

The Research Field of Democracy Promotion

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This literature review deals with the research field of external democracy promotion. It discusses central notions and gives a short overview of real-world developments in external democratization. It then distinguishes four different modes of democracy assistance: coercion, conditionality, socialization, persuasion. Along these modes, theoretical classifications and empirical findings from the pertinent literature are presented.

Introduction – terms and contexts of external democratization research

In the early years of transition research, many major publications in the field suffered from a systematic subordination of international aspects (for example Huntington 1991; Beyme 1994; Linz/Stepan 1996).¹ Only in the late 1990s, scholars started paying attention to the external dimension of democratization. The growth of interest proved to be tremendous. In January 2010, an American bibliography of democracy promotion listed more than 340 texts on the topic, from advising reports and policy briefs to dozens of pertinent edited volumes and monographs.²

This literature review deals with the research field of external democracy promotion. Along with a handful of other literature overviews (Schraeder 2003; Cardwell 2011; Simmons 2011), it discusses central notions and outlines real-world developments in external democratization. It emphasizes the different mechanisms of democracy assistance: coercion, conditionality, socialization, and persuasion. Classifications that partly go along with these modes have already been presented in the literature (Schimmelfennig/Sedelmeier 2005a; Börzel/Risse 2009; Magen/McFaul 2009). The chapters just cited introduce specific democracy promotion actors – the EU or the USA. One aim of this text is to show the affinity different types of democracy promoters have for different ways of democracy promotion. The difference between democracy promotion styles of the USA and Europe (or the EU) has sometimes been characterized as a categorical matter, with the US leaning to “democracy promotion” and Europe being engaged in “democracy assistance” (Merkel 2010: 438). However, I do not make this distinction but follow that part of the literature which uses the two terms interchangeably (Burnell 2000; Finkel/Perez-Linan/Seligson 2007).

The research on democracy promotion can mainly be traced back to two strands of research which, in turn, are inspired by different elements of interest: international relations research on the one hand and transition studies on the other. Approaches in

the first field are often centered on the actors engaged in democracy promotion. Furthermore, they are often driven by the assumption that foreign policy actors assess a given situation and then decide according to thought models ranging from neo-realism to constructivism. These thought models need to be made explicit in order to better understand the underlying assumptions of international democratization research. In transition studies, the focus of interest is directed towards the character and dynamics of domestic political regimes. The involved scholars are often trained in comparative politics and are therefore bound to acknowledge multi-vectored influences of given phenomena.

Most democracy promotion research examines under which conditions a linkage between external and domestic actors leads to domestic regimes that are more liberal, free, or stable than before. The question usually rests on the assumption that an external actor intentionally tries to influence the quality of a political regime elsewhere. Consequently, the external actor is a “promoter” (Lawson 1999; Ethier 2003; Burnell 2004), a “sender” (Börzel/Risse 2009) or a “sponsor” (Freise 2004; Jünemann/Knodt 2007; Gravingholt/Leininger/Schlumberger 2009) of democracy. Because all these notions are inextricably linked to the element of intention, we are able to delineate a related body of literature that addresses democratization as a process of diffusion (Bunce/Wolchik 2006; Brinks/Coppedge 2007; Lauth/Pickel 2009; Elkink 2011). The concept of diffusion is only partly compatible with the idea of intentional action. Processes of diffusion can by their nature hardly be steered by democracy promoters. Therefore, this literature review understands democracy promotion in a way that excludes various sub-concepts of diffusion – for example emulation, mimicry, imitation, inspiration. Another concept explicitly overlooked in this text is “external democratization”. Of course, the term has been used by important scholars (Whitehead 1986; Merkel 2010), and much of the insight produced under the label of external democratization overlaps with democracy promotion in the sense of an intentional act of political regime change. Nonetheless, I prefer to keep the two terms separate. ‘External democratization’ in my understanding refers to a process in which a broad range international factors – meaning all factors that are not domestic – may influence developments within non-democratic regimes. In particular, events in the sphere of international politics (for example the negotiation of international treaties) or the international economy (for example the globalization of trade) belong to objects of the research on external democratization. These aspects are not addressed at length in this review due to space restriction.

1 I would like to thank the following persons for helpful comments on earlier versions of the manuscript: Christiane Barnickel, Tanja Börzel, Lisa Düsing, Naemi Schadagies, Frank Schimmelfennig, and two anonymous reviewers. Any remaining flaws of the text should be attributed to the author alone.

2 See http://cddrl.stanford.edu/docs/bibliography_of_democracy_promotion#rule-of-lawH. The list is exhaustive until about the year 2008 but not complete for the years 2009-2011.

Democracy promotion can thus be characterized as a set of actions of non-domestic actors who intentionally try to overcome authoritarian power by supporting domestic actors who share the same objective. The definition reveals three aspects of democracy promotion to be discussed in further detail in the following section: democracy promoters, democracy promotion recipients and the actions which link the two actor groups.

Actors and modes of democracy promotion: towards a typology of social mechanisms

Research on actors of democracy promotion considers national governments, international organizations, transnational actors as well as a plethora of societal actors. Studies exist on democracy promotion/assistance by the USA (Cox/Ikenberry/Inoguchi 2000; Magen/Risse/McFaul 2009), the United Nations (Joyner 2002; Newman/Rich 2004; Mansfield/Pevehouse 2006), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE, see Richter 2009), and the European Union (Youngs 2001; Youngs 2003; Pridham 2005; Vachudova 2005; Kneuer 2006; Jünemann/Knodt 2007; Youngs 2008). By and large, these studies reveal large differences between the *character* of democracy promotion carried out by these bodies. There seems to be, however, fewer differences regarding the *effectiveness* of external democratization (Burnell 2008); this aspect will be dealt with in more detail below.

Even though there is no compilation of numbers on all resources spent in the field of external democracy promotion, the amount raised by promoters is undoubtedly substantial. In the United States, funds for the development of democracy and good governance have risen from US\$128 million in the 1990s to US\$817 million in 2003 (Magen/Morlino 2009b: xiv). In 2008 the US reportedly spent \$2.25 billion on democratic assistance abroad. European states are also active in democracy promotion; four of them each spent more than €400 million on democracy promotion during 2006 and 2007 (Youngs 2008: 10). For EU member states, these numbers are complemented by other resources. The money spent by the EU's European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) amounted to €713.3 between 2000 and 2006. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in contrast, spends about \$1.4 billion per year in order to support democratic processes around the world (ibid.).

Many authors emphasize that an analysis of intentional international influence on democratization processes must recognize the inevitable limits of external means. Democracy and democratization are *by definition* dependent on the relations between domestic elites and the demos: "such processes always are, in a fundamental sense, an essentially 'domestic drama'" (Morlino/Magen 2009a: 29). In fact, a look at the pertinent literature reveals that different regions are assumed to be sensitive to foreign influence in diverse ways. Latin America, Southern Europe and Central Europe are usually seen as active playing fields of international democratizers. Consequently, domestic actors indeed had to deal with substantial external influence on the respective regime transitions (Whitehead 1986; Pridham 1994; Baun 2000). On the contrary, post-soviet Eastern Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, and the Arab world have frequently been characterized as being less open to external democratizing influence. This led authors to focus on the internal political economy of regime change (Hellman 1998; Richter 2007).

Which instruments do external democratizing actors use? Despite the many publications on external democratization, attempts to systematize this area of research have been rather modest. We find enumerative lists of instruments that largely originate from foreign policy action. A few years ago, Peter Schraeder presented a catalogue of seven categories of instruments: classic diplomacy, foreign aid, political conditionality, economic sanctions, covert intervention,

paramilitary intervention, and military intervention (Schraeder 2003: 26). Wolfgang Merkel also uses this list, but additionally arranges them by degree of coercion – diplomacy being the least, military intervention being the most coercive instrument (Merkel 2010: 456). Such enumerations help us classify the diversity of measures in the field. Ongoing external democratization efforts have made authors aware of the importance of conditions and contexts for successful democracy promotion.

Attempts to systematically link the two actor groups by modes of interactions appeared relatively late. The first prominent text to do so was Laurence Whitehead's edited volume named the "International Dimension of Democratization" (Whitehead 2001b). In the introductory chapter of this book, Whitehead develops three reference models of external democratization: contagion, control and consent (Whitehead 2001a). His approach is oriented mainly towards empirically discernable constellations: *contagion* in regional neighborhood (e.g. Southern Europe during the 1980s, Central Europe in the 1990s), *control* by an external actor with asymmetrical powers (e.g. the USA in Latin America), and *consent* in societies with external assistance that only accompanies an already ongoing process (e.g. Southeast Asia in the 1980s).

With this suggestion, Whitehead established basic categories which have remained relevant ever since. A few years later, Paul Kubicek employed similar terminology when he spoke of control, contagion, convergence, and conditionality (Kubicek 2003). Retaining control and contagion on the list, Kubicek brought two new elements into debate. First, he renamed consent, instead calling it *convergence*. Secondly, Whitehead's control category was split into two subcategories, namely *control* and *conditionality* – the former standing for instances with little room to maneuver for the democratizing country, and latter focusing on the option of the democratizing country to accept offered incentives or turn them down. Both choices relate to Kubicek's focus on the EU and the inclusion of prospective member states in the analysis.

On the occasion of the eastern enlargement of the EU, a huge collection of volumes focusing on EU-approximation and on democracy development were published. One of the most seminal books was written by Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier: "Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe" (Schimmelfennig/Sedelmeier 2005b). Of course, Europeanization as a concept of reference deviates from external democratization in two regards. The development of a democratic order represents only one among various dimensions in which the EU tries to exert external influence on candidate countries. Also, a potential EU membership at the end of a presumed democratization process constitutes a highly exceptional side condition. Still, many of the insights gained in the Europeanization literature have been taken up in external democratization research, and they shall therefore be considered here.

Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier's major contribution included a broader understanding of social action in the field of external impact on democratizing countries. This promoted the categories as established by Whitehead and Kubicek to discernable models of international interaction; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier named them a) *external incentives model*, b) *social learning model*, and c) *lesson-drawing model* (Schimmelfennig/Sedelmeier 2005a). This step forward endeavored to extensively link these models to existing theoretical positions. Their external incentives model is designed as "a rationalist bargaining model. It is actor-centered and based on the logic of consequences. In a bargaining process, actors exchange information, threats, and promises according to their preferences" (Schimmelfennig/Sedelmeier 2005a: 10). Discussion of the model revolves around the rationalist tool-kit, for example the credibility of incentives (or threats), potential veto powers, costs of adaptation and asymmetries in information. The social learning model is, according to Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, "based on core tenets of social

constructivism (...). The most general proposition of the social learning model (...) is that a government adopts EU rules if it is persuaded of their appropriateness (Schimmelfennig/Sedelmeier 2005a: 18). These two models are largely compatible with a dichotomous view of Europeanization developed by Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse (2003). It divides the diffusion of rules into processes of an instrumental logic on the one hand and a non-instrumental logic on the other. The division vaguely existed in prior external democratization research (control/contagion versus consent/convergence, see Whitehead and Kubicek). However, in the end it was the real-world event of EU's eastern enlargement which served as an opportunity to transfer the knowledge of EU internal dynamics to non-EU environments. More recent publications on external democratization did not introduce further types into the debate (see Pridham 2005; Youngs 2008; Magen/Risse/McFaul 2009). Even the labels accredited to the different modes seem rather familiar. For example, Amichai Magen and Leonardo Morlino use the well-known notions of control, conditionality, socialization, and example in order to map the field (Magen/Morlino 2009c). The number of descriptive terms for modes of democracy transposition seems to be exhausted.

The next important step in conceptual development has been taken by Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse in a paper which aims to conceptualize the "transformative power of Europe" (Börzel/Risse 2009). Börzel and Risse are more explicit than others in highlighting the diverging logics behind the non-instrumental types of external democratization. They are not contented with labeling everything beyond coercion and conditionality as "constructivist". Instead, they draw a distinction between the two constructivist camps of socialization and persuasion by accrediting the first to normative rationality and the second to communicative rationality (Börzel/Risse 2009: 5). In their paper, normative rationality is attributed to the large body of literature on new institutionalism which suggests that individuals do not only follow a logic of consequentialism, but also a "logic of appropriateness" (March/Olsen 1989). Exactly this logic had also been discussed by the previous literature, including Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, who classified the mode as social learning. Although Börzel and Risse only "zoom in" (Börzel/Risse 2009: 9) on their mechanisms and do not discuss them at length, the two authors advise us of the existence of two different types of social learning. One indeed follows the logic of appropriateness in the neo-institutionalist sense – actors design their decisions on the basis of values they exhibit. To this approach, norms are important but represent only external variables. The other does not conceptualize values as something given, but is based on the idea that they develop during a process of communicative exchange. During communication, a redefinition of interests, identities and therefore values takes place (Risse 2000; Checkel 2007; Checkel/Zürn 2007).

Börzel and Risse list altogether four modes, or social mechanisms, of external democratization.³ They present underlying principles rather than firmly established types. Before discussing them individually in the next section, they can briefly be characterized as follows:

- a) *Coercion*: This mode is based on the idea that a democracy sender imposes its ideas on a country where no democracy exists. On the receiving side, there are either too few oppositional actors to make a

domestic regime change probable and/or the conditions for democratization are unfavorable. External democratization by coercion therefore often bears a dimension of physical conflict; the use of physical force by democracy promoters distinguishes "coercion" from the other modes of democracy promotion. While the mode easily identifies the democracy promoter – a democratic state or organization using force to impose democracy elsewhere –, there is a wide range of actor groups and possible reactions on the recipient end. Coercion often occurs with regard to strongly authoritarian regimes which do not allow for a clearly identifiable political opposition. Weak and/or failing states present another context in which violent democracy promotion occurs. In such instances, domestic actors receiving democracy assistance are sometimes difficult to classify as "citizens" of a non-democratic state.

- b) *Conditionality*: The mode is based on instrumental rationality in the sense that both actor groups – senders and recipients – enter into a game of incentives, promises and (non-violent) threats. Despite the origin of the concept in the World Bank and development policy, conditionality-based external democratization has often been linked to the EU and its institutional structure. Consequently, the paradigm of international politics has more and more been replaced by an institutionalist perspective on transnational politics. Because the pertinent mode has been increasingly applied also to less probable cases of EU membership, conditionality research has recently concentrated on incidents of non-compliance or evasion, thus shifting from an earlier focus on successful democratization instances in Central Europe.
- c) *Persuasion*: This mode is based on the idea that values of individuals are heavily influenced by arguments and reason. Although these roots are not explicitly discussed in the external democratization literature, its theoretical origins largely go back to Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action which explores the idea that societal deliberation leads to legitimate political decisions, processes, and structures (Habermas 1981; 1992). The thought model has been transferred on a broader scale to the international sphere (one prominent example would be Risse 2000). In that approach, communicative international action needs resonance structures both on the societal and the elite level. Involved societal actors have to be ready for social learning by internalizing norms and ideas in an identity changing way. Conducive to this is public access to mass communication (including the new media). In other constellations, intensive learning – sometimes called complex learning – needs enduring structures of international politics. Especially on the elite level, learning is not very likely to happen in an anarchic setting of international relations. Therefore, one natural arena for external democratization by communicative action is that of international organizations which engage in political dialogue and deliberative bargaining.
- d) *Socialization*: As opposed to persuasion, this mode is based on normative rationality. Not an active policy of conviction, but the exchange of social norms and values is at the center of interest. The result of effective socialization is, like in the "persuasion" mode, social learning – for an act of learning, it does not matter if norms, ideas, or values have been changed by communicative conviction or by an experience of practical appropriateness. The school of thought highlighting socialization as a major mode of external democratization does not usually deny that

3 Taken singly, the different characteristics of actor constellations between democracy donors and democracy recipients present *modes*. They are promoted to *social mechanisms* when attached to underlying theories (or assumptions) of social action. Because this text mostly discusses the characteristics of actor constellations with reference to such theories (or assumptions), I use the terms "mode" and "social mechanism" interchangeably.

communication plays a role in establishing norms. However, the focus is less on their development than on the interaction of existing norms. Often, norms of a legal nature are involved, for example with regard to the UN Declaration of Human Rights or the European Convention on Human Rights. From a sociological point of view, these norms entail developing institutions with formal and informal rules – the core

tenet of neo-institutionalism (March/Olsen 1989; North 1990). More specifically, it is the interplay of societal (sometimes called “traditional”, sometimes called “cultural”) rules and pure institutional logics that show the relevance of socialization (Rosenbaum 1999). For example, elections may carry more meanings to people than simply the ‘democratic’ idea of selecting a temporary leadership (Verdery 1998).

Type of action: democracy promoters	Mode of democracy promotion	Type of action: democracy promotion recipients
Coercive action Use of legal or physical force	a) Coercion – instrumental rationality	Submissive or non-submissive action Obedience, evasion, or apathy
Offering incentives Giving assistance with threat of withdrawal, imposing sanctions	b) Conditionality –instrumental rationality	Processing of incentives Compliance or non-compliance, depending on reward/punishment relationship
Persuasion Promotion of ideas as legitimate through justification	c) Persuasion – communicative rationality	Social learning (effective or non-effective) internalization of ideas and/or identity change if norms and values are accepted
Social interaction Exhibition of norms and values in social practices	d) Socialization – normative rationality	

Table 1: Modes and types of action in external democracy promotion*

* The principle of this table is taken from Börzel/Risse (2009: 11), but many notions and classifications here differ. See section 3 for further elaboration.

Table 1 shows that these four social mechanisms of interaction need to be distinguished from potential actions of democracy promoters on the one side and democracy recipients on the other. Whereas the aims of the former to externally support democratization are not difficult to determine, the range of the latter is much more complex. Because of threats or of their own free will, political elites may decide *or decide not* to allow democratic institutions to take root in the domestic regimes; usually the promoter assumes that recipients will opt for one alternative or the other in light of their own chances for political (or sometimes physical) survival (Hellman 1998). Also the populations of authoritarian or democratizing countries may decide *or decide not* to incorporate external impulses into their politically relevant action. Here, promoters assume that populations will generally be ready to strive for higher degrees of freedom, autonomy, and self-determination. Obstacles do emerge when social or economic hardships become so evident that they outweigh the perceived advantages of a democratized regime (Przeworski 1991).

Modes of Democracy Promotion in detail: research results

This section traces the literature on democracy promotion with a focus on the modes and/or social mechanisms developed in section 2. Special attention is paid to the actors involved in instruments attached to the respective modes. The overview illustrates how modes of democracy promotion are distinguished by their inherent logic of different social mechanisms and also by the types of actors using the respective interests.

a) Democratization by Coercion – governmental actors and the growing focus on post-war periods

The classic cases of successful coercive democratization are the post World War II countries of Japan and West Germany (Montgomery 1957). However, these two cases constitute exceptions to the more general insight that coercive external democratization a) is often a side-effect of international political action with other aims and b) is rarely effective. The expressed intention to fight a country into democracy is often seen as a rhetorical diversionary tactic, while the reason for international conflict rests in the assumptions and findings of pessimist

realism (Cederman/Hug/Wenger 2009: 55). The security studies paradigm continues to be relevant to the study of external democratization, and civil-military relations are judged as an important element to reconcile (potentially violent) military and (potentially civil) political spheres. Western strategy after the Cold War then consisted of making graduated offers regarding integration into western security structures (Mares 1998). Even NATO’s enlargement to include Central Europe could therefore be dealt with as an integral part of transition to democracy (Jacoby 2006). In the changing international environment, military cooperation has consequently lost much of its coercive potential. Security assistance was generally identified as an element of democracy promotion (Rhame 1996). The focus shifted from the external dimension of military assistance to questions of internal control of the military in young democracies. Today civil control is a minimum condition for a domesticated military (Huntington 1995; Forman/Welch 1998; Watts 2002).

The US-led war of the “coalition of the willing” against Iraq brought external democratization by coercion into the center of public and scholarly interest. The US President at the time, George W. Bush, repeatedly claimed the aim of establishing democracy in Iraq and the whole Middle East as one of the objectives of the military operation launched in March 2003. It is clear today that this goal has not been achieved. Mainstream literature simply classified allied action in Iraq as an occupation;

the aim of democratizing Iraq was judged as both a made-up argument and illusionary (see, for example, Cockburn 2007). Some authors saw a certain effect of state-building. For example, Andrew Arato presented an analysis of constitution-making in Iraq in which he provided evidence for a substantial and constructive role of American actors (Arato 2009). He does not, however, go as far as characterizing this process as democratization.

A special issue of the journal “Democratization” has systematically discussed the issue “democratization through war” by addressing the legality, legitimacy and effectiveness of external democratization as a follow-up to violent conflicts (Grimm/Merkel 2008).⁴ From the case studies in that volume, it becomes clear that coercive democratization emanates from democratic states (often the US in global politics and European states in the European context) and is accompanied by international organizations (the OSCE, the UN) which legitimize external action and try to safeguard the new order that emerges after an intervention (Croissant 2009; Jawad 2009; Suhrke 2009).

The pertinent literature divides external intervention into three phases: before, during, and after a conflict. The first two phases were debated heavily in public spheres around the world in the early 1990s (Mansfield/Snyder 2002; Merkel 2009b). Two aspects were discussed. On the one hand, human rights norms were declared more decidedly than before as universal values. The corresponding theory of just wars (Walzer 1977) constitutes a normative basis for imposing regime change on governments that systematically violate basic human rights of their own citizens. On the other hand, just wars have to be seen against the background of real world power. In fact, decisions concerning the legal legitimization of wars are usually dependent on the UN Security Council, a political committee. Here, the principle of sovereignty is still existent and stands in contrast to the universal validity of human rights. Public international law is therefore “normatively enlightened” (Merkel 2009a: 29) to legitimize external changes in unjust states, but it is at the same time restricted by the will of an exclusive group of political actors.

With regard to the outcome and potential success of coercive external democratization, the editors and authors of the already mentioned special issue of “Democratization” draw skeptical conclusions. The positive examples of West Germany and Japan after 1945 are contrasted with less successful cases like post-Yugoslavia, Georgia, Afghanistan and Cambodia. Reasons for their limited success are not so much related to the violent character of coercion. Rather, unfavorable preconditions like ongoing security problems, internal state failure, ethnic and minority conflicts and a lack of internal societal trust are identified as obstacles (Grimm 2009: 89). If several of these conditions apply simultaneously, external powers with military intervention capacities will hardly have the resources to deal with all of them. In some cases, an increase of good governance – for example with regard to the rule of law – can be traced. However, none of the more recent cases of coercive democratization can be characterized as more than a hybrid regime. These insights go along with another study on external democratization in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua (Reiber 2009). In contrast to some of the instances mentioned above, the degree of coercion was limited in these Central American cases. Consequently, Reiber is able to ascribe some success to external action in the three states.

In a book from 2010, Sonja Grimm systematizes the challenges for coercive democracy promotion as four “dilemmas of external democratization” (Grimm 2010: 119-126). First, she identifies a “benevolent intervention dilemma”, referring to the conflict between external support and aspired self-determination. Secondly, she points out a parallel

democratization dilemma of all parts of transformation, for example legitimate statehood’s need for a functioning election mechanism which in turn requires functioning state institutions. Thirdly, a “radicalizing democratization dilemma” exists in such cases when democratic competition intensifies societal conflicts. Fourthly, the “forced cooperation dilemma” refers to the need for recipients to voluntarily cooperate and to compromise. This willingness is counteracted by the coerciveness of the new world order’s military protection. Not all of these dilemmas can be dealt with constructively by foreign actors (Grimm 2010: 331). Obviously, there is “no guarantee for the success of external democratization” (Grimm 2010: 336). Furthermore, the aforementioned dilemmas deepen with the intensification of the asymmetrical relation between donors and receivers of coercive democracy assistance. In the end, the abilities of an external actor to consolidate peace and establish democracy and rule of law are limited (Grimm 2010: 339).

The cautious conclusions to be drawn from the record of coercive democratization have shifted the attention to the time period after successful invasions by democracy promoting powers (Merkel 2009b). In international law, post bellum norms have either not at all or only minimally been codified, yet in the political sphere they are hugely relevant. Especially in areas of limited statehood, coercive external democracy promoters are implicitly or explicitly expected to introduce an active policy for the pacification of society in the post-conflict setting. Democratic interventions can also destroy state institutions by activating latent conflicts previously curtailed by the autocratic system (Merkel 2009b: 48-49).

b) Democratization by Conditionality – the European case

Conditionality is a concept that emanated in the 1980s when international financial institutions – typically the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund – started to link lending programs to certain policy demands (Koeberle u.a. 2005: 3; see Dreher 2009). In World Bank terminology, demands relating to politics or public administration were labeled ‘good governance’ measures. Often in poor and heavily indebted countries, development aid required good governance be applied to modest liberalization measures. Democratization or democracy itself were topics usually low on the agenda (Crawford 2001).

This changed at the end of the 1990s when both actors and scholars applied the term ‘conditionality’ to the European Union and its eastern enlargement process. After the deterioration of the Iron Curtain, almost all post-socialist countries sought closer relations with West European states and in particular with the EU. The EU reacted by establishing the Copenhagen criteria in 1992, a list of conditions EU candidate countries had to fulfill in order to be eligible for accession negotiations (Baun 2000). Later, the Copenhagen list became important beyond potential accession candidates; the EU started including these criteria in association agreements with a broad range of third, non-EU countries. Obviously, the EU and its institutions were confronted with very different contexts under which third country obligations could realistically be demanded. Conditionality research peaked in the years around the central European member states’ EU-accession (with two books seemingly most cited, see Grabbe 2003; Schimmelfennig/Sedelmeier 2005b).

According to that literature, the effectiveness of EU conditionality is linked to a rather limited set of factors and conditions. One is the weight an incentive needs to have in order to be relevant to democratization. Further points are the credibility of the democratizer and the capacity of democracy recipients to deal with incentives or threats. These insights have been advanced by a working group formed by Frank Schimmelfennig, Stefan Engert and Heiko Knobel. Their analysis includes nine cases, among them Belarus, Estonia, Montenegro, Northern Cyprus, and Turkey. With this wide range

4 The issue was later published as an edited volume (Merkel/Grimm 2009). Cited articles are from that book version.

of examples, the authors tried to encompass the wide variety of (mainly) EU-driven incentives, as well as their different levels of commitment and durability.

In summary, a triple set of conditions needs to be present in order to be helpful to democratization. The first condition is substantial external input: “High and credible material and political incentives have been necessary for the promotion of liberal political norms in problematic target countries” (Schimmelfennig/Engert/Knobel 2006: 240). The two other conditions have to do with recipient elites and the distinct constellations they find themselves in. In addition to substantial incentives by the EU, identification of the elites with the EU and/or democracy is influential. Thirdly, it is important that political costs of democratization are not prohibitive for elites. All three elements then have to be present in a specific way: a combination of great incentives and positive identification of elites with western values is sufficient for democratic change – despite possibly high internal costs (Schimmelfennig/Engert/Knobel 2006: 240). The most obvious example to date for this argument is the case of Slovakia. During the 1998 elections, the credible offer of EU-accession led the Mečiar government to face and accept the electorate’s vote even though a loss of power was almost certain (Krause 2003). Schimmelfennig, Engert and Knobel also present other examples to underline their claim. Estonia and Latvia in particular are used to show the effectiveness of combining high incentives and credible threats in the event of non-compliant behavior. In both countries, a treatment of the Russian minorities compatible with democratic values was only introduced after the EU and NATO made it a requirement for accession (cf. Schimmelfennig/Engert/Knobel 2006: 172, 194, 241).

Schimmelfennig, Engert and Knobel have combined and continued preliminary works of many authors. Still notable today, Heather Grabbe laid out the instruments of conditionality faced by potential accession candidates early on (Grabbe 2001; 2003). Jim Hughes, Gwendolyn Sasse and Claire Gordon expanded the concept to post-socialist regions without an immediate accession perspective (Hughes/Sasse/Gordon 2004). Milada Vachudova provided the most extensive overview over the different phases of the connection between Europeanization and democratization by introducing the distinction between “passive” and “active” leverage (Vachudova 2005). Finally, Annette Jünemann and Michèle Knodt took up many suggestions made in the debate and applied them to a number of EU partners beyond the European Neighborhood (Jünemann/Knodt 2007).

All of these authors have paved the way for the current state of research, in which the following question is discussed from different angles: Is it possible to employ conditionality in the absence of an EU accession perspective with countries targeted for democracy promotion? This question has been discussed most prominently with regard to eastern enlargement. In an empirically dense study, Marianne Kneuer concentrates on the new EU member states, drawing on the southern enlargement states as historic examples (Kneuer 2006). In line with Schimmelfennig, Engert and Knobel, Kneuer links the effectiveness of EU democracy promotion and/or good governance to the perceived attractiveness of incentives.

With regard to the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), the findings on countries from the eastern and southern partnerships parallel insights in the literature on the potential EU accession cases (Koopmann 2006; Jünemann/Knodt 2007; Weber/Smith/Baun 2007). Target countries frequently complain that the resources provided by the EU are insufficient given the high stakes of implementing internal reforms. In this context, Annegret Bendiek uses the notion of a “tragedy” and arrives at the conclusion that ENP is suffering from a strategy with weak ambition (Bendiek/Röhrig 2007; Bendiek 2008). This finding does not contradict earlier results; it simply underscores that conditional approaches in external democratization only make sense if they are substantiated with according resources.

Another part of the literature turns its attention to the recipient

side of democracy promotion. Leonardo Morlino and Amichai Magen point out the destructive functions of undecided elites in, for example, Serbia and Ukraine (Morlino/Magen 2009b: 236). Similar findings relate to the implementation of good governance in the Southern Caucasus (Börzel/Pamuk/Stahn 2010). These publications also contribute to the idea that the introduction of material and political frameworks is an adequate solution only if the elites in the target countries drum up the will and the potential for internal reforms.

In conclusion, democracy promotion by conditionality is seen as one of the most successful mechanisms available. At the end of a study including Romania, Turkey, Serbia, and Ukraine, Morlino and Magen write: “Conditionality works for rule adoption! Sometimes...” (Morlino/Magen 2009b: 229). The restricting “sometimes” is related to a combination of empowering factors which include external aid, continuous conditional action, the creation of opportunities as well as a deliberate weakening of veto powers (Morlino/Magen 2009b: 256).

c) Democratization by Persuasion – communicative action and the civil sphere

The early writings on constructivism in international relations theory stipulated that norms were not a given entity, but subject to context and change (Wendt 1992; Checkel 1998; Finnemore/Sikkink 1998; Ruggie 1998; Christiansen/Jorgensen/Wiener 2001). The major line of attack was directed towards realist and neo-realist approaches that derived norms from stable and non-volatile (state) interests. Constructivism forwarded an alternative meta-theory with a few major messages: interests should be seen as subject to contingent interpretation by actors (Wendt, Ruggie); norms should not be too closely linked to interests (Checkel); and norm dynamics should be rated as driving forces for international political change (Finnemore/Sikkink). These approaches present a promising research dimension in external democracy promotion in all cases where the focus needs to be directed to norms and values that make formally democratic institutions work.

Constructivism scholars therefore leaned towards the issue of democracy promotion rather early. Over time, two theoretical directions crystallized (Risse 2004: 162-165): discourse and communication theory on the one hand, and sociological institutionalism on the other hand. While some authors in the field of external democratization tend to subsume both of these approaches under a ‘constructivist’ mechanism of ‘socialization’ (Börzel/Risse 2003; Schimmelfennig/Sedelmeier 2005a; Magen/Morlino 2009a), it seems worthwhile to insist on the two substantially different types of human action linked to these schools. Discourse and communication theory mainly focuses on norm change in its ideational dimension, whereas sociological institutionalism predominantly refers to norm change related to (formal as well as informal) institutional rules and practices. In a later paper, Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse have therefore returned to Risse’s earlier division and established “persuasion” – a mode related to ideational change – as a proper mechanism of norm diffusion (Börzel/Risse 2009: 9).

Within that category, different paths of persuasion are discernable. One mode is described by Jeffrey Checkel who, in a widely cited paper, explored the norm convergence of democratizing Turkey with the European Union (Checkel 2001). He argued that political actors move in ideational frames that relate to non-ideational contexts. In that sense, a changing environment in international relations eliminates earlier constraints and opens new opportunities to which political actors adjust; the result is ideational adaptation and an emergence of new frames. The sudden appreciation of human and political rights by previously repressive communist leaders around

1989/91 may be taken as an appropriate example. Of course, this kind of ideational frame change cannot only be observed with regard to processes of democratization. It equally occurs in nation building processes in which ideas and norms co-vary with processes of internal modernization (Risse 2001).

Ideational change among domestic actors is equally important. Here the main distinction is between domestic elites and domestic civil society. Existing literature exhibits an interesting divide. Domestic non democratic or semi-democratic elites have to be persuaded to accept democratic rules in the transition process (Linz 1990; Burton/Gunther/Higley 1992). For example, an article by Omar Encarnación refers to Alexis de Tocqueville's "school of democracy" theorem in order to demonstrate the democratic potential of civil society in Latin America (Encarnación 2000). Similarly, several texts where conceptual rather than empirical issues are prevalent have argued that the new transnational character of civil society presents numerous opportunities for actors to be exposed to the persuasive idea of democracy (White 1994; Keane 2003).

The most extensively studied case seems to be Russia. Two books have shown that close communicative encounters with the West have not led to an incorporation of democratic norms; a major reason is a lack of domestic resonance structures both within civil society and the political elites (Henderson 2003; Heller 2008). One might conclude that the empirically oriented literature on advocacy and civil society involvement has yielded findings much more hesitant than the broadly optimistic tone of the theoretical research on civil society. In her work, Regina Heller analyses the Council of Europe's human rights policy towards the Russian Federation. She finds that the main cause for the many deficits in the implementation of human rights in Russia lies in domestic conditions. Whenever the imposition of human rights becomes incompatible with the power interests of the Russian elite, domestic actors enact a "decoupling" of norms and interests (Heller 2008: 306). In an earlier work, Patrice McMahon had already hinted at this constellation in a study of the support of women's groups in post-socialist Europe (McMahon 2001). More generally, the limited acceptance of norms exported by the transnational civil society led to the assertion of a Western "aid industry", as formulated in 1998 by Alison van Rooy (van Rooy 1998). Many authors in the field agree that the communicative transfer of norms is heavily limited when democracy is promoted by civil society organizations lacking a voluntary dimension (Petrova 2011).

In its ideal form, the theory of communicative action conceptualizes argumentative communication as a two-sided process. What, however, if certain conditions constrain mutual communication? Democracy promotion research tells us that it is quite possible that domestic actors copy or re-contextualize persuasive arguments of foreign actors. This process of "diffusion" is defined as "an innovation [which] is disseminated through specific information channels and finds acceptance" (Lauth/Pickel 2009: 37). Diffusion can occur as knowledge transfer, change in attitude or change in behavior (Lauth/Pickel 2009: 40). Successful lesson learning is only observable when imitation takes place not as result of socialization but as a product of diffuse persuasion of assumingly superior ideas. Research has shown a causal link between communicative openness (international telephone traffic, access to television, internet access) and the quality of democracy (Lauth/Pickel 2009: 65-67).

One area of recent interest where this effect can be seen is the Arab world, where revolutions eliminated authoritarian regimes in 2010 and 2011. For a long period of time, countries in this area had been characterized by particularly stable autocratic regimes (Kailitz 2009). By and large, they were considered to lack many internal preconditions for liberalization or democratization. Most of the ruling authorities seemed so stable that it is difficult to find literature from before 2011 that focuses on potential regime change in the region. If external forces were dealt with at all, they were seen as elements supporting the existing authoritarian regimes because of Western governments'

interests in access to resources and a stable regional security structure (Richter 2007).

This changed in late 2010 and 2011, when – starting with Tunisia – street revolutions turned into the so-called Arabellion. One of the elements central to the success of the overthrows was the communication of the protesting population via electronic media, in particular Facebook (Todd 2011). First analyses of these processes highlight that the respective media introduce "the West" in a twofold way. While social networks are a Western technology import, networks and the internet in general catalyzed the dissemination of knowledge about Western lifestyles and democratic government practices. Both qualities helped "the digital media [...] turn individualized, localized and community-specific dissent into a structured movement" (Howard/Hussain 2011: 41).

In that sense, established democracies served as role models in the Arab upheavals, but in a somewhat hidden way. The globalization of communication has made the low living standard and high levels of corruption known – to name two problems endemic to many Arab regimes. Furthermore, digital media were able to circumvent traditional or official ways of communication. In Tunisia those elements were, in principle, sufficient to overthrow a seemingly stable regime (Schraeder/Redissi 2011). Accordingly, Schraeder and Redissi see only a limited and indirect role of foreign forces. Ironically, the authors identify the WikiLeaks affair, during which US American diplomatic documents were made open to the public, as an important element in the fall of the Tunisian regime (ibid.: 14). These documents made the decadent lifestyle of Ben Ali's clan transparent to a wider public. The irony of WikiLeaks is that it was seen as a scandal by the US government. Besides Tunisia, there are other Arab cases where liberalization has been less successful. In contrast, the situation in Syria demonstrates that external democratization forces or their arguments do not play a role if strong stability interests prevail (Bickel 2011).

Taken together, the cases in the Southern Mediterranean and in the Middle East indicate a certain affinity of the coercion and the persuasion modes. In contrast to other modes, they may apply to regimes of a relatively closed nature. Should this not be the case, direct social interaction by politically relevant actors is much more likely to evolve, and consequently, the other modes discussed – conditionality, socialization – are more likely to apply. If regimes are relatively closed, and if democracy promotion actors decide to refrain from coercive action, societies and states are left with the 'domestic drama'. During the 20th century, this usually led to the perpetuation of closed (and hence autocratic) regimes. In the early 21st century, the question was raised how the globalized character of electronic communication may be able to change that setting. The transnational character of digital media has made it easier to break up authoritarian regimes without directly involved external democratizers.

In summary, persuasion arguably presents the most understudied mode of democracy promotion for several reasons. First, the process of persuasion can only be observed in relatively costly research. Actors must be followed over a longer time in an atmosphere of mutual trust and concord. Second, norm change usually becomes relevant on a collective level rather than on the individual level which multiplies research costs; documenting *persuasion* is more difficult than observing socialization. Third, several actor groups need to be taken into account: external elites have privileged access to those domestic actors that might actively initiate a regime change; external or international civil society is often better legitimized than state actors because of a lack of involved state interests; domestic elites may carry on normative arguments and therefore constitute a communicative link between external actors and domestic societies; last but not least domestic civil society actors present the area where democratic norms and values take root.

Most research on democracy promotion has not concentrated as much on one of these empirical fields as it has on communicative mechanisms between several actor groups. A

focus has been set on advocacy coalitions (Finnemore/Sikkink 1998; Price 2003) and their – more or less successful – implantation into democratizing societies. Within international advocacy coalitions, norm entrepreneurs of democratization can form “islands of persuasion” (Deitelhoff 2006: 280) on which non-democratic norm systems can be transformed into democratic ones. However, a study by Manal Jamal on civil society oriented democracy promotion in Palestine and El Salvador has shown that external democracy promotion is not only dependent on communicative processes between all actor groups but also on the inclusiveness of political settlements in general – where certain groups are excluded from the settlement, external democratization efforts may even weaken the quality of civil society as the main carrier of democratic institutionalization and consolidation (Jamal 2012).

d) Democratization by Socialization – from unstructured social action to external governance

As outlined above, the mode of socialization needs to be carefully distinguished from the other modes of democracy promotion. Socialization in the tradition of sociological institutionalism is closely linked with two other directions of research. First, the mode is related to ‘conditionality’ in the sense that the logic of consequentialism (conditionality) and the logic of appropriateness (socialization) present two sides of the coin called new institutionalism (March/Olsen 1989; North 1990). In that tradition, both modes are ultimately linked to actors with an instrumental agenda. In order to distinguish them, we have to concentrate on the difference between the processing of incentives and social learning (see table 1 above). Both aspects are always present in interaction between actors with asymmetric resources. In the end, the predominant mode in a given situation depends on the context – and the types of action chosen by the actors involved.

The mode ‘socialization’ has much in common with ‘persuasion’. Here, the common denominator is the weight associated with the exchange of symbolic values. A major difference between the two modes is the behavior of the democracy promoters. If they are bound to deliberately convince the democracy taker using arguments, we are dealing with persuasion. If social interaction rather than argumentative communication takes place in many arenas, norms and values on the democracy taker side change more autonomously. In this case, rules of democracy are less learned through direct persuasion than through observance and the re-contextualization of Western ‘democratic’ elements in the domestic setting. In both cases, speaking of social learning is justified and confirmed by existing literature (again, see table 1).

The quasi-natural environment for norms to be spread without extensive elements of persuasion is networks formed both by individuals and organizations (Diani 2003). Unfortunately, only a very limited number of studies exist that explicitly concentrate on external democratization networks. Doris Beer has written on networks of political consulting (Beer 2006), Matthias Freise on civil society in the Czech Republic (Freise 2004). Jörg Forbrig and Pavol Demes have gathered experts involved in the network of election monitoring (Forbrig/Demes 2008). One common result of these studies is that the potential effects of democracy promotion by socialization depend on the prior existence of a certain degree of openness in the society being democratized. Otherwise, social interaction is not likely to take place or to be transposed into social or even governmental action.

This means that the explanatory power of external action is often hard to determine in the socialization mode. Where it is applied towards reluctant domestic actors, a danger of evasion and bluffing exists; adoption is not likely to take place in such a case. Where domestic elites are open to external norms, further socialization is superfluous and other instruments are used by democracy promoters. In other words, the empirically existing

constellations make it hard to identify effects of democracy promotion by socialization – either there is little basis for success, or (in successful cases) there are additional variables that may override the relevance of instruments linked to the mode of socialization. Some scholars have therefore decided to explicitly concentrate on less successful cases of democratization like Belarus (Marples 2006). Here, it becomes clear that non-willing elites are hardly influenced by interaction which is not interlinked with strong conditional instruments.

This rather pessimistic result does not apply to democracy promotion directed towards domestic civil society – an area on which a large proportion of research concentrates (Forbrig 2003; Forbrig 2004). Systematically speaking, three dimensions of civil society groups can be discerned: a) civil society organizations in target countries, b) civil society organizations in sender countries, and c) transnational, cross-border civil society. Research exists mainly on dimensions a) and c). In the first field, Marc Howard (2003) and Matthias Freise (2004) have published extensive studies on the development of civil society in Russia, Eastern Germany and the Czech Republic. Both come to rather reluctant conclusions concerning the external impact on civil society. Similar statements have been made by Sarah Mendelson who conducted a large comparative research project: “Local and Western NGOs have had very little effect on the actual functioning of new fragile institutions (...). The diffusion of norms and practices associated with democracy has in many cases been affected more by regional norms and practices than by international ones“ (Mendelson 2002: 233). The tenor of these early writings is that democratization in the civil society sphere largely depends on domestic conditions, whereas external aid can only serve as a resource of democracy to a very limited extent.

A significant change in this assessment came with the color revolutions in post-socialist Europe – the electoral defeats of semi-democratic regimes in Serbia (2000), Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004) with the aid of mass protest and pressure from civil society. An instructive volume on this topic has been edited by Jens Forbrig and Pavol Demeš (2008). Both scholars are affiliated with the German Marshall Fund, an active and relevant actor of external democratization. Therefore, when reading the volume, it must be kept in mind that the editors are not in a position to neutrally evaluate the role of external promoters.

An issue that has received growing attention in the external democratization literature is the post-national constellation of many actors in democratization networks. The focus on non-state organization leads to transnational groups in civil society. This is true for the donor side of democracy where many organizations have pillars in different countries. International organizations with little bargaining power like the Council of Europe or the OSCE are also dominated by an internal logic detached from clear national profiles. In addition, civil society in countries receiving democracy is often heavily interlinked with transnational networks. One important contribution which highlights this aspect is Solveig Richter’s study on the impact of the OSCE on democratization in select South-Eastern European countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia (Richter 2009). She finds that the (non-)success of the OSCE depends on the timing of socialization measures. During the phase of stabilization and institution building, conditionality may prove successful. At a later stage, the OSCE and other transnational bodies need to switch their strategy to arguing and model giving in order to remain a relevant player. A similar statement has been made by Susan Stewart who argues that an instrumental approach towards civil society in a democracy recipient state bears the potential problem of evolving into an artificial civil society (Stewart 2009).

The most recent literature centered on the socialization mode deals with external governance by the EU. Previously, countries subject to the European Neighborhood Policy were usually treated within the conditionality paradigm. Since it has become clear that the major incentive of the EU – prospective EU membership – will not be on the agenda for years to come, the

character of contacts has been bent towards less conditional types of interaction. Of course, the EU still partly follows its strategy of offering certain benefits to ENP countries. However, the focus has switched from the direct promotion of democracy to transgovernmental interaction which invests in principles like transparency, accountability, and participation rather than in directly demanding progress in the institutions of electoral democracy. In its non-democratic neighborhood, the EU has arguably moved from leverage to external governance (Lavenex/Schimmelfennig 2009; Lavenex/Schimmelfennig 2011). Effective democracy promotion in this context depends on sectoral adoption costs of the principles named above, the accessibility and autonomy of a country's administration, and the institutionalization of functional cooperation (Freyburg u.a. 2011; Lavenex/Schimmelfennig 2011: 898). In these texts, one main difference to existing socialization literature is involvement at the actor level. Whereas most texts using the socialization approach concentrate on civil society and the non-state sector, the notion of external governance implies that transgovernmental structures are the level where social learning potentially takes place (Freyburg 2011).

In summary, it becomes clear that the mode of socialization can only be seen as a promising approach to external democracy promotion in specific constellations. Measures resting on the transfer of ideas need to be flanked by alternative measures, in particular by elements of conditionality. At the same time, measures focusing on social interaction gain plausibility in those cases when a certain progress of democratization can be discerned in the target countries; only then can external democracy promoters become the actors on an equal footing that are necessary for social learning by both domestic civil society and by domestic elites.

Conclusion

The research field of external democratization distinguishes between four modes of democracy promotion: by a) coercion, b) conditionality, c) persuasion, and d) socialization. Across the modes, our empirical knowledge is unevenly distributed. While numerous papers address the conditional democracy assistance, in particular by the EU, there is considerably less knowledge on

existing 'islands of persuasion' or networks of socialization. In contrast, it is not difficult to find research on the conceptual dimension – by and large, there is a certain imbalance to the disadvantage of descriptive analysis which could sufficiently buttress all modes of external democratization.

In light of this, it seems that the bigger projects by Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier (Schimmelfennig/Sedelmeier 2005b) as well as by Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse (Börzel/Risse 2009) set the tone in conceptual respect. Currently, there seem to be no rivaling projects that contest the basic ideas developed there. Drawing on alternative metatheoretical schools of thought, their systematizations have perpetuated existing propositions and paved the way for future studies. It is necessary to underscore that both contributions stem from the research field of European Union studies. On the one hand, EU studies have again proven able to give important impulses to other subfields of political science. Nonetheless, problems are implicit in this orientation towards European Studies. There is a need for constant review of presumably inadequate presuppositions, and a possibly even greater danger in the inappropriate transfer of empirical results to regions with other political or historical contexts.

All in all, research on external democracy promotion has developed rapidly in recent years. The general idea is that external democracy promotion can indeed play a significant role in the democratization process of a given country. Geographical or ideational proximity to a western integration system almost assumes the position of a condition *sine qua non* for the lasting stability – meaning consolidation – of a young democracy. Democracy promotion only becomes sufficiently effective if adequate instruments considering both the case and the situation are implemented. The prospects of success increase when logics of action for the different modes of democracy promotion are recognized and consistently followed by donors and receivers. Given the ongoing widespread complaints about research deficits in the field of external democratization (Erdmann/Kneuer 2009: 320), these general insights can indeed be seen as a sign of progress. We should, however, be aware of the fact that large parts of the knowledge gained are related to the *character* and much less to the *effects* of underlying mechanisms. Therefore, it can be expected that further research literature will concentrate on the results rather than on the attributes of democracy promotion.

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