also the interests of North-Western states cooperating with these regimes. Pakistan and Turkey are the two states in the region with, at least temporarily, basic democratic structures since 1990. Furthermore, the two countries’ bilateral relations with the U.S. and Germany have been generally cooperative and friendly, while both have been “targets” of active efforts at promoting democracy. Since the 1990s, however, there has been growing concerns among democracy promoters about the increasing Islamization and the increasing public presence of Islamist movements in the two countries as well as about the rise to power of an Islamic Party in Turkey.

South America’s political regimes have also been challenged “from below” since the turn of the century, albeit in quite different ways: social movements opposed the alleged imperatives of neoliberal globalization and toppled a number of elected governments. As part of a regional “turn to the left”, this opposition included a general critique of capitalism, liberal democracy and of the countries’ external dependence (especially on the U.S.). Bolivia and Ecuador represent countries in which this criticism translated into government policy. This includes a fundamental transformation of the political regimes in question, a departure from (neo-) liberal economics and an escalation of socio-political conflicts. These changes and conflicts have taken place within basically democratic settings, but nevertheless seriously challenge the interests and values of the “North-Western” donor community.

Belarus and Russia, finally, represent a political path that is characteristic for much of the post-Soviet space. Following an initial period of democratization in the (early) 1990s, in many countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) presidents were elected who, on the basis of (initial) democratic legitimacy, turned to increasingly authoritarian rule. The result has been the emergence of “semi-authoritarian” regimes (Ottaway 2003) that range from “defective democracies” to outright autocratic rule (Merkel et al. 2006). Belarus and Russia represent those states in the region that after temporary transitions to democracy have turned into the opposite direction; Freedom House, for example, classifies both countries as “not free” (Freedom House 2012).

In all three pairs of states democracy promoters have been confronted with significant conflicts of objectives that have both *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* dimensions. Across the recipient countries, “democracy” – i.e., democratic (majority) decisions – brought about results that, from the donors’ point of view, challenged or, in extreme cases, directly threatened democracy (intrinsic conflict). At the same time, security and/or economic donor interests were adversely affected (extrinsic conflict). In the cases of Pakistan and Turkey, the common challenge to democracy promotion is constituted by the rise of Islamic and Islamist movements; this raises the question whether donors should tolerate or even support restrictions on democracy or even coups d’état in order to protect the secular state and societal pluralism (intrinsic) and secure cooperation with the “West” (extrinsic). In Bolivia and Ecuador, the election of “radical” governments force donors to decide whether to tolerate, in the name of democratic self-determination, a gradual departure from universally conceived standards of liberal democracy and market economy (intrinsic) as well as related threats to specific donor interests (extrinsic). In Belarus and Russia, finally, political developments have given rise to the question of how democracy promoters should deal with governments that used domestic societal support to revert to authoritarianism (intrinsic) when donors, at the same time, are interested in securing continued international cooperation (at least on the part of Russia, extrinsic).<sup>11</sup>

The combination of two donor states and six recipient countries adds up to twelve cases which – based on in-depth case studies – have been compared following the method of structured, focused comparison (George and Bennett 2005: Chapter 3). The object of research – namely, democracy

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11 The specific extrinsic and intrinsic conflicts of objectives as well as their interplay in the twelve cases are discussed in detail below (see 4.1).



promotion by states – is defined in a broad sense: democracy promotion includes all measures aiming, from the outside, at “establishing, strengthening, or defending democracy in a given country” (Azpuru et al 2008: 151). Accordingly, the instruments encompass the entire spectrum of foreign, security, economic and development policies (cf. Schraeder 2003: 26). Systematically, we distinguish five dimensions of democracy promotion that are characterized by different logics of influence. With a view to each dimension it is to be examined to what extent and in which ways political measures aim at promoting democracy (Table 1).<sup>12</sup>

**Table 1: Dimensions of Democracy Promotion: The Analytical Framework**

Dimension	Logic of influence	Description
International observation	Transparency	Observation of democratic processes by external actors (e.g., electoral observation)
Foreign aid	Aid (technical & financial)	Foreign/development aid that explicitly aims at promoting democracy (democracy assistance)
Diplomacy	Appeal (normative)	Public statements by external actors, intergovernmental political dialogues and bilateral documents that explicitly refer to democracy (promotion)
International cooperation	Incentives (material)	Political, military, economic or development cooperation that is tied to democracy-related conditions (positive incentives) or limited by democracy-related sanctions (negative incentives)
Military intervention	Coercion (physical)	Use of physical (military) force explicitly aimed at promoting democracy

Source: Compilation by the authors, drawing on Wolff et al. (*forthcoming*).

The variety of potential instruments of democracy promotion implies an equally wide range of actors (cf. Burnell 2000; Schraeder 2002). Even democracy promotion directly implemented by the government involves different actors. First, there are the governmental institutions that primarily shape external relations – in our cases, the Foreign and Defense Ministries, the White House and the Chancellery as well as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (*Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung* – BMZ). Second, with regard to German development cooperation, the official “implementing agencies” have to be considered as well, in particular the German Technical Cooperation (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit* – GTZ), the German Development Service (*Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst* – DED) and the *KfW Development Bank*.<sup>13</sup> Third, there are quasi-governmental organizations that have traditionally played an important role in democracy promotion. In the German case, this refers to the political foundations (*Stiftungen*).<sup>14</sup> In the case of the U.S., the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is included as are NED’s four core grantees: the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International

12 The analytical framework presented in Table 1 draws on the one proposed by Magen and McFaul (2009: 11-4). Whereas, for example, Carothers (1999: 335) focuses on democracy assistance only, Magen and McFaul, by including “control” and “material incentives”, also take into account democracy promotion outside the field of development cooperation (see also Whitehead 1996). At the same time, they differentiate, as we do, between “normative suasion” and “capacity-building”.

13 In January 2011, GTZ, DED and Capacity Building International (InWent) were merged into the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ). During the period under study, however, the different organizations were still acting as separate entities.

14 These are *Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung* (KAS), *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung* (FES), *Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung* (HSS), *Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit* (FNS), *Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung* (HBS) and *Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung* (RLS). The political foundations represent respective parliamentary groups in the German Bundestag. Their international activities are funded by the federal government according to the weighted share of their parties in the last four parliamentary elections. Still, they have to present individual program and project proposals to the BMZ, which also have to be accepted by the Foreign Office.

Republican Institute (IRI), the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), and the Solidarity Center.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. The Theoretical Framework

Drawing on theories of international relations and foreign policy as well as on research on the Democratic Peace and democracy promotion, we identify five factors that are considered to shape democracy promotion policies: (1) the relative power position in the bilateral relationship between donor and recipient; (2) the security interests of the donor in a given recipient country; (3) its economic interests; (4) the specific culturally embedded conception of democracy promotion characterizing the foreign policy of a given donor; (5) international norms, i.e., the institutionalization of norms related to democracy (promotion) in common international organizations.<sup>16</sup> In this section, the five determinants are briefly described (3.1) followed by a comparative assessment are presented (3.2).

#### 3.1 Factors Shaping Democracy Promotion Policies

(1) Realist approaches in International Relations and utilitarian perspectives on the Democratic Peace refer to the *relative power position* as an important factor shaping democracy promotion in foreign policy (cf. Monten 2005: 118). Only in cases of pronounced asymmetries in relative power between donor and recipient country, promoting democracy from the outside is rational in the sense of promising tangible effects at appropriate costs and of controlling the risks of democratization. Conversely, balanced power relations or an asymmetry in favor of the recipient should lead to restraint on the part of the donor. The relative power position between donor and recipient is measured by drawing on two quantitative indicators: the Composite Index of National Capability (CINC) compiled by the Correlates of War Project and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).<sup>17</sup>

(2) From a modified (Neo-) Realist perspective, *security interests* can drive democracy promotion if the democratic character of other states' political regime is seen by the donor government as contributing to international peace and national security. In such a "security-based approach" (Peceny 1999: 3) promoting democracy becomes an instrument of security policy (cf. Smith 1994). The positive impact of democratization on national security, however, is only long-term. In the short run, there can be conflicts and then immediate security concerns will prevail over democracy promotion once both clash (Carothers 1999: 16). Democracy promotion, here, depends largely on the relevance of the particular recipient country for the security interests of the donor. To measure security interests, three indicators were chosen: a qualitative assessment of the security cooperation between donor and recipient; the possession of nuclear weapons by recipient country (yes/no); and an assessment of the strategic location of the recipient from the perspective of the donor.

(3) *Economic interests* are equally often referred to in the literature. According to Economic Liberalism in IR (Moravcsik 1997: 528-9), democratic regimes promise conditions (predictability, stability, rule of law) that are crucial for economic cooperation. In addition, Democratic Peace research emphasizes that democracies are particularly prone to increase political cooperation and economic

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15 The NED, founded in 1983, is a nongovernmental organization, but its budget is annually fixed by Congress. NED's Board of Directors is composed of representatives from the Republican and the Democratic Party, the US chamber of commerce and the labor unions. These institutions are also the main beneficiaries of NED grants. In addition to these core grantees, NED gives grants to civil society organizations in recipient countries. While critical observers regard the NED and its sub-institutes as instruments of the U.S. government (Robinson 1996: 71-116), Carothers (1991: 232-3) emphasizes that Congress exerts a more direct influence by controlling NED's funding whereas the approval of NED projects by the State Department is "in practice a pro forma requirement" (Carothers 1991: 232-3).

16 The literature review identified an additional factor that might shape democracy promotion policies: domestic special interests, along the lines of "republican" Liberalism (Moravcsik 1997: 530). This factor is not included here as part of the theoretical framework because its impact on democracy promotion is idiosyncratic and therefore can hardly be specified on this comparative level. For a comprehensive discussion of competing theoretical perspectives on democracy promotion, see Wolff and Wurm (2011).

17 A comprehensive presentation of the data including sources can be found in Wolff et al. (*forthcoming*) or requested from the authors.



interdependence with each other (Ikenberry 1999; Mansfield et al. 2002). Democracy promotion, from this perspective, directly serves economic interests – but democracy, again, is promoted for its instrumental long-term value only and democracy promotion should, therefore, take a back seat when colliding with tangible economic interests of the donor. Two indicators measure economic interests: the amount of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the respective recipient country and the amount of bilateral trade, both measured as a share of total donor FDI/trade.

(4) From the perspective of an actor-centered Constructivist approach to IR (Harnisch 2003: 340), scholars have emphasized national role conceptions (Holsti 1970), national identities (Katzenstein 1996), or political cultures (Duffield 1999) as important factors shaping foreign policy and, thereby, democracy promotion.<sup>18</sup> These culturally rooted national self-perceptions, roles or identities are seen to shape how states form and change national preferences; how policy-makers perceive and interpret the world outside; and how they translate such preferences and perceptions into foreign policy decisions (Wolff and Wurm 2011: 84). The ways in which a government promotes democracy, conceptualizes democratization processes and defines its appropriate role as an external actor is, then, shaped by the historical experiences of a specific country and its more general (foreign) political culture. This factor – *national conceptions of democracy promotion* – is different from the other four in that it does not vary in accordance with different recipient countries. In order to measure the conceptual differences, a qualitative content analysis was conducted that investigated the overall outline of democracy promotion in official government documents from the two countries.<sup>19</sup> Based on this analysis, German official rhetoric is found to generally correspond to a “Civilian Power” conception of democracy promotion while the U.S. approaches an ideal-type conception we call “Freedom Fighter”.<sup>20</sup> This, however, does not imply that German and U.S. democracy promotion policies in individual cases necessarily correspond to these overall conceptions that have been detected in non-recipient-specific donor documents. Whether such a correspondence exists – and, thus, general patterns distinguishing German from U.S. democracy promotion – is precisely one of the empirical questions for the comparative analysis.

The two ideal types are defined by differences across four dimensions:

- (a) The Freedom Fighter is characterized by an explicit and narrow focus on liberal democracy, emphasizing civil liberties and political rights. The Civilian Power is guided by rather abstract and broad values, emphasizing international human rights in general.
- (b) The mode of democratization is conceived of either as a fairly short-term, quasi-revolutionary process of regime change (Freedom Fighter) or as a long-term, evolutionary process of transformation involving a series of gradual steps (Civilian Power).
- (c) Concerning the attitude towards actors that are perceived as opponents to democracy or non-democrats, the Freedom Fighter, bound to a Manichean worldview, privileges strategies of exclusion and confrontation towards the “enemies” of democracy. The Civilian Power, concerned with inducing gradual change through engagement, prefers pragmatic strategies of (institutional) cooperation and inclusion.
- (d) The Freedom Fighter’s style of democracy promotion is proactive; assertive action on the part of external actors is legitimate and, at times, needed in order to enforce democratic standards. The Civilian Power, in contrast, is relatively reluctant to openly meddle in other states’ affairs and to infringe on their rights to sovereignty and collective self-determination.

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18 The same argument is made by normative approaches to the Democratic Peace, which explain the specific peace-proneness of democratic states (at least, vis-à-vis fellow democracies) as a result of their externalizing domestically embedded liberal-democratic norms (Risse-Kappen 1995).

19 This content analysis drew on 20 primary sources for each government. Both subsamples included the most important official strategy papers and speeches that explicitly deal with democracy promotion as well as primary sources that outline the general guidelines of foreign, defence and development policy. The analysis is presented in Poppe et al. (*forthcoming*).

20 The term Civilian Power was introduced by Hanns Maull (cf. Kirste and Maull 1996; Maull 2001).

(5) While actor-centered Constructivism emphasizes the domestic socio-cultural context of foreign policy, Constructivist approaches in IR also refer to the impact of “international cultural environments” on foreign policy (Jepperson et al. 1996: 34). More specifically, international norms can be seen as defining shared expectations of appropriate behavior. In this sense, the extent to which democracy and democracy promotion are established as international norms directly impacts the foreign policy of states. Although such norms have been established at the global level of the United Nations, they are much stronger, more explicit and institutionalized at the level of some regional organizations (Piccone 2005). The strength of democracy-related *international norms* is assessed by, first, looking at the extent to which a group of states institutionalizes democracy as a common, binding principle: Is a democratic political regime a condition for membership, and do violations result in sanctions? Do regional organizations define the active promotion of democracy as a legitimate objective of the organization and/or the member states, and are there instruments to this effect? In order to measure the strength of such democracy-related international norms for a given pair of states, the joint international (regional) organization with the highest democracy standards for the dyad is consulted.

### 3.2 *The Configurational Perspective*

The theoretical framework presented above differentiates between power-, interest- and norm-based factors. In addition to factor (1) which grasps a core feature of the bilateral relationship between donor and recipient, factors (2) and (3) correspond to the main foreign-policy interests (security, economic), while factors (4) and (5) refer to the two main normative frames (national, international) that are expected to guide foreign policies. The mainstream view on democracy promotion concurs with what Carothers (1999: 16) once called a “semi-realist approach to democracy promotion”: Democracy promotion, from this perspective, constitutes a relevant foreign-policy aim, “sometimes compatible with and sometimes contrary to economic or security interests”; but when it runs counter, “it is usually overridden” (Carothers 1999: 16). The observation that foreign-policy interests ultimately dominate the “normative goal of democracy” (Schraeder 2003: 33) is, however, not sufficiently specified given that, in democracy promotion, “material” foreign-policy interests and “ideational” democratic values are generally considered to coalesce. When, for example, U.S. democracy promotion is regarded as a “national grand strategy” (Doyle 2000: 21), it is not plausible to assume that it is easily overridden by other foreign-policy interests. And when democracy promotion after the Cold War is not seen as a “purely soft, idealistic interest” any more, but no less as a “pragmatic interest that reinforces other interests” (Carothers 1999: 60), then it would be surprising if governments would always sacrifice “strategic objectives such as democracy promotion” for immediate security or economic interests (McFaul 2005: 158).

In order to understand the complex dynamics behind democracy promotion, it is therefore necessary to treat the above factors not as competing independent variables whose individual explanatory power is to be assessed, but as interrelated parts of “configurations of causally relevant conditions” (Ragin 2007: 15).<sup>21</sup> In this sense, Table 2 presents the configurations of factors across the twelve cases:

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21 Such a configurational perspective on causality is also suggested by the “analytic eclecticism” proposed by Sil and Katzenstein (2010: 20), which pays “attention to the multiplicity, heterogeneity, and interaction of causal mechanisms and processes that generate phenomena of interest”: “An eclectic approach also assumes the existence of complex interactions among the distribution of material capabilities (typically emphasized in realism), the gains pursued by interested individual and collective actors (typically emphasized by liberals), and the role of ideas, norms, and identities in framing actors’ understanding of the world and of their roles within it (privileged by constructivists),” (Sil and Katzenstein 2010: 37).

**Table 2: Configurations of Determinants in Comparison**

	(1) Relative Power	(2) Security Interests	(3) Economic Interests	(4) National Conceptions	(5) International Norms
USA/Pakistan	3	4	3	4 (FF)	1
Germany/Pakistan	2	3	3	4 (CP)	1
USA/Turkey	3	3	3	4 (FF)	2
Germany/Turkey	2	3	4	4 (CP)	4
USA/Bolivia	4	3	2	4 (FF)	3
Germany/Bolivia	4	1	1	4 (CP)	1
USA/Ecuador	4	3	3	4 (FF)	3
USA/Belarus	4	1	1	4 (FF)	2
Germany/Ecuador	3	1	2	4 (CP)	1
Germany/Belarus	3	2	2	4 (CP)	2
USA/Russia	2	4	3	4 (FF)	2
Germany/Russia	1	4	4	4 (CP)	3

**Note:** All factors but determinant (4) were measured by drawing on both statistical data and qualitative assessments as briefly indicated in Section 3.1. All (sub-) indicators and determinants were ranked on an ordinal scale ranging from 1 (minimal) to 4 (maximum). For a comprehensive presentation of the data including sources, see Wolff et al. (*forthcoming*). Determinant (4) is a dichotomous variable that is either FF (Freedom Fighter) or CP (Civilian Power) (on our ordinal scale, this factor is categorized as “4” throughout, because actor-centered Constructivism would not expect idiosyncratic conceptions of democracy promotion to vary in accordance with different recipient countries).

At one end of the spectrum are those dyads that are characterized by high power asymmetries, marginal donor interests and a low level of democracy-related international norms (Germany vis-à-vis Bolivia and Ecuador; Germany and USA vis-à-vis Belarus). In these cases, democracy promotion policies can be expected to be largely shaped by the political culture of the individual donor country, i.e., its specific conception of democracy promotion. Conflicting objectives should be mainly of an intrinsic nature – i.e., pitting sub-goals of democracy promotion against each other – and donors should deal with these conflicts following a logic of normative appropriateness that is defined by their ideological predispositions.

At the other end of the spectrum are those dyads that are characterized by less pronounced power asymmetries and/or much more pronounced security and/or economic interests (USA and Germany vis-à-vis Pakistan, Turkey and Russia; USA vis-à-vis Bolivia and Ecuador). In these cases foreign-policy interests are expected to play a much larger role in donor policies. In the cases of U.S. policy towards Pakistan and Russia these are primarily security interests; and in the case of Turkey security interests are on par with economic interests. The same applies to German relations with Pakistan (equally on a lower level) and with Russia (on the highest level), whereas in German relations with Turkey economic interests are of greater importance than security interests. In these cases, significant extrinsic conflicts of objectives are to be expected and donors should adapt their (democracy promotion) policies in line with their national interests – at the expense of their normative preferences.

Democracy-related international norms too vary across the dyads. In the case of Germany’s policy towards Turkey these are conceivably strongest, as the EU enlargement process entails democratic streamlining and should therefore prevent a purely interest-driven policy. Even if German interests would stand against promoting Turkish democracy, one can expect the international normative setting to push Germany towards a relative coherent stance on democracy promotion. The same holds for U.S. policy towards Bolivia and Ecuador because of the strong democracy norms institutionalized by the Organization of American States (OAS). Here, strong donor interests (mainly

security-related) on the one hand, and political culture and international norms on the other could then lead to a potential competition between interests and norms.

#### 4. Dealing with Conflicting Objectives

##### 4.1 *The Interplay of Extrinsic and Intrinsic Conflicts*

The conflict situations pose quite different challenges to democracy – and thus produce equally different conflicts of objectives with which Germany and the U.S. are confronted in their policies of democracy promotion. This applies to both the extrinsic and the intrinsic conflicts. In the following paragraphs, we will first look at extrinsic conflicts to, then, describe their interplay with intrinsic conflicts.

German policy towards Bolivia, Ecuador, Turkey and Belarus is hardly confronted with extrinsic conflicts of objectives. As far as Germany's strategic interests are concerned, the governments led by Evo Morales in Bolivia (since 2006) and by Rafael Correa in Ecuador (since 2007) pose a classic low-intensity conflict: Germany's respect for democratic self determination has been challenged by these countries' turn against "neoliberalism" and towards Hugo Chávez's Venezuela, but the policy changes in these two Andean countries do not constitute serious threats for German "national interests".<sup>22</sup> With respect to Turkey, Germany certainly has vital economic and security interests, and the fact that the largest Turkish-speaking diaspora in the world lives in Germany gives the German policy on Turkey a distinct domestic blend. This, however, has not produced a serious extrinsic conflict of objectives: Even when Islamic parties – the Welfare Party (RP) in the mid-1990s, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2002 – rose to power, Germany generally saw a cooperative strategy of promoting and protecting democracy in Turkey as contributing to these German interests. In the case of Belarus, the autocratic regime established by President Alexander Lukashenko after his first election in 1994 has not led to major extrinsic conflicts of objectives, neither on the part of Germany nor on the part of the U.S. Only in the wake of the Caucasus war in 2008, the prospect of driving a wedge between Belarus and Russia – officially aligned in a union state – temporarily tempered the drive to confront Lukashenko with calls for democratization. Yet, in general but particularly pronounced in the case of the U.S., democracy promotion (directed against the Lukashenko regime) was seen as serving "Western" interests in regional balancing (directed against Russia).

The remainder of seven pairs displays serious extrinsic conflicts of objectives. In U.S. policies towards Bolivia, respecting self-determination has been compromised by drug-related security interests and strategic considerations: President Morales declared an end to the U.S.-driven "War on Drugs" and to "neoliberal" economics, joined the Venezuelan-led Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) and fiercely criticized the U.S. government to the point of expelling, in the course of 2008, the U.S. ambassador and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The election of Correa in Ecuador led to similar developments, including the closure of the U.S. military base in Manta and threats to U.S. business interests in the oil sector; yet, Correa's counternarcotics policies were judged by the U.S. as much more cooperative and successful than Morales's. In the case of Turkey pronounced U.S. security interests in a reliable NATO ally collide with respect for Turkish self-determination insofar as both Islamic parties, previously the RP and currently the AKP, have challenged the basic secular and Kemalist, pro-Western orientation of the country. Furthermore democratic reforms of the AKP government have been aiming at reducing the political role and relevance of the Turkish military, the core addressee of U.S. security policy. In the case of Pakistan, it was the war in Afghanistan that has produced a serious conflict of objectives in that General Pervez Musharraf and his autocratic regime became a vitally important U.S. ally in the "War on Terror" (until Musharraf's resignation in 2008). To some extent this also applied to Russia's cooperation in the "War on

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22 Only in one (minor) case, a Germany company and, thus, German business interests were affected by the new Bolivian policies of "nationalization".

Terror”, on Afghanistan and Iran which had some mitigating effect on a democracy promotion aimed at the increasingly authoritarian regime of Vladimir Putin. The German conflict of objectives vis-à-vis Pakistan in the wake of the Afghanistan campaign evolved in line with the U.S. In the case of Russia, however, the German interest in cooperation has been markedly higher than the U.S. interest, and it has been more economic than security-related.

How did the two democracy promoters react when democracy in a recipient country challenged their donor interests? In principle, the case studies support the well-established finding that almost always foreign-policy interests prevail over democracy aims (cf. Carothers 1999: 16; Schraeder 2003: 41). This could be clearly observed in U.S. policies towards Pakistan (after 9/11) and Turkey as well as in German and (albeit less pronounced) U.S. policies towards Russia. Belarus also supports this finding as the virtual absence of U.S. or German “national interests” clearly facilitated the relatively consistent and increasingly coordinated (if largely ineffective) policy of combining diplomatic pressure, public criticism and increasing sanctions against the Lukashenko regime.

This, however, is only part of the story. The case studies also reveal the limits of such a “realist” foreign policy and, thus, of the explanatory power of materially defined “national interests”. In different ways, democracy invariably has been part of the overall picture.

*First*, even when “material” interests were arguably privileged over democracy promotion, donors still felt obliged to justify their policies as normatively appropriate.<sup>23</sup> The German government, for example, pointed to the burden of history, the (still early) stage of democratic development and to difficult socioeconomic conditions in Russia in order to qualify existing “deficits”. In a similar way, U.S. and German support for Musharraf was in part explained by the need to stabilize the country and make it fit for democracy (given both the turbulent history of fragile democratic governments and the current terrorist/Islamist threat). With a view to Turkey, the U.S. justified its reluctance to explicitly support the AKP government against domestic threats from the old Kemalist elite by referring to the “secular democratic principles” guaranteed by the country’s constitution (which was, to be sure, once imposed by the military). Bolivia’s exclusion from U.S. Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) aid was technically based on a gradual decline in governance indicators. And the U.S. focus on fighting drug production and trafficking in the Andean region has always been justified as contributing as much to core U.S. interests as to the stability of the local democratic regimes. *Second*, the domestic politics of international democracy promotion prevented donor governments from entirely ignoring relevant calls from within society. For example, the relatively sympathetic attitude of the German government towards Russia regularly met with public criticism from opposition parties, NGOs and the media. Thus democracy and human rights remained on the bilateral agenda, even if on a rather low level and embedded in a not-too-political agenda of forging a “modernization partnership” between Germany and Russia. Also the close U.S. cooperation with Pakistan following 9/11 proved highly controversial in the U.S. and when, in 2007, tensions between Musharraf and the judiciary escalated it became increasingly difficult for the U.S. Administration to stick to its ally.

*Third*, the U.S., let alone Germany, did not undertake visible efforts to enforce foreign-policy interests by openly acting against democracy in recipient countries – even vis-à-vis relatively powerless states. Some negative reactions notwithstanding, the Bush administration generally accepted the elected governments of Morales in Bolivia and Correa in Ecuador even as the two, and Morales in particular, acted in opposition to core U.S. interests. The U.S. – while sticking to its traditional Kemalist allies and the military in particular – also continued cooperating with the AKP government and tried to maintain a rather neutral position vis-à-vis intra-Turkish conflict. Of course, U.S. reactions in these cases reflect not necessarily a genuine respect for democratic norms, but also a

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23 As the following examples show, the need to justify policies as in accordance with (long-term) democracy aims leaves quite some leeway for interest-driven policies that, in effect, mean *forgoing* any active measures of democracy promotion. Still, as will be argued below, this normative obligation does constrain democracy promoters from actively *violating* democratic norms by openly confronting an elected government – as demonstrated, most notably, in the case of US policies towards Bolivia.

pragmatic acceptance of the balance of power in the recipient countries. Yet, still, as further discussed in 4.2, there are strong indications that democratic legitimacy tends to protect governments that act against U.S. preferences from being confronted with corresponding U.S. countermeasures. Turning to intrinsic tensions in the democracy promotion agenda, the case studies not only show that the problem of conflicting objectives in democracy promotion consists of more than the well-known clash of “interests” and “norms”; they also demonstrate that – and how – the extrinsic conflicts are intertwined with intrinsic conflicts.<sup>24</sup> On the one hand, the intrinsic conflicts enabled donors to *de facto* solve extrinsic conflicts in favor of pursuing national interests without explicitly breaking with the declared aim of democracy promotion: as each solution to an intrinsic conflict implies a certain norm violation with a view to some democracy-related sub-goals (in favor of other sub-goals), a relative broad range of reactions can be framed as normatively appropriate. On the other, however, intrinsically conflicting objectives posed real political challenges to be dealt with.

Following his first election as president of Russia in 2000, Putin did not simply abolish Russian democracy but he assured political stability and state capacity following the chaotic and not-too-democratic Yeltsin era. It was therefore difficult to assess whether the net impact on democracy was positive, neutral or negative, certainly during the first years of Putin’s presidency. In the case of Pakistan, there could be no doubt that the 1999 coup violated the most basic democratic rules, but the experience with Pakistan democracy in the 1990s and the difficult domestic and regional situation lent some plausibility to Musharraf’s claim that a gradual path of managed modernization were the best strategy for long-term democratization. The implications of the governments of Morales (Bolivia), Correa (Ecuador) and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Turkey) for democracy in respective countries are no less ambivalent, if with a clearly pro-democratic bend. All three represent important progress towards improving democracy while, at the same time, their political projects include elements that – from the perspective of the donors – pose threats to liberal democracy: the reliance on plebiscitarian support facilitating one-party dominance at the expense of liberal principles of checks and balances; or the promulgation of indigenous, Socialist or Islamic values at variance with liberal-democratic values.

When dealing with these intrinsic conflicts of objectives, both Germany and the U.S. clearly evaluated the situation according to their particular (liberal-democratic and capitalist) concepts of a “good” political order: They have been generally skeptical of Islamic parties in Turkey and feared “Islamization” (or “Iranization”), and they have been clearly interested in securing as much as possible the liberal-democratic character of the evolving political regimes in Bolivia and Ecuador. In general, the U.S., in line with its own democratic tradition, tended to emphasize checks and balances and political counterweights more than Germany. Yet, in the end, neither the U.S. nor Germany insisted on their specific models of democracy but were rather flexible and pragmatic in adjusting to local conceptions. This was clearly the case when in free and fair elections undisputed majorities expressed their support for a given direction of political development, as with the AKP agenda for Turkey and the political projects of Morales and Correa in the South American cases. And, as indicated above, relatively good performance in terms of stability, peace and governance led donors to downplay democracy-related problems. This, for example, improved donor perceptions of the democratic performance of the AKP government in Turkey and Correa in Ecuador, and it certainly attenuated critical assessments of Musharraf and Putin.

Confronted with intrinsic conflicts of objectives, donors generally showed respect for sovereign decisions and country ownership. When intrinsic conflicts were perceived as such, typical public statements would urge “all parties” to respect the constitutional order while working towards strengthening democracy, stability and peace.<sup>25</sup> Both the U.S. and Germany did regularly try to

24 The exception is Belarus, where neither German nor U.S. democracy promotion was confronted with significant intrinsic conflicts of objectives: Both governments perceived the Lukashenko government as indisputably autocratic and anticipated no risks (of destabilization) arising from potential democratization.

25 When donor statements openly criticized violations of basic democratic standards, they usually assumed that these violations were not in any sense helpful for democracy (or stability or governability) but served the narrow interests of



shape the domestic processing of such conflicts in various ways. “Technical” advice, capacity building and the promotion of dialogue as well as diplomatic appeals served as instruments to spread donor concepts of democracy and development, to promote a pluralist debate and to strengthen “moderate” (democratic, liberal) voices. Yet, once domestic politics in recipient countries in one way or another ‘solved’ an intrinsic conflict, donors basically accepted this internal solution – whether it complied with donor preferences or not.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4.2 *Alternatively Conditioned Double Standards in Democracy Promotion*

Having summarized the ways in which the U.S. and Germany dealt with conflicting objectives, we now discuss the determinants that have been hypothesized to explain these reactions. This section focuses on causal dynamics that hold for both the U.S. and Germany (the differences between the two donors will be described and explained in section 5). In this paper, we cannot, however, assess in detail the explanatory power of the individual determinants and of their case-specific configuration. Instead, we will synthetically discuss the causal role of three types of determinants (relative power position; donor interests; normative dispositions) and focus on one overall phenomenon that cuts across these three types and also concerns their interplay: the phenomenon of alternatively conditioned double standards, i.e. of different causal effects depending on specific conditions.

The relative power position, for instance, unambiguously shapes democracy promotion when small (or even negative) power asymmetries give donors the impression of having only little influence on the recipient country. Under such premises, donors are reluctant to promote democracy and, as far as they do, they largely avoid confrontational strategies. Conversely, however, high power asymmetries do not necessarily lead to high assertiveness. The reason is straightforward: success of democracy promotion largely depends on the local conditions, on the balance of power within the country and to which extent potent entry points and partners for the democracy promoter are available. The differentiated causal effect of (high versus low) relative power asymmetries on democracy promotion is therefore itself the result of power-related considerations, if from a broader perspective on power understood as potential influence.

The formative power of security and/or economic interests is similarly circumscribed. They have a direct impact on donor policies when they confirm the status quo and call for cooperation with the recipient government. Under these circumstances, donors engage in democracy promotion only within the narrow constraints defined by their interests: They do not openly challenge autocratic governments, while downplaying democracy-related criticism, ignoring democratic conditionality and limiting democracy assistance to cooperative, non-sensitive and long-term activities. Yet interests have a far less direct impact when they suggest confronting a democratically elected government. As seen above, no clear pattern of interest-driven confrontation emerges, if a government acts against donor interests but is democratically legitimate. These differences in the relevance of donor interests are quite rational: supporting the recipient’s status quo promises yields in line with donor interests, attempts to change the status quo are risky and therefore less promising.

The normative dispositions exist in two types: national conceptions of democracy promotion that are supposed to shape the foreign and development policies of a given donor, and international democracy norms that are supposed to shape democracy promotion in a given dyad that is part of the specific normative environment. In both cases democracy-related norms do not drive donor policies in a sense of push or pull, but they constrain the scope of options that are seen as appropriate or justifiable. This constraining effect again plays out in a differentiated manner: It is clearly observable when a purely interest-based policy would call for an active *violation* of democratic norms (e.g., for confronting an elected government); but the constraining effect disappears once interests call for *omitting* a normatively appropriate behavior (e.g., for not confronting an autocratic

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the incumbent government only. Examples include electoral fraud and post-electoral violence in Belarus or the restrictions imposed on NGOs in Russia.

26 The forms of such ‘acceptance’ ranged from toleration – in the sense of not adopting any active countermeasures – all the way to direct support.

government). This differentiated effect can be explained by the basic distinction that active violation of a norm is qualitatively different from passive neglect. In addition it finds support in the effects of traditional international norms (sovereignty, non-intervention): they support democracy-related norms in the case of preventing norm violation (against a democratic government), but work against them in the case of promoting norm compliance (against an autocratic government). It becomes clear that the well-known diagnosis of double standards in Western politics is too simple both empirically and theoretically. Instead one can observe what we call *alternatively conditioned double standards*. Donor interests do not consistently override democracy norms, and donor behavior cannot be explained by ranking interests as primary and norms as secondary. To summarize our findings in a very broad pattern: Vis-à-vis a democratic government that threatens donor interests, the *normative prohibition* to openly fight it shapes donor policies in spite of the *interest to change the status quo*, which is, even under conditions of high power asymmetries, difficult and risky to pursue. Vis-à-vis a non-democratic government that serves donor interests, the *interest to uphold the status quo* consistently overrides the *normative inclination* that democracy promoters should work towards regime change. As a result, the specific conditions in the recipient country, by constraining what is normatively appropriate and pragmatically possible, lead to double standards with a view to both interests and norms: An interest in upholding the status quo is causally more relevant than an equally strong interest in changing it; the constraining effect of one and the same norm is stronger in prohibiting its violation than in producing compliance. The same differentiated effect can also be observed in power relations between donor and recipient.

## 5. The National Patterns of Democracy Promotion

### 5.1 “Freedom Fighter” Versus “Civilian Power”?

The U.S. and Germany were selected as donors, *inter alia*, because existing research led us to suppose that the two would represent different approaches to democracy promotion. In order to heuristically grasp these differences, two ideal-type conceptions of democracy promotion were construed: the “Civilian Power” and the “Freedom Fighter”. A qualitative content analysis of German and U.S. government sources demonstrated that the official rhetoric of the two governments generally corresponded to these ideal types. The case studies confirm this distinction between the German “Civilian Power” and the U.S. “Freedom Fighter” but also led us to introduce crucial qualifications.

German policies correspond to the Civilian Power-type conception of democracy promotion. German governments proved reluctant to meddle in recipient countries’ affairs and tolerant of deviance from German notions of liberal democracy and the rule of law. Germany favors strategies of engagement and bonding, and is reluctant to confront the powers that be – the only exception being Belarus. Similarly, non-provocative and non-confrontational strategies predominate in the German democracy assistance portfolio: While the government’s official democracy aid is focused on the public sector, governance-related issues and cooperation with the state, the parastatal Stiftungen emphasize an all-encompassing dialogue, gradual change and long-term capacity building. Overall, Germany’s rhetoric on democracy promotion demonstrates a basic openness: It is characterized by vagueness in terms, restraint in political demands, and avoidance of dichotomous or teleological thinking – all reminiscent of the Civilian Power. These general features characterizing German democracy promotion are not affected by changes in government.<sup>27</sup>

U.S. policies, in contrast, meet the characteristics of the Freedom Fighter only to a limited extent. U.S. rhetoric generally proves much more explicit in terms of emphasizing normative standards and criticizing what it perceives as violation of such standards. The U.S. is also more willing to respond to open violations of democratic rule with (the threat of) sanctions. In the case of Belarus, the only recipient country officially labeled a dictatorship, Manichean rhetoric and a strategy of exclusion

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<sup>27</sup> During the period under study, the governing coalitions in Germany changed from ‘red-green’ (SPD and the Green Party) via a Grand Coalition (CDU/CSU and SPD) to a center-right government (CDU/CSU and FDP).

were even more readily employed than by Germany. U.S. democracy assistance, like German official aid, applies cooperative, government-oriented and long-term strategies but it also includes support for – and empowerment of – opposition (civil-society) groups. And in some instances the U.S. even tried to directly influence the outcome of internal democratic processes. Yet the major difference between Germany and the U.S. consists of the observation that U.S. democracy promotion draws on both Freedom Fighter-type and Civilian Power-type activities, while Germany confines itself to the latter. Again, changes in the donor government do not significantly affect these patterns of U.S. democracy promotion. In terms of overall rhetoric, the Bush Administration was certainly more explicit and assertive than the Obama Administration, but across our recipient cases this was not followed by significant changes in democracy promotion policies.

A brief look at the dimensions of democracy promotion as identified in Table 1 may illustrate the differences in the German and U.S. patterns.

*International observation*, primarily electoral observation: Although Germany contributed in all our cases to multilateral observation missions (EU, OSCE, Council of Europe), neither in German foreign policy nor in German democracy assistance did elections play a major role. Either Germany just acted on the assumption that generally free and fair elections were being held (Bolivia, Ecuador, Turkey), or Berlin preferred to not explicitly meddle with this contentious topic and basically accepted elections even if they were deemed as undemocratic (Pakistan, Russia). The exception was Belarus where the German government continuously expressed specific demands before elections and took explicit stances afterwards.

For the U.S., elections and electoral observation proved a much more important topic. This not only concerns bilateral or multilateral observation missions but also the use of tools that go beyond mere observation, namely diplomatic statements on elections and democracy assistance (capacity building) that supports local electoral observation by both state agencies and civil-society groups. In some cases, U.S. diplomatic statements and/or U.S. foreign assistance actively intervened in electoral processes – in favor of or against a particular candidate. This could be observed in Bolivia's 2002 elections (against the presidential candidate Evo Morales) and in the run-up to Pakistan's 2008 elections (in favor of a deal between President Pervez Musharraf and Benazir Bhutto).

*Foreign Aid*: In terms of democracy assistance, the portfolios differ less between the U.S. and Germany than between different types of recipient countries. In the case of democratic developing countries like Bolivia and Ecuador, democracy assistance is the main part of explicitly democracy-related activities. Even if democracy promotion was never the most important part of either U.S. or German development cooperation in these countries, the latter included programs aimed at building institutional capacities and/or strengthening particular actors (political parties, advocacy groups etc.) and entailed cooperation with both state and non-state partners. On the other side of the spectrum, democracy assistance in relatively rich countries (Russia, Turkey) is largely limited to parastatal organizations like Germany's *Stiftungen* and their U.S. counterparts. The same holds true for Pakistan, poor and non-democratic, but allied during Musharraf's rule after 9/11: Besides parastatal activities, German official development cooperation was rather "apolitical" while, in the U.S. case, some democracy assistance (focused on elections and the legislature) was by far outweighed by actual autocracy assistance, i.e., budget support for the Musharraf regime.

Across our cases, democracy assistance with a clear partisan profile was the exception, only to be observed in the case of U.S. policy towards Belarus. German democracy assistance to Belarus equally emphasized civil society aid and terminated any government-related support early on, but in spite of the confrontational official stance towards the Lukashenko regime did not depart from the preference for broad-based dialogue. A bias towards supporting the opposition (or, at least, counterweights) to the Morales government could also be observed in U.S. foreign assistance to Bolivia, but the U.S. also tried to remain engaged with the government showing some flexibility to adjust to official Bolivian demands.

*Diplomacy*: Democracy and related issues like human rights, the rule of law and good governance are regular topics of bilateral dialogues between donor and recipient governments across our cases.

With a view to public official statements that contain democracy-related appeals, however, there is a notable difference between the German and the U.S. government.

Washington rather consistently refers to political developments and events in recipient countries, regularly assesses the state of democracy and human rights (like the State Department's Human Rights Reports) and articulates specific democracy demands. When looking at the spectrum of U.S. diplomatic statements across the recipient countries, there are however some striking inconsistencies. In the case of Turkey, traditional U.S. relations with the Kemalist elite and skepticism towards pro-Islamic parties led U.S. administrations to react remarkably neutral even in cases of clearly undemocratic moves (attempts to blackmail elected governments or ban "unwanted" political parties). Responding to Musharraf's takeover in Pakistan, the Clinton administration publicly condemned the coup; but later – and, in particular, after 9/11 – U.S. official rhetoric became increasingly cautious and, in fact, pro-Musharraf and returned to "pro-democratic" statements only in the context of escalating domestic protests against Musharraf. With regard to Putin's Russia, an important shift in the official rhetoric was identified: starting with quite favorable statements about Putin's vision for a democratic and free country during the first George W. Bush administration to a much more critical stance in the second and back again under the auspices of the "reset" between Obama and Medvedev. As a rule official U.S. attention to democracy "problems" is rather low once bilateral relations improve (e.g., in the dyads USA/Pakistan and USA/Russia following 9/11) or when U.S. interest in improving relations increases (e.g., in the dyads USA/Bolivia and USA/Ecuador during the second Bush administration or, across the recipient countries, during the Obama administration).

Berlin, in contrast, only occasionally issues public statements about the state of democracy and human rights in the recipient countries. Responding to electoral fraud in Belarus, it was the *Bundestag* in the first place to demand from the German government pushing Lukashenko towards compliance with his commitments in terms of democratic elections. And the government issued increasingly strong statements to that effect, most notably during the conservative-liberal coalition (since 2009). With a view to Turkey, the German government kept silent to the "soft coup" against Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan in 1997 but, in the 2000s, publicly supported both the government of Erdoğan and his AKP against domestic threats. Vis-à-vis Russia, frequent statements by the German government expressing concern about the chaotic democratic transition during the 1990s gave way to increasing silence on (and attempts to circumscribe) Russia's democratic shortcomings. Public criticism as to Russian democracy mainly came from respective opposition parties (no matter political colors). Responding to Musharraf's coup in 1999 and to Musharraf's imposition of emergency rule in late 2007, the German government demanded a return to constitutional order, but for most of the time in-between it remained silent. Only after Musharraf had already resigned, the German government – in its intergovernmental negotiations with Pakistan – emphasized the need to advance with democratization.

*Conditioning international cooperation:* Officially, both Germany and the U.S. condition their cooperation with recipient countries on democracy standards. Indeed, the U.S. reacted swiftly by imposing (or tightening or threatening) sanctions in cases of an open breach with the democratic order (Belarus 1996, Pakistan 1998, Ecuador 2000) or in cases of electoral fraud followed by political repression (Belarus 2006, 2010). But when the toppling of an elected government was seen as serving U.S. "national interests", was driven by U.S. allies and took the shape of a "soft" coup (Turkey 1997), democratic conditions were not enforced. The same applies to Russia where, given a significant U.S. interest in maintaining cooperation with the Russian government, an increasingly critical perception did not provoke any punitive measures as demanded by the U.S. congress. When overwhelming "national interests" called for cooperation with a coup government, as with Musharraf after 9/11, the U.S. quickly suspended its sanctions without requiring any democracy-related concessions. At the same time, U.S. threats of sanctions against Bolivia in 2002 and Bolivia's exclusion from trade preferences in 2008 were driven not by democracy-related considerations but responded to (worries about) the country's denial to cooperate with the U.S., particularly in the area of counternarcotics. Yet Bolivia's suspension from the U.S. MCA was at least justified (if not driven) by a gradual decline in governance indicators.

Germany, as a rule, is much more reluctant to impose democracy-related sanctions. In fact, Belarus is the only case in our sample where Germany applied this “negative” form of democracy promotion. And even here, it is not German sanctions proper but a common policy of the EU with its different drivers. Within the EU, Germany was relatively reluctant to impose sanctions and, most of the time, argued in favor of an approach that tried to engage Lukashenko (exceptions being German reactions to the 1996 referendum and to the 2010 post-electoral repression). In the German relationship with Turkey, the EU accession process establishes a framework of explicit and far-reaching political conditions. Yet, while generally supportive of EU conditionality, the German government (driven by the conservative parties CDU/CSU) has fundamentally threatened this approach by signaling a categorical rejection of Turkey’s EU membership, irrespective of compliance with the EU *acquis communautaire*. Vis-à-vis Pakistan, Germany had already suspended its development cooperation in response to the 1998 nuclear test when Musharraf took power, and it gradually resumed development aid only two years later without posing any democratic conditions.

*Military intervention:* In our cases the use of direct (physical) violence only showed up in a few instances and always in cooperation with (or at least tolerated by) respective recipient governments. This basically concerns military and paramilitary U.S. activities in Pakistan (related to the “War on Terror”) and in Bolivia and Ecuador (related to the “War on Drugs”). These U.S. measures are clearly not driven by the aim to promote democracy in respective countries, but they do have democracy-related implications: directly, as they imply military support to the political regime in place, whether democratic or not; indirectly, because U.S. (para-) military activities can either contribute to escalating violent conflict or to bringing about peace and stability which is obviously important for the future of democracy in respective countries.

### 5.2 How Are These Differences To Be Explained?

As we have outlined above, the national patterns of democracy promotion clearly differ between the U.S. and Germany. This by and large confirms previous findings (Schraeder 2003: 33-38; Spanger and Wolff 2007: 280-4). However, as seen, the difference does not develop along the lines of our ideal types according to which the U.S. would behave like a Freedom Fighter and Germany like a Civilian Power. Rather U.S. democracy promotion draws on both Freedom Fighter-type and Civilian Power-type activities, while Germany sticks to the latter.

The close correspondence between German policies and the Civilian Power conception of democracy promotion can be explained by a coherent configuration of normative disposition, donor interests and specific requirements of the institutional setup of German democracy assistance. The Civilian Power’s logic of appropriateness corresponds closely to the overall profile of German donor interests, by and large in line with the “trading state” (Rosecrance 1986). It furthermore corresponds to the heterogeneity of partisan actors engaged in German democracy assistance which can best be accommodated by a democracy promotion strategy that is broad, oriented at dialogue and not too streamlined politically. And it is in line with Germany’s own history which clearly defies posturing as a democracy lecturer. The U.S., by contrast, does have the option to apply a Freedom Fighter strategy because the U.S. conception of democracy promotion does provide for an active and assertive approach and because the political heterogeneity of the democracy assistance agencies is much less pronounced and their embeddedness in an overall foreign-policy frame is higher.<sup>28</sup> Yet, U.S. policies regularly deviate from the Freedom Fighter type because U.S. interests quite often point into the opposite direction. In addition, our case studies suggest that the normative and conceptual premises of the Civilian Power fit much better the complex challenges posed by countries in which the dilemmas inherent to democratization come to the fore (see 2.). Successfully applying the linear and dichotomous conception of the Freedom Fighter, by contrast, requires rather specific conditions in the recipient country.

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28 This is, of course, a comparative statement: in terms of political orientation, NDI and IRI are much more similar than Germany’s political foundations; and USAID is much more politically in line with the State Department than GTZ and BMZ are with the German Foreign Office.



While German policies correspond to the conception of democracy promotion we label Civilian Power, it is important to note that both our theoretical concept and German practice deviate from the concept as developed by Hanns Maull and colleagues. In the literature on Germany as a Civilian Power, these authors conceive the promotion of “good governance” and “processes of democratization” (Kirste and Maull 1996: 302), or of “democracy and human rights” (Maull 2001: 125), as constituent parts of a Civilian Power, but this claim remains underspecified. On closer look, the general Civilian Power preference for democracy and human rights translates into a concrete commitment to democracy promotion only with significant modifications. Civilian Powers – according to the general normative expectation formulated by Maull et al. – are skeptical about the unilateral export of models, are characterized by a “culture of restraint”, and rely on international norms and on the “civilizing” of world politics through cooperative integration. This has repercussions for promoting democracy as it rules out to openly reject the sovereignty claims of other states in the name of democracy, impose democratic conditions and block the cooperative integration of autocracies (Poppe et al. *forthcoming*). Consequently, the German practice of democracy promotion proves much more nuanced and even ambiguous than the undifferentiated conclusion that Germany, as a Civilian Power, should be expected to give a central value to democracy and human rights would lead us to expect.

The heterogeneity of actors involved in promoting democracy has led Peter Burnell to caution against the attempt to identify and explain national patterns of democracy promotion: “the number and range of *dramatis personae* [...], the diversity of organizational forms, approaches and principal concerns” does render it difficult “to depict the real agenda behind international democracy promotion” and makes the idea that there could be a “valid and comprehensive general theory” of external democracy promotion questionable (Burnell 2000: 34). Our case studies certainly confirm the diversity, but in the comparative analysis we could identify overall patterns that characterize German and U.S. democracy promotion as well as general factors that shape these patterns. The quasi-governmental organizations like the German political foundations or the U.S. party institutes are part of these national patterns. Their *raison d'être* within the overall division of labor, in fact, makes them an important instrument of foreign policy. In the U.S. case, NDI and IRI, for example, assume the task of strengthening specific political forces – something USAID or the U.S. Embassy cannot do. In the German case, the political pluralism of the *Stiftungen* together with their focus on dialogue and long-term evolution perfectly fits the Civilian Power approach to democracy promotion. And their affiliation with political parties, not governments, ensures that elections and changes in the composition of donor governments do not significantly affect these national patterns of democracy promotion.

## 6. Conclusion

The comparative analysis presented here indicates that democracy promotion can neither be understood as simply norm-guided nor as purely interest-driven. As the notion of *alternatively conditioned double standards* highlights, we observe reflexive policies of democracy promotion – reflexive in the sense that democracy promotion policies reflect interests that drive policies, normative dispositions and power relations that constrain and enable, as well as specific conditions in the recipient country which define the normatively appropriate and the pragmatically possible. When appreciating this reflexivity, we can account for the fact that donor policies across our cases are regularly either too cooperative or too democracy-oriented when seen from a rationalist perspective, and either too confrontational or too cautious when seen from an idealist view. For instance, in U.S. policies towards Bolivia, Ecuador and Turkey, “national interests” would have suggested much less cooperation with the incumbent governments, while U.S. respect for democratic self-determination has been more ambiguous than normatively appropriate. German policies towards Turkey and Russia as well as U.S. policies towards Russia have been more democracy-oriented than purely rationalist interest calculation would appreciate, but much too cautious in terms of an idealistic perspective on democracy norms. The notion of *alternatively conditioned double standards*,



by grasping the differentiated impact of and the interplay between interests, norms and context conditions, helps understand these complex realities of democracy promotion: the particularly ambiguous U.S. policies towards Bolivia, Ecuador and Turkey; the unusually consistent pattern of democracy promotion in the cases U.S./Belarus, Germany/Belarus, Germany/Bolivia and Germany/Ecuador); the low-profile of democracy promotion in the dyads U.S./Russia, Germany/Russia and Germany/Turkey; and the virtual non-existence of any democracy promotion in U.S. and German policies towards Pakistan.

At the present stage, we could only outline the broad dynamics of such reflexive policies of democracy promotion. More theoretical and empirical work is needed to conceptualize and study the articulation of interests and norms and domestic and international power relations in the international politics of democracy promotion. As a first step in this direction, the two ideal-type conceptions presented in this paper (Freedom Fighter and Civilian Power) proved useful not only as heuristic devices to grasp different normative dispositions vis-à-vis democracy promotion, but also helpful in identifying the interplay between norms, interests and context conditions: the close and harmonious interrelation between the Civilian Power's normative disposition, dominant "national interests", institutional characteristics of the donor and prevalent conditions in the recipient countries in the case of Germany; and the frequent clash between norms attributed to the Freedom Fighter, "national interests" and unsuitable conditions in the recipient countries in the U.S. case.

While we observe democracy promotion to be *de facto* reflexive in the ways outlined above, there is no evidence that donors consciously reflect on this *problematique*: in none of our cases did we find attempts by the donors to deliberate the complex interplay of aims and conditions in any organized pattern. A general practical implication of the study is, in this sense, the need for democracy promoters to systematically include the problem of extrinsic and intrinsic conflicting objectives into their strategies. This includes the necessity of consciously reflecting on the conceptual and material underpinnings as well as on the ambivalences and limits of international democracy promotion.

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