

## **Abstract**

The United States of America and the institutions of the European Union are the most prominent democracy assistance donors in third countries. Over the last two decades, they have spent tens of billions of dollars to support the formation and consolidation of democratic regimes around the world. In this sense, the US and the EU have seemingly shared interests – i.e. seeking to build democratic institutions in target countries so that these become part of the community of democracies and contribute to the stability of the world’s economic and political system. However, if we look at the approaches and strategies used by the US and the EU to support democracy, we find that they are often quite different and, in some respects, clashing. Why are the approaches of both actors different if they strive to reach the same goal? Or – upon closer examination – are their goals indeed somewhat different? The key problem is that democracy as such is a contested concept, so it is necessary to ask the question: if we are promoting democracy, what kind of democracy do we mean? If we finance the development of one or the other institution, what model of democratic establishment will be created? The thesis takes a constructivist view of this issue and demonstrates how the different democratic identities of the two actors create different views on the process of democratic transformation and, consequently, informs the actors’ approaches to the policy of democracy assistance. The first part of this dissertation deals with the discussion of models of democracy and creates a typology of approaches to democracy assistance. The second part examines the democratic identity of both actors – that is, the influence of different political philosophies on their contemporary perceptions of democracy, their conceptions of the role of the state in an individual’s life and the sources of the legitimacy to govern for democratic regimes. The third part links previous theoretical knowledge to practice – it describes the concepts and definitions of democracy in US and EU primary guiding documents and instruments designed to support democracy in third countries and demonstrates how the specific democratic identity of both actors manifests itself in practice. The thesis concludes that the US’ preferred “bottom-up–political–procedural” approach to democracy and the EU’s leaning toward the “top-down–developmental–substantive” approach are given by default by the two actors’ democratic identities – in other words, how each of them defines democracy for its foreign policy use.