Democracy Promotion & Civilian Power

The example of Germany’s “value-oriented” foreign policy

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1. Introduction

The foreign policy of states is shaped by a series of most different factors (cf. Hudson 2007; Müller/Risse-Kappen 1993; Rittberger 2001; Smith et al. 2008). According to an extensive scholarship generally based on some kind of constructivist reasoning, the particular sociocultural domestic context is one crucial determinant, whether it is conceptualized in terms of national role conceptions (Holsti 1970; Kirste/Maull 1996), national identities (Joerißen/Stahl 2003; Katzenstein 1996, 2003), or, more general, political culture (Duffield 1999; Hudson 2007: 103-123; Müller 2007). When it comes to Germany, the concept of "civilian power", devised by Hanns W. Maull, is the most prominent attempt to grasp the specific features that characterize German foreign policy culture (cf. Harnisch/Maull 2001a; Kirste/Maull 1996; Maull 1990). From this perspective, German foreign policy aims at actively “civilising” international relations by trying “to replace the military enforcement of rules (politics based on power) with the internationalization of socially accepted norms (politics based on legitimacy)” (Harnisch/Maull 2001b: 3-4; cf. Kirste/Maull 1996: 300-301; Tewes 2002: 33-50).

Whether applying the specific concept of Civilian Power or not, other scholars working on German foreign and security policies have largely confirmed the general argument (cf. Becker et al. 2008: 834-839; Duffield 1999; Geis 2011; Geis et al. 2010: 190-194; Katzenstein 1997, 2003; Risse 2004; Rittberger 2001; Tewes 2002; Webber 2001). Although the evolution of German foreign policy since 1990 in general – and German participation in the Kosovo War in 1999 in particular – provoked a debate on whether Germany was gradually abandoning its “civilian” foreign policy culture (cf. Geis 2008; Harnisch/Maull 2001a; Webber 2001), most observers see “‘modified continuity’ rather than fundamental change” (Harnisch/Maull 2001b: 2). Some crucial changes with regard to foreign policy means (like the use of military force) coexist with a basic continuity in Germany’s foreign policy aims (Risse 2004). Both

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1 This paper presents results of the research project “Determinants of democratic states’ handling of conflicting objectives in democracy promotion” jointly conducted by PRIF and Goethe University Frankfurt, and supported by the German Research Foundation (DFG). It draws on a content analysis of German (and US) policy documents conducted by Annika E. Poppe and analyzed by Bentje Woitschach (cf. Poppe et al. 2011). I thank Cemal Karakas, Hans-Joachim Spanger and Bentje Woitschach for helpful comments.

2 See also Becker et al. (2008), Geis et al. (2010), Harnisch/Maull (2001), and Rittberger (2001). The shared perspective of these approaches is one of an actor-centered or societal constructivism as distinguished from institutionalist or transnational constructivism (Harnisch 2003: 329-340; Boekle et al. 2001: 115-123). Whereas the former “stresses the dependence of foreign policy behavior on the norms which are shared within society”, the latter “assumes that foreign policy behavior of states is first of all shaped by the characteristics of their international environment” (Boekle et al. 2001: 121, 116; cf. Harnisch 2003: 340).

3 “Whereas [Maull’s concept of a Civilian Power] was largely prescriptive in its original form, it later became more narrowly focused on foreign policy analysis, working the concepts of foreign policy culture and role theory […]. Equally, whereas Maull at first proposed the Civilian Power approach as an argument about the distinctiveness of Germany and Japan, he later conceded that other states also have the potential to act like Civilian Powers.” (Tewes 2002: 9)
continuity and change in German foreign policy, according to the mainstream view, do not point to a departure from but adjustments within the basic culture of a Civilian Power (cf. Maull 2001).

Broad consensus has it that, since the end of the Cold War, democracy promotion has become an important aim and strategy of the foreign and development policies of most democratic states, including Germany (cf. Burnell 2000; Schraeder 2003; Spanger/Wolff 2007; Youngs 2004). Yet, up to now, democracy promotion scholarship has largely focused on the United States and the European Union. There is, therefore, limited work on the German approach to democracy promotion (if there is a specific one). Likewise, the literature on (Germany as a) Civilian Power has hardly dealt with democracy promotion. The present paper wants to contribute to filling this gap by doing four things: In a first conceptual step, I try to locate democracy promotion as a foreign-policy aim and instrument in the concept of Civilian Power. Second, I will summarize the fragmented state of the art on German democracy promotion in order to see whether empirical observations confirm theoretical expectations. Third, results of a qualitative content analysis are presented in order to reconstruct the main features of the official outline of German democracy promotion. Fourth, these programmatic findings are confronted with a brief comparative view on the practice of German democracy promotion towards three different cases, namely Bolivia, Turkey and Russia.

2. “Civilian” democracy promotion: Conceptual issues and ambivalent expectations

In the academic writings on Civilian Power, references to values, norms and rights abound. Yet, the proper place and shape of democracy promotion – understood as all those measures taken by an external actor that are explicitly “aimed at establishing, strengthening, or defending democracy in a given country” (Azpuru et al. 2008: 151) – in the foreign (and development) policies of an ideal-type Civilian Power is far from clear-cut. According to Kirste and Maull (1996: 302), Civilian Powers do not rule out “the meddling in the internal affairs of other states”, and the promotion of good governance and democratization is even considered an “avowed aim” (Kirste/Maull 1996: 302). Democracy promotion is, however, not part of a Civilian Power’s guiding principles. The latter include, in particular, constraining

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4 In a general sense (and with a view to different subtopics), this observation is confirmed by Harnisch/Maull (2001a), most contributors to Webber (2001), Geis (2011; cf. Geis et al. 2010), Katzenstein (2003), Leithner (2009), Risse (2004), and Tewes (2002). Even Baumann and Hellmann – who emphasize Germany’s new “readiness to participate in military interventions” – conclude that their analysis “should not be interpreted in the sense that Germany is shedding all its ‘civilian’ traditions. What we are saying is rather that the German self-image of being a ‘civilian power’ different from other more ‘traditional’ Western powers is misleading. What is more, these ‘civilian’ inclinations may lead to military interventions which more ‘hard-nosed’ calculations of ‘national interests’ would refuse.” (Baumann/Hellmann 2001: 79)
the use of force in handling political conflicts; strengthening international law, international norms and international regimes; intensifying multilateral cooperation with inclusive participation and a partial transfer of sovereignty; and promoting social justice at the global level (Kirst/Maull 1996: 300-301; cf. Maull 1990: 92-93). The problem, now, is that democracy promotion is not just an additional aim which can be considered as complimentary (if secondary) to the guiding principles mentioned. In a world that is not only made up of democracies, an active “meddling in the internal affairs of other states” in order to promote the democratization of non-democratic regimes clashes both with the respect for the norm of collective self-determination and sovereignty, and with the aim to establish mutual trust and maintaining international peace by cooperating with all real-existing states in an inclusive international order (Wolff/Wurm 2011: 81). To the extent that there is a “tension inherent in the Civilian Power concept, pertaining to the question of whether the pursuit of peace or the defence of democratic rights should take priority” (Tewes 2002: 12), there can be not much doubt that a Civilian Power should be expected to privilege the former. This is not to say that a Civilian Power will not promote democracy but, given the priorities assumed by the literature (cf. Kirste/Maull 1996: 301-303; Harnisch/Maull 2001b: 3-5), it will be only reluctantly do so and focus on accompanying ongoing processes of democratization, establishing positive incentives, and relying on collective, multilateral means. The prime interest is in using international cooperation as a means of civilizing world politics which implies both the inclusion of non-democratic regimes and the rejection of unilateral action. A Civilian Power’s “value-oriented foreign policy” (Kirste/Maull 1996: 302) will less focus on explicitly promoting democracy as a particular (and contested) type of political rule but more on supporting human rights in a rather broad notion of “universal values” (Pfeil 2001: 88; cf. Kirste/Maull 1996: 302).

In a recent piece, Carothers (2009: 5) has identified “two distinct overall approaches to assisting democracy: the political approach and the development approach”. While the former is characterized by “a relatively narrow conception of democracy – focused, above all, on elections and political liberties – and a view of democratization as a process of political struggle in which democrats work to gain the upper hand in society over nondemocrats” and, correspondingly, “directs aid at core political processes and institutions […] often at important conjunctural moments and with the hope of catalytic effects”, the developmental approach quite nicely fits the expectations for a Civilian Power: It “rests on a broader notion of public action, as a form of ‘intervention from above’ in the social domain” (Carothers 2009: 5).

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5 Harnisch and Maull (2001b: 4) mention “Promotion of participatory forms of decision-making both within and between states (democratic participation)” as one of the “six intertwined objectives” of a Civilian Power (cf. Maull 2001: 125).
of democracy, one that encompasses concerns about equality and justice and the concept of democratization as a low, iterative process of change involving an interrelated set of political and socioeconomic developments” while favoring “democracy aid that pursues incremental, long-term change in a wide range of political and socioeconomic sectors, frequently emphasizing governance and the building of a well-functioning state” (Carothers 2009: 5). A broad notion of democracy fits much better with human rights as established at the international level (which are not narrowly defined in liberal terms, but include civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights). A gradual, evolutionary and complex conception of democratization corresponds to the whole notion of “civilizing” international relations which draws on Norbert Elias’ sociological analysis of the civilizing process – the century-long, non-linear process of pacifying European societies (Kirste/Maull 1996: 297-298).

In this sense, an ideal-type conception of democracy promotion by a Civilian Power could be characterized by the following four features: It would (1) be based on a rather abstract and broad notion of universal values and rights; (2) conceive of democratization as a long-term, evolutionary process of complex transformation; (3) privilege pragmatic strategies of (institutional) cooperation and inclusion; and (4) be relatively reluctant to openly meddle in other states’ affairs and infringe on their rights to sovereignty and self-determination (cf. Spanger/Wolff 2007: 277-280; Poppe et al. 2011).

3. German democracy promotion: The fragmented state of the art

In line with the Civilian Power concept, German governments regularly characterize their foreign (and development) policies as “value-oriented”. It is, however, usually not very clear to what extent – and in which particular ways – this value-orientation includes an explicit focus on democracy promotion.

In general, Germany has been portrayed as a reluctant – late-coming and selective – democracy promoter (cf. Betz 1996; Pfeil 2001; Rüland/Werz 2002). Before 1990, German democracy promotion was mainly the business of the political party foundations (Pinto-Duschinsky 1991; Mair 2000). Development aid, at that time “pursued a rather apolitical, technical approach” and, on the macro level, aimed “at keeping developing countries in the western camp” (Mair 2000: 132; cf. Betz 1996: 203). Likewise, “human rights rhetoric in

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6 In his contribution, Carothers argues that the two approaches to democracy promotion cannot be simply read as representing the (political) US and the (developmental) European approach: There is just too much institutional heterogeneity on both sides of the Atlantic, and one can find elements of both approaches on either sides (Carothers 2009: 12-13). Yet, Carothers’ brief comparison does point to a relative predominance of the political approach in US, and of the developmental approach in European democracy promotion policies (Carothers 2009: 14-16, 16-18; see also Youngs 2004: 31-37). For the competing thesis of a convergence of US and European approaches to democracy promotion see, e.g., Magen et al. (2009).
German foreign policy was mainly used as an instrument in the ideological conflict with the Soviet Union and the GDR” (Pfeil 2001: 88). It was the “third wave of democratization” (Huntington 1991) and, in particular, the end of the Cold War that “changed the parameters of Germany’s approach to democracy promotion” (Rüland/Werz 2002: 78). Since 1990, German governments have increasingly emphasized human rights as an important guideline for their foreign and development policies. In 1991, the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development introduced political conditionalities related to human rights, the rule of law and political participation. These conditions, however, were rather soft criteria for evaluating partner countries than hard preconditions (cf. Betz 1996: 204; Pfeil 2001: 89; Rüland/Werz 2002: 78). The Foreign Office, in 1992, created a democracy promotion facility which focused on funding election observer missions (Rüland/Werz 2002: 81). In the course of the 1990s, the GTZ – the agency (now GIZ) implementing German Technical Cooperation – adopted an increasingly political democracy and governance assistance as part of German development cooperation (Erdmann 1996: 139). More than other “donors”, the German government has been emphasizing that democratization “should not be limited to holding more or less free elections” but requires broader attention to human rights, the *Rechtsstaat* (rule of law) and civil society (Betz 1996: 204). As the Civilian Power approach would expect, discourse and practice of German democracy promotion in the 1990s are described as rather reluctant as to the political meddling in internal affairs of other states: German democracy assistance activities have been focusing on good governance, the rule of law, decentralization and administration; the Foreign Office, if it considered democracy promotion at all, viewed it as part of its broader human rights policies (cf. Betz 1996: 215; Rüland/Werz 2002: 86; Lerch 2007: 9; Youngs 2006: 113-114). In 1996, Gero Erdmann (1996: 136) concluded that the Development Ministry preferred to talk about human rights and not democracy promotion, while the Foreign Office largely limited democracy promotion to selective activities of technical electoral support (cf. Erdmann 1996: 134-135; Pfeil 2001: 90). In official rhetoric both the Foreign Office and the Development Ministry emphasized that they were guided – in line with United Nations’ norms – by a broad notion of human rights comprising both the civil-political and the social, economic and cultural rights, even if with an implicit preference for the former (Pfeil 2001: 89-90; cf. Youngs 2006: 111).

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7 “On the part of the [German] government, the importance of the rule of law and governance is emphasized; democracy in the sense of pushing for political competition guaranteed by state regulations is, in contrast, not mentioned at all.” (Pospisil 2009: 248) Drawing on an analysis of official documents on German development aid, Pospisil (2009: 269) concludes that democracy, in the end, “turns into a vague general goal that, first, has to take a second place to a dense, functioning, socially rooted constitutional state *[Rechtsstaat]*”.
This reluctance vis-à-vis an openly political approach to promoting democracy is well in line with the expectations for a Civilian Power. The same holds true for the German focus on positive capacity-building activities, i.e. on democracy assistance (Betz 1996: 208). In terms of political conditionalities, Germany has been prioritizing a rather “soft conditionality” while preferring dialogue, incentives and long-term strategies of taking influence; coercive measures have been (and are) the exception (Lerch 2007: 9; Rüland/Werz 2002: 86; Youngs 2006: 111). Negative sanctions as a means to promote (or protect) democracy were – and are – used only “very selectively, occasionally half-heartedly, inconsistently, and situationally” (Betz 1996: 208; cf. Lerch 2007: 9; Youngs 2006: 111). This cautious and selective use of sanctions has traditionally been justified by an evolutionary, modernization-theory argument:

The support for economic growth and reforms – e.g., in China – was supposed to lead to political reforms in the middle to long run (Betz 1996: 207; cf. Rüland/Werz 2002: 73f, 76). According to Lapins (2007: 5), German democracy promotion is “long-term in conception”, “not missionary” but “as a policy of the good example”. The Foreign Office, in particular, prefers indirect measures, above all to avoid confrontation and the charge of interfering in other states’ internal affairs (Rüland/Werz 2002: 80; cf. Lerch 2007: 11). During the Red-Green coalition (1998-2005), Foreign Minister Fischer even intended “to transfer the promotion of values such as democracy, human rights, openness, and critical tolerance into the realm of cultural cooperation” (Rüland/Werz 2002: 79). Well in line with the ambivalent expectations outlined above (2.), German human rights policy was far more consistent in strengthening international human rights norms within the United Nations than in terms of reacting to human rights violations in other countries (Pfeil 2001; cf. Boekle 2001). Nicely summarizing German preferences, the coalition agreement between Christian Democrats and Social Democrats in 2005 highlighted “[b]ilateral dialogues about the rule of law [Rechtsstaatsdialoge], measures to strengthen civil society, and democracy promotion in the multilateral framework“ (quoted in Lapins 2007: 21). The role of the German political foundations – that are still important actors in implementing German democracy assistance – adds to this because their work has traditionally aimed at promoting dialogue, education and

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8 This reluctance can be read as extending the logic of the “culture of restraint” that had evolved in post-Second World War Germany “in light of the disastrous consequences of German militarism during the Nazi period” (Baumann/Hellmann 2001: 62). With a view to democracy promotion, it is reinforced by Germany’s own experience with (the failure of) democracy and democratization.

9 Rüland and Werz (2002: 74) observe “a belief within the German policymaking establishment that economic growth fueled by foreign trade and investment serves as the most important precondition for the emergence of Western-style political democracies in the developing world”.

10 “Overall, German democracy promotion policies have been piecemeal and indirect in nature, lacking in financial commitment, and often reluctantly imposed without clear direction.” (Rüland/Werz 2002: 87)

These features characterizing German democracy promotion since 1990 correspond not only to the culturally embedded profile of a Civilian Power, but also to the material interests of a heavily export-oriented middle power (Spanger/Wolff 2007: 284; cf. Rüland/Werz 2002).\textsuperscript{11} Germany’s cautious approach to democracy promotion quite obviously responds to economic considerations related to German trade and investment; political pressure and economic sanctions are regularly rejected when – as with China and Russia – such economic interests are threatened (cf. Betz 1996: 205, 207-208; Lerch 2007: 11; Pfeil 2001: 95-97; Rüland/Werz 2002: 73-74; Schrade 1997). In this sense, to the extent that the German conception of democracy promotion corresponds to the notion of a Civilian Power, this does not mean that Germany’s political culture does prevail over tangible “national interests”. At least with a view to the general pattern of German democracy promotion, cultural predispositions and hegemonic discourses, on the one hand, and material interests, on the other, seem to reinforce each other. In specific situations, however, both may clash – and case studies, here, will have to show the extent to which “culture” shapes policies even when in conflict with perceived tangible interests (see below, 5.).

4. German democracy promotion in official rhetoric: Results of a content analysis

The content analysis presented here systematically screened a selection of 20 primary sources (documents and speeches issued by the German government) dealing both with the general guidelines of German foreign, defense and development policy and with German democracy promotion policies in particular.\textsuperscript{12} The aim was to see whether the German conception of democracy promotion as outlined in official rhetoric confirms the four specific expectations for the democracy promotion profile of a Civilian Power (see 2.): (1) a rather abstract and broad notion of universal values and rights; (2) a long-term, evolutionary understanding of democratization; (3) a preference for pragmatic strategies of (institutional) cooperation and inclusion; and (4) reluctance as to open interferences into other states’ affairs and respect for their rights to sovereignty and self-determination.

\textsuperscript{11} “The newly unified Germany, however, has not been an avid proponent of the political dimensions of democracy promotion in the developing world, preferring instead to pursue an approach that underscores the overriding importance of securing economic self-interest relative to other foreign policy goals.” (Rüland/Werz 2002: 73-74; cf. Schraeder 2003: 35, Tab. 1).

\textsuperscript{12} The primary sources include speeches and documents from all German governments since 1990 (until 2009) and the four principal actors shaping foreign policy (Chancellory, Foreign Office, Defense Ministry, Development Ministry). The original content analysis – and the research project it is part of – compared Germany and the US. Here, just the German part is presented, and references to the US are only made selectively in order to highlight the specific features of the German rhetoric on democracy promotion.
The results show that in German documents, in fact, references to rather abstract and broad universal values and rights predominate. 13 passages in the text were coded accordingly (representing 7% of all codes). Examples include references to “human dignity” (BMVg 1994: 41; Merkel 2007), “the democratic values and basic principles” (BMZ 2005: 5) or human rights in general (BMZ 1998; Kinkel 1996; Spranger 1998). The Development Ministry (BMZ 2005: 6) explicitly emphasizes that Germany does “not promote a particular form of democracy”, “but the implementation of democratic and rule-of-law principles”. Only two references were coded as declaring the universality of democracy. In one instance, the BMZ (2005: 5) quotes then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan who called democracy a “universal right” – but the Ministry refrains from explicitly embracing this notion. Just as expectations for a Civilian Power would have it, the German government, thus, does not unilaterally proclaim a universal right to democracy but takes international norms – as represented by the UN Secretary-General – as the point of departure for conceiving its democracy promotion agenda. In the second text passage coded, the Defense Ministry emphasizes freedom, law and human dignity as the universally binding core of human rights (BMVg 1994: 41). This combination of concepts can be interpreted as an indirect, if substantial reference to democracy. Yet again, it is notable that democracy as such is not mentioned.13

Generally, German rhetoric is characterized by a close connection between democracy and the Rechtsstaat (rule of law) which are often mentioned together (cf. AA 2000: 5; BMZ 2008: 137; Fischer 2004; Kinkel 1996; Wieczorek-Zeul 2005).14 The normative principles that are mentioned as guiding German foreign policy include democratic values and human dignity as well broadly understood (political, civil, economic, social and cultural) human rights – frequently with a reference to internationally codified norms (cf. AA 2000: 5; BMZ 2005: 15; Kinkel 1996; Schröder 2002; Spranger 1998; Wieczorek-Zeul 2005).

In terms of the conception of democratization, the German documents include not a single reference to short-term transitions to democracy, revolutionary processes of change, or “democratic breakthroughs”.15 Democratization is consistently characterized as a long-term process of gradual change that has to grow from within the respective society. According to

13 In contrast, the analysis of US documents found much more explicit references to the universality of democracy than to abstract universal rights and values (Poppe et al. 2011).
14 At times, the dimension of the rule of law even takes priority over democracy: Foreign Minister Steinmeier, for example, argued that Germany – because of its particular historical experience and in contrast to the US – prefers a process “that leads from the establishment of the rule of law (rechtsstaatliche Strukturen) to democratization” (quoted in Lapins 2007: 16).
15 In contrast, USAID’s Democracy and Governance Strategic Framework systematically includes “democratic breakthroughs” – “dramatic openings for democratization” like “peaceful revolutions” – as crucial steps that make a “democratic transition” possible (USAID 2005: 12).
the BMZ (1998: 28), democratization encompasses “long-term structural changes that establish better preconditions so that projects and reforms in traditional sectors are viable and sustainable”. These are “protracted processes” where setbacks are always possible (BMZ 2005: 5; cf. BMZ 2008: 139; Wieczorek-Zeul 2003). Explicitly turning away from the Transition Paradigm (Carothers 2002), the Development Ministry’s democracy promotion strategy does not mention the transition to democracy as a relevant phase of democratization (or a noteworthy aim of democracy promotion), but speaks about “hybrid” regimes (BMZ 2005: 11-12).\textsuperscript{16}

(3) The preference for cooperation and inclusion (instead of confrontation and exclusion) was analyzed with a view to the stance towards non-democratic actors. In comparison to US rhetoric, German documents relatively rarely characterize non-democratic countries or groups as “enemies” and comparatively rarely argue in favor of their exclusion or marginalization.\textsuperscript{17} Still, it is surprising that Germany advocates “exclusion” more frequently than “inclusion”. This, however, is almost entirely due to references to terrorism (cf. BMVg 2003: 20, 2006: 16; Schröder 2002).\textsuperscript{18} When dealing with terrorists, Germany does adopt a non-inclusionary approach. In and of itself, this is not a contrast to the Civilian Power approach. As Peter Katzenstein (2003) has demonstrated, the German approach to counterterrorism is about actively combating global terrorism but sees this largely as a fight against crime – not as a war as the US would have it.

If text passages related to terrorism are taken out, inclusion is clearly the predominant strategy. Exclusion is at best the very last option (cf. Spranger 1998). Confronted with “countries in which the government impedes or hinders the democratic will-formation by taking arbitrary measures (violating human rights, freedom of opinion etc.)”, the Development Ministry provides for a policy dialogue in order to push the corresponding government “to open or broaden the room for a socio-political reform discussion” (BMZ 1998: 29-30). As long as authoritarian “partner governments” refuse to liberalize politically, official German democracy promotion as implemented by the government is to be narrowed down to indirect measures: It “takes the existing order [in the partner country] as a starting

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\textsuperscript{16} The paper does mention “transition countries” (Übergangsländer) but emphasizes that these regularly “remain stuck in transitional structures” (BMZ 2005: 21-22, 8). The transition (from authoritarian rule and/or towards democracy) as a particular, rather short-term process of political change is not mentioned at all.

\textsuperscript{17} The relative frequencies of the categories “characterization as enemy” and “exclusion” are 11.2% (US) vs. 3.85% (Germany) and 9.05% (US) vs. 3.3% (Germany).

\textsuperscript{18} The relative frequencies of the two categories are 3.3% (exclusion) and 2.2% (inclusion). If references to terrorism are taken out, “inclusion” (2.2%) outweighs “exclusion” (1.65%). A notable exception includes the following remarks by Development Minister Wieczorek-Zeul who called for telling “those that still oppress their people, disregard freedom and human rights, and only pursue their own advancement, like Mugabe in Zimbabwe”: “You will fall too; your people will gain freedom too. We work for the pursuit of this aim.” (Bundesregierung 2009: 8)
point and, for the time being, accepts the given correlations of power”; it is to work with a “long-term” orientation aiming at a “improvements in governance and administration”, a “professionalization of the political system and the rule of law” (BMZ 2005: 18-19). The politically sensitive and potentially confrontational direct support for processes of political reform and liberalization is, under such conditions, “first and foremost the business of non-state actors” (BMZ 2005: 19; cf. BMZ 2008: 139). In general, the official principles guiding German democracy promotion – “dialogue”, “long-term commitment” and “mutual trust” based “on shared value orientations” – are entirely focused on cooperation (BMZ 2005: 10).

(4) The German reluctance to openly speak democracy promotion – noted in Section 3 – is confirmed by the general observation that relatively few codable text passages were found in the documents. The whole topic – democracy, democratization, democracy promotion – seems to be far less present in German official rhetoric than, e.g., in the US case. More specifically, a frequency analysis for the use of the terms “freedom/liberty”, “democracy” and “rule of law” (Rechtsstaat) revealed that the US governments mention “freedom/liberty” three times as much as German governments, “democracy” twice as much, and “rule of law” almost equally. Correspondingly, German documents frequently avoid talking about democracy (promotion) as an aim by relying on indirect references that somehow imply democracy (cf. BMVg 1994: 41; BMZ 2005: 5-6; Merkel 2007; Steinmeier 2008). If democracy (promotion) is explicitly mentioned, it is usually seen as situated in a broader context of societal development and part of a general development agenda (cf. BMZ 2005: 6; Kinkel 1996). Conceptual vagueness is further aggravated as documents frequently refer to series of not really delineated principles and aims: “freedom”, “law” and “human dignity” (BMVg 1994: 41) or “empowerment, participation and non-discrimination as well as transparency and accountability” (BMZ 2005: 6). Typical for Germany’s cautious approach to democracy promotion is that not only “direct” but also “indirect” strategies are included in the democracy promotion strategy. Such indirect democracy promotion aims at contributing to the “output legitimisation” or the “performance” of the state (BMZ 2005: 17) and is seen as particularly appropriate when dealing with authoritarian states that refuse to liberalize (BMZ 2005: 18-19).

Finally, the literature review in Section 3 suggested that Germany since 1990 has adopted – if reluctantly so – an increasingly explicit stance towards democracy promotion with more and

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19 For the same amount (20) of documents, in the US case 478 democracy-promotion-related text passages were coded, as compared to 109 in the German case.

20 Because US documents, on the average, contain more words, frequencies are reported as percentages of total words. The shares are 0.3% (USA) vs. 0.1% (Germany) for “freedom/liberty” (Freiheit), 0.44% vs. 0.24% for “democracy” (Demokratie), and 0.07% vs. 0.06% for “rule of law” (Rechtsstaat).
more ministries, agencies, instruments and resources being somehow geared to this aim.\textsuperscript{21} The content analysis provides some statistical evidence for such a gradual change in time, i.e. a rhetoric that increasingly refers to the active promotion of democracy. When comparing the distribution of codes in the documents with the average distribution in US documents, the rhetoric of the Kohl government (coalition between Christian Democrats and Liberals, until 1998) clearly differs from the US profile, while correlations between the US average and the governments led by Gerhard Schröder (coalition between Social Democrats and Greens, 1998-2005) and Angela Merkel (coalition between Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, 2005-2009) are positive, significant and increase over time.\textsuperscript{22}

5. German democracy promotion in practice: Three case studies

If the profile of German foreign policy – in general and with a particular view to democracy promotion – largely complies with the model of a Civilian Power, then the corresponding normative dispositions should shape German policies towards most different countries. Without claiming to really test this proposition, this section assesses its plausibility by briefly reviewing the (preliminary) results of three case studies on German democracy promotion policies: towards Bolivia, Turkey, and Russia.\textsuperscript{23}

In all three countries, German (and, in general, “North-Western”) democracy promotion policies recently had to deal with crucial challenges. In Bolivia, the 2005 election of Evo Morales as the first indigenous president of the country led to the dismantling of the democratic institutions that had been established in the 1980s and 1990s – and that were previously supported by Germany (and, in fact, regarded as highly successful). The new constitution pushed by Morales, while still basically democratic, at least partially deviates from German conceptions of liberal democracy, the rule of law and market economy. The same holds true for the changes in economic policies (including “nationalizations”) promoted by President Morales which, in one case, directly hurt the interests of a German company (cf. Wolff 2010, 2011a). In Turkey, it is the rise of political Islam that has posed challenges to German policies. On the one hand, the political success of pro-Islamic or outright Islamist political parties in Turkey presented not only a direct threat to the Kemalist elite (and,

\textsuperscript{21} E.g., Richard Youngs notes that “The German development ministry’s funding for Democracy, Civil Society, and Public Administration, meanwhile, increased from €180 million (6.2 percent of bilateral ODA) in 2000 to €410 million (9 percent) in 2006.” (Youngs 2008: 161)

\textsuperscript{22} The coefficient of correlation (Pearson’s r) with the US average is not significant with r=0.28 for the German subgroup “Kohl”, but highly significant (p<.001) for the subgroups “Schröder” (r=0.58) and “Merkel” (r=0.64).

\textsuperscript{23} The general research project this paper draws on includes case studies on two “donors” – the US and Germany – and six “recipient countries” – Bolivia and Ecuador, Pakistan and Turkey, and Belarus and Russia. The study on Turkey is conducted by Cemal Karakas (cf. Karakas 2010), Russia is analyzed by Hans-Joachim Spanger (cf. Spanger 2001, 2005). On the Bolivia case studies see Wolff (2010, 2011a, b).
therefore, the stability of the Turkish state), but was also perceived (in Germany) as a potential risk for the secular democratic order and for Turkey’s strategic orientation towards the West. On the other hand, it was the Justice and Development Party AKP which, since 2002, has promoted both political and economic reforms just along the lines demanded by the European Union (EU) and Germany (cf. Karakas 2010). With a view to Russia, Germany has vital interests in (economic) cooperation and in preventing domestic instability. Both interests clearly have been served by the political rise and leadership of Vladimir Putin since 1999. At the same time, Putin embarked on a path of gradual authoritarianization which led to increasing German concerns as to Russia’s political development – and, in particular, provoked increasing domestic criticism within Germany directed against the German government’s attitude towards Putin’s Russia (cf. Spanger 2005).

The general pattern characterizing German reactions to these most different processes of political change is one of pragmatic cooperation. In the Bolivian case, Germany largely supported the Morales government and its reform project, including by adjusting its democracy assistance. It basically accepted the democratically legitimized deviance from German preferences in terms of both the political regime and economic policies but, by engaging the new government, tried to temper the political changes in order to prevent them from deviating too much from German conceptions of liberal democracy, human rights and market economy. At the same time, Germany tried to refrain from openly interfering in sensitive issues of domestic politics; privileged a conflict-sensitive approach of do no harm to a dogmatic emphasis on democratic and rule-of-law standards; and focused on supporting inclusive processes of dialogue and concertation (cf. Wolff 2010, 2011a).

In the case of Turkey, after some initial doubts as to threats to the secular order, the German government came to see the AKP government as a guarantor for democracy and stability as well as for an EU-oriented reform process. When reacting to domestic challenges to AKP rule, Germany explicitly supported the democratically legitimized government. In fact, it was not so much Turkish domestic politics (e.g., the alleged threat of an islamization and authoritarianization pushed by the AKP) but changes in Turkish foreign policies (e.g., rapprochement with Iran and Syria and alienation from Israel) that met with German criticism. German development cooperation – including democracy assistance with a focus on the public sector – continued (Karakas 2010).

In the Russian case, continuity is the main feature characterizing German reactions. Given a strong German interest in ensuring continuing cooperation with Russia, normative concerns as

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24 These challenges included a threat of a coup in 2007 and an attempt to ban the AKP party in 2008 (Karakas 2010: 15-16).
to the political situation in Russia have had a limited impact on actual policies at best. Opposition parties have regularly joined the media and human rights groups in demanding a much less sympathetic German attitude towards Putin’s Russia, but once in power they quickly chose pragmatic continuity. To the extent that the democracy issue is relevant at all, it is treated through dialogue. In terms of democracy assistance, the German political foundations are in part working with opposition groups, but in general focus on supporting political dialogue and long-term change (Spanger 2005).

This picture – general and underspecified as it is – largely confirms the notion of a Civilian Power Germany. However, such a “cultural” narrative only tells one part of the story. As already mentioned above, the cultural or normative predispositions represented by the Civilian Power concept are, at the same time, quite in line with the “classical” tangible interests the literature assumes to guide Germany’s foreign policy. This argument – that the Civilian Power represents not so much a “purely” ideational phenomenon but one in which interests and norms are articulated in particular ways – is clearly supported by the three case studies. In the Bolivian case, the “Civilian” way of promoting democracy was enabled by the almost complete absence of any tangible German interests. The one (minor) case where a German company was affected by “nationalization” led to intense activities by the German embassy and even Chancellor Merkel – Germany, in fact, suspended a development cooperation project (Wolff 2011a: 18). This suggests that the reaction to Morales probably would have been much less benign and tolerant in the case of a significant harm to German economic interests. Yet, even this clearly interest-driven support of a German company could be justified normatively in terms of Germany’s approach to democracy promotion: According to the official German discourse, private property rights are a crucial element of the rule of law (the Rechtsstaat) and, as seen above, democracy and the rule of law are inextricably linked. Thus, the sanction against Bolivia in defense of German economic interests, at the same time, could be presented as support for “democracy and the rule of law” in Bolivia.

In the case of Turkey, Germany’s increasing skepticism as to Turkey’s accession to the EU does not fit well with the alleged aim to promote Turkish democracy (Karakas 2010: 30-31). For a Civilian Power, the “socialization” into international (democratic) norms via the EU accession process should be the privileged strategy – a strategy that is clearly undermined by the rejection of a potential accession by the Christian Democrats which have been heading the

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25 In fact, the most important tangible (if particular) interests involved concerned the organizational self-interests of the different agencies implementing official German development aid (e.g., GTZ or the political foundations). These interests – i.e., to continue their work in the country and continue receiving corresponding public funding – were perfectly in line with the cooperative alignment to the Morales government as pursued by the German government.
German government since 2005. While this position is clearly driven by partisan interests – especially in benefiting from Islamophobic and anti-Turkish sentiments in the German populace –, it is mainly justified in normative terms: In line with the Civilian Power concept, Turkey is presented as not living up to the normative standards of the EU and Turkey’s accession is said to threaten the EU, i.e. the institution that is seen as the most important achievement in the process of civilizing international relations. However, the fact remains that the culturalist argument put forward – i.e., that a Muslim, ultimately non-European Turkey was threatening the particular identity of the EU – is clearly not in line with the focus on universal norms and inclusionary participation that is assumed to guide a Civilian Power.26

In the case of Russia, the inherent tension between the different normative guidelines for a Civilian Power came to the fore, namely the tension between the preference for cooperation and inclusion and a substantial “value-orientation” in terms of democracy and human rights. That German governments – the party-political composition notwithstanding – obviously privilege the former can be read as supporting the argument that Germany represents rather a “trading state” than a Civilian Power (cf. Spanger 2005: 19-26). The growing distance between Russia’s political reality and Germany’s normative preferences, however, does pose continuing problems for the German government. The German stance towards Russia – even if mainly shaped by economic interests – has to be at least presented as normatively appropriate for a Civilian Power. In this sense, the German government has argued, for example, that more than open criticism it is dialogue based on mutual trust that serves democracy in Russia – with Russia’s democratic development seen as part of a comprehensive and long-term process of modernization (cf. Spanger 2005: 27-36).27 In this sense, the political foundations represent an ideal instrument for Germany to (semi-officially) promote democracy – including NGOs and political parties that belong to the opposition – with a long-term perspective without threatening trustful relations between the two governments (cf. Spanger 2005: 35).

6. Conclusions
A cultural theory of democracy promotion traces the particular conceptions and practices of a given democracy promoter back to the political cultures of the individual country: “The more

26 This particular (culturalist) argument is obviously related to a very specific factor that shapes German policies towards Turkey: the presence of approximately 2.5 million people of Turkish origin living in Germany (Karakas 2010: 7, 30-31).
27 An additional argument concerns Germany’s special “historical responsibility” towards Russia (Spanger 2005: 13). Germany, therefore, has a particular responsibility to help Russia and to do so with a maximum respect for Russia’s sovereignty and self-determination.
democracy promotion is seen as part of a liberal mission, the more coercive instruments will be applied; the more democracy is seen as something that has to grow from within society, the more low-key tools (if any) are preferred” (Wolff/Wurm 2011: 89). Civilian Powers in general and Germany in particular clearly belong to the latter camp. Democracy promotion, here, is based on a rather abstract and broad notion of universal values and rights; conceives of democratization as a long-term, evolutionary process of complex transformation; privileges pragmatic strategies of (institutional) cooperation and inclusion; and is relatively reluctant to openly meddle in other states’ affairs and infringe on their rights to sovereignty and self-determination.28 The present paper has developed these four features as part of a specific approach to democracy promotion that is in line with the general role conception of a Civilian Power (2.). A review of the literature on German democracy promotion (3.), a content analysis of German official documents (4.) and a brief comparison of German democracy promotion policies towards three different countries (5.) have shown that this Civilian Power approach to democracy promotion fits quite well the German case.

This, however, is not to say that such “cultural” predispositions explain German democracy promotion. Both the conceptual debate and the empirical case studies suggest that “political culture” – as specified in the Civilian Power approach to democracy promotion – is relevant for, but surely does not determine foreign policy. Its causal effects operate more in the sense of constituting norms of appropriateness that constrain and enable (cf. Harnisch/Maull 2001c: 128-129; Müller 2007: 206; Hudson 2007: 121). They constrain policy choices by requiring their justification in terms of certain normative guidelines. But in every single case, there is still a broad range of rather different interpretations and practices that can be seen or presented as in line with these guidelines. In addition, the range of potentially appropriate policies is further broadened by the fact that the normative guidelines are, at least partially, contradictory (cf. Geis 2011: 30; Harnisch/Maull 2001c: 138; Tewes 2002: 12). In the case of democracy promotion, this refers particularly to the tension between a preference for cooperation, inclusion and non-interference (in the interest of peace and in line with international sovereignty rights) and the explicit promotion of substantial values (in the interest of democracy and in line with international human rights norms). The same holds true, however, for tangible “material” interests: Such interests have not only to be defined – and such definition depends on a particular ideational background –, they themselves yield

28 These conceptual (or cultural) patterns of German foreign policy (discourse) are confirmed also by a comparative content analysis of pre-war parliamentary debates in Western democracies since 1990. Whereas in the US discourse, the frequency of references to “power”, “enemy images” and “democracy” is above average, the German debate is characterized, in particular, by arguments pointing to “values”, “international law” and “peaceful means exhausted” (Geis et al. 2010: 190, 193; cf. Geis 2011).
only a range of potentially appropriate policies: “Material” interests constrain in the sense that some policy choices may be excluded because they clearly hurt those interests defined as vital, and they enable to the extent that different policies can be justified as serving them.

In the case of German foreign policy, a politically reluctant, cooperative and long-term approach to democracy promotion seems to best fit both the cultural predispositions and the material interests the German government is representing. In terms of actual democracy promotion policies, this can still result in quite different practices on the ground.

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