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A Multilateralized Civilian Power Approach: The German Foreign Policy and Central Eastern Europe[1]

Applying the insights of role theory, this paper investigates Germany's foreign policy since 1990 towards the Central and Eastern European region in general, and Hungary in particular. Applying Germany's "civilian power" role concept as a yardstick, we explore whether Germany lived up to the expectations in the area of economic assistance, minority rights and the Eastern enlargement of the EU. In the next step, we review how Germany's civilian power approach has changed since the CEE countries became members of the EU in 2004/2007. Overall, we find that Bonn very much lived up to its role concept before 2004/2007. What changed since then is that Germany's role concept was multilateralized: in effect, the EU and Germany share a similar foreign policy playbook, as many have characterized the EU itself as a civilian power. At its optimum, this gives Berlin a significant leverage over the CEE countries: the common weight of the EU apparatus and Germany is considerable.

Keywords: Germany, Hungary, foreign policy, Central and Eastern Europe, European Union, minority rights, economic assistance, Angela Merkel, civilian power

Introduction

Role theory has been an important tool in Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) since Kalevi Holsti's seminal article was published in 1970. (Holsti, 1970) Building on the insights

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role theory has brought to sociology and psychology, and using the works of James N. Rosenau, Richard C. Snyder, H. W. Bruck and Burton Sapin as a stepping stone, Holsti and other role theorists asserted that states evince regular behavioural patterns in the bipolar Cold War structure, e.g. "non-aligned", "ally" or "satellites". (Walker, 1979; Wish, 1980) Role concepts are defined by Holsti as "the policymaker's own definitions of the general kind of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems. It is their "image" of the appropriate orientations or functions of their state toward, or in, the external environment". (Holsti, 1970: 245–246) In short, role concepts are templates for states to guide their foreign policy actions. What makes role concepts particularly useful for FPA is that they constitute an ideal situation, a yardstick, against which to measure the actual foreign policy actions (role performance). Since the early 1970s, a growing number of role theorists have asserted the existence of an expanding number of social roles – such as that of "leader", "mediator", "initiator", "defender of the faith", "aggressor" – as the social structure of international relations evolved. (Harnisch, 2011: 7)

There is a significant consensus in the literature that Germany's role concept can be best described as a "civilian power" ("Zivilmacht" in German). The term was coined by Hanns W. Maull in 1990. (Maull, 1990; Maull, 2007) Rooted in (West) Germany's post-1949 history, Maull and Henning Tewes argued that the ideal type civilian power exhibits the following five characteristics:

- the acceptance of the necessity of cooperation with others in the pursuit of international objectives;
- the concentration on non-military, primarily economic means to secure national goals, with military power left as a residual instrument serving essentially to safeguard other means of international interaction;
- a willingness to develop supranational structures to address critical issues of international management;
- the upholding of values such as democracy, the rule of law and human rights including minority rights;
- a view of economic interdependence that not only accepts interdependence as a given, but that gears domestic actors to reap the maximum benefits from it; and
- a vision of an international system that exhibits the legalisation of social relations, the development of participatory forms of decision making, the institutional channelling of conflict resolution and the taming of the use of force. (Maull, 1990; Tewes, 1997)

Applying the civilian power role concept more specifically to Eastern Europe after 1990 but prior to the EU and NATO accession of the countries of the region, we can postulate from the above five characteristics that we will witness:

1. A multilateral German approach to the region instead of a bilateral regional German strategy.
2. Significant German support for the EU and NATO integration of the region terminating in full membership.

3. A propensity to use economic means (economic assistance, aid, trade etc.) to achieve German goals (stability and prosperity) in the region.
4. Support for the economic opening up of the region to increase economic interdependence with the EU.

We will now turn to the question whether Germany lived up to its civilian power vocation in the actual implementation of its foreign policy after 1990. In other words, we try to establish if Germany's role concept and role performance aligned or diverged in this period. Throughout, we will mostly focus on German–Hungarian relations, but to give a wider picture, where possible, we will take a glimpse of Germany's foreign policy towards Central Eastern Europe (CEE) in general, as well. To do all this, we firstly review German foreign policy in three crucial areas which are touched upon in our four aforementioned expectations: economic assistance, minority policy and EU accession. In this, we will focus on the years prior to the EU accession of Hungary (and the region), i.e. 2004/2007. Secondly, we try to sketch if and how Germany's civilian power vocation vis-à-vis the CEE region has changed since these countries became part of the European Union. Our sources include not only the relevant secondary literature, but reports and policy papers from the Hungarian Foreign Ministry from the period 1990–2003, as well.

German Economic Assistance after 1990

Did Germany's commitment to being a civilian power live up to the expectations in the field of economic assistance? Tewes argues that this is an issue area where the congruence of role concept and role performance of a civilian power can be ascertained or refuted, because the awareness of the high costs of military force should let a civilian power engage in active development policies in order to prevent conflicts. (Tewes, 1997) Therefore, ambitious aid programs ought to be examples of a particularly active development policy suited to a civilian power. More concretely, Davis and Dombrowski postulate that in keeping with the cheque book diplomacy practiced in Western Europe, Germany should have sought to establish a regional economic environment and commercial ties compatible with the needs of its domestic economy. It should also have encouraged the transitional economies to pursue policies of openness toward global markets. (Davis–Dombrowski, 1997)

It is notoriously hard to establish just how much assistance Germany has given to the region, especially 25 years later. Even when data is to be found, differences in book-keeping, different time-frames, currencies and categories confuse the picture. Moreover, pledged sums do not equal actual aid disbursements as some of the sums did not find addressees. (This was the case with a credit Germany gave to Hungary in 1996. It turned out that the interest rate was higher than that which could be obtained in the market, making the

assistance unattractive.)[2] Nevertheless, even rough numbers give a good impression on Germany's commitment to the countries of the region.

Turning first to absolute numbers, Germany bilaterally assisted the three Visegrád countries and Romania and Bulgaria to the tune of 20 billion DM in the period 1989–93 – this without its share in EU and EBRD transfers (Table 1). If we add Germany's share in EU assistance (for example, the PHARE program), the sum is 22.5 billion DM over five years or 4.5 billion DM a year. This does not include one-off, ad-hoc forms of assistance as the cancellation of Hungary's transfer Rubel debt it owed to former Eastern German companies for deliveries received but not paid in 1990. In comparison, the German financial contribution to the Gulf war in classic cheque book fashion amounted to 18 billion DM. The biggest single contribution of all was Poland's debt cancellation. Overall, bilateral assistance to all Central and Eastern European countries amounted to 0.2 per cent of German GNP in 1992. (Davis–Dombrowski, 1997: 8) The numbers clearly show a bias toward the three Visegrád countries. The Visegrád countries as a group received ten times as much as Bulgaria and Romania put together (18.3 to 1.7 billion DM). Although not included in this table, the Baltics and the Balkan region were similarly disadvantaged compared to the Visegrád countries. (Davis–Dombrowski, 1997: 12)

Table 1.

German assistance to selected Eastern European countries 1989–1993 (in million DM)

	Bulgaria	**Czecho-slovakia**	**Poland**	**Hungary**	**Romania**
Bilateral…					
Federal credits	198	5677	2727	2684	1129
State credits	0	0	0	500	0
Humanitarian assistance	27	0	20	50	179
Debt cancellation	0	0	6118	0	0
Other	27	80	191	275	127
Total bilateral	**252**	**5757**	**9056**	**3509**	**1435**
Per capita	**28 DM**	**558 DM**	**237 DM**	**340 DM**	**63 DM**
Multilateral…					
Share in EU assistance	353	381	554	852	428

Source: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Fraktionen der CDU/CSU und F.D.P., Drucksache 12/6162, November 12, 1993. 61.

Comparing German assistance to other countries is trickier still due to different national book-keeping standards and different currencies. Yet a compilation of statistics provided

[2] *A német szövetségi kormány, vm. a bajor, a baden-württembergi és az északrajna-vesztfáliai tartomány által felajánlott 1,3 Mrd. DEM értékű hitelkeret felhasználásáról.* [About the utilization of the credit offered by Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg and North Rhine-Westphalia to the tune of 1.3 bln. DM.] KKM Irattár, Külügyminisztérium Tük, 109. csomó, 00813, February 28, 1997.

by the Bundestag in 1996 sheds some light on how much the EU-15 countries were assisting Central and Eastern Europe in the period of 1990–95.[3] In total, EU member states bilaterally provided 32.6 billion ECU worth of assistance to the region (Table 2). Of this, Germany held the lion share with 45 per cent of the total sum. In view of its relative geographic distance from the region, France's contribution of 19 per cent can also be viewed as significant. The third biggest donor was Austria, due to its obvious interest in stabilizing the region. However, Italy's and, especially, the UK's relatively low share stand out while Holland's contribution can be characterized as paltry in light of the fact that it was very much profiting from the region: in Hungary, Dutch firms were the second biggest investors as late as 2002. As percentage of GNP, only Austria contributed more to the region than Germany at 0.22 per cent in 1992. The US contribution was 0.01 per cent that same year. (Davis–Dombrowski, 1997: 21) All this in a period, when the German budgetary situation was extremely tight: due to the rebuilding of former Eastern Germany, ever-increasing German contributions to EU budgets and ad-hoc outlays (such as approx. 15 billion DM to the Soviet Union for removing its troops under the 2 + 4 agreement), Germany's public debt tripled in 1990–1998. (Hinrichs, 2002: 7) After 1990, Germany's debt grew 17.3 per cent every year. Overall, the financial side of civilianization was no doubt costly to Germany at a time when domestically it had to face a vicious circle of high taxation, high unemployment and slack economic growth. (Tewes, 1997: 107)

Table 2.
Assistance to CEE countries by the EU-15 (1990–1995)

Total EU-15 countries	32613	100%
Germany	14645	45%
France	6162	19%
Austria	3421	10.5%
Italy	1542	4.7%
Sweden	1487	4.5%
The Netherlands	1267	3.9%
Denmark	1092	3.3%
Spain	1039	3.2%
UK	836	2.6%
Finland	720	2.2%

Source: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Klaus Francke (Hamburg), Karl Lamers und der Fraktion der CDU/CSU sowie der Abgeordneten Ulrich Irmer, Dr. Olaf Feldmann, Dr. Helmut Haussmann, Dr.-Ing. Karl-Hans Laermann und der Fraktion der F.D.P. Drucksache 13/5601, September 25 1996. 59.

[3] Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Klaus Francke (Hamburg), Karl Lamers und der Fraktion der CDU/CSU sowie der Abgeordneten Ulrich Irmer, Dr. Olaf Feldmann, Dr. Helmut Haussmann, Dr.-Ing. Karl-Hans Laermann und der Fraktion der F.D.P. Drucksache 13/5601, September 25, 1996. 59.

Having established that Germany provided significant help to the region both bilaterally and multilaterally, we might ask to what extent was German assistance geared towards goals that might be expected from a civilian power, e.g. conflict prevention, economic stabilization and encouragement of openness toward global markets? In the first years after 1990, the countries of the region were economically at the edge of a precipice because of recession, high inflation, huge deficits and ballooning public debts. The situation was perhaps the gravest in Poland, where the government could not service its debt which exceeded 100 per cent of the GDP. To avert bankruptcy, the creditors, among them the German state and German banks, cancelled a significant part of Warsaw's debt, a move which cost German taxpayers 6.1 billion DM. In a similar, life-saving fashion Hungary received in its first "democratic" winter of 1990/91 a last-minute, non-refundable German assistance to the tune of 50 million DM to buy coal supplies which Budapest could not secure due to cash-flow problems.[4]

German assistance did not always come in such dramatic fashion, though. The Transform program, initiated in 1994, bundled the long-term technical assistance Germany was giving to the region. Areas of training were demand-driven and included microeconomic consultancy, environmental co-operation, economic policy making, advice on privatization, the restructuring of agricultural sectors and the training of civil servants in legal matters and EU norms and standards. In 1993–2005, the program spent approximately 1.1 billion DM in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. (Sell–Schauf, 2003: 45) Another successful, long-term assistance was the so-called KMU-Förderprogramm of the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW). The aim was to give cheap loans to small and medium enterprises (SME) in the region. In case of Hungary, the initial sum of 100 million DM provided by the German side in 1991 was soon exhausted so the program was extended in 1994. In the first four years, almost 5000 Hungarian SMEs profited from the cheap loans.[5] In effect, Germany expended significant resources on building a strong SME sector in Central and Eastern Europe, thus developing enterprises which might later become competitors to its own SMEs.

In addition to these measures, Germany was also interested in the strengthening of trade links with the region. For this, the Hermes export-insurance program was the preferred instrument, whereby in contracts, where incalculable political risks prevent private insurances from giving guarantees, the German state steps in to insure German exporters. Overall, the purpose of Hermes guarantees was to encourage German companies to explore export opportunities from which they would otherwise refrain, i.e. in Central and Eastern Europe. In 1992, 32.4 per cent of all German exports to the region were insured by the Hermes program. (Tewes, 1997: 108–109) The German state also provided insurances for German companies investing in the region through the C&L Treuarbeit Deutsche Revision AG. All in all, 3.5 billion DM of German investments were insured this way. (Tewes, 1997: 110)

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4 Állami Számvevőszék: *Jelentés 100 millió márka kedvezményes hitel (START-hitel) és az 50 millió márka német szénsegély felhasználásának az ellenőrzéséről.* [Report on the control of the utilization of the 100 mln. DM START Credit and the 50 mln. German coal help.] October 6, 1995. 2.

5 Cím nélkül. [Without title.] MNL OL, Antall József személyes iratai, 117. doboz, 432/1992, Feburary 5, 1992.

Hand in hand with these various assistance measures went schemes to make it easy for workers from the CEE region to get work in Germany. Through various federal programs, guest workers, seasonal labourers, project-tied workers and border commuters from the region were able to access the German work market through the preferential treatment afforded to them by the German state. (Sieveking–Reim–Sandbrink, 1998; Pásztor, 2013) For Hungary, this meant that, in 1996, for instance, 14,000 persons found work in Germany, easing the unemployment in the country and generating a profit of 500,000 Dollars, according to Foreign Ministry estimates.[6] At the turn of the century, Germany was issuing around 350,000 work permits per year for workers from the CEE region.[7] True to its civilian power vocation, Bonn maintained this preferential treatment even in the years when the unemployment in Germany increased, reaching 9.8 per cent in 1993. Although Germany lowered the various quotas through which it was regulating the flow of incoming Eastern European workers, it did not abandon its commitment to help the CEE countries through these workforce schemes.

All these cases should not be viewed as altruistic initiatives on the side of Germany. A civilian power very much pursues its own set of interests, yet in an enlightened way, eschewing military force, coercion or domination. The stabilization of Eastern and Central Europe was very much in Germany's political and economic interest as was the kick-starting of investments and the expansion of trade. Yet other actors, similarly interested in this outcome, expended much less resources on this goal. There were no similar French or Italian aid programs for the countries of the region. Moreover, the German civilian power approach saw to it that the demands of the CEE countries were taken into consideration: the Transform program was tailored to the needs of each country. Through the aid programs, credits, humanitarian assistance, debt relief and Hermes insurances, the ability of the governments of the region to put in motion the necessary economic transformation was significantly enhanced. To talk about German unilateral domination, something which is incompatible with the civilian power approach, can be further refuted by pointing to the fact that Germany was ready to share the CEE market with its competitors. In the first years after 1990, American firms invested much more than Germans in Hungary. Even today, Germany is only the third biggest investor in Slovakia.

German Minority Policy after 1990

Human rights policy is a constitutive element of Germany's civilian power role concept. (Heinz, 2007) Probably the most important dimension of human rights in Central and Eastern Europe are ethnic minority rights. After 1990, approximately 3 million Hungarians continued to live in the neighboring countries as ethnic minorities, more than 10 million Russians in the Baltic countries, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, and around a quarter of a million Germans in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Germany thus had a double

6 *Tárgyalási témajavaslat – Antall József és Helmut Kohl megbeszéléséhez.* [Topics for discussion for the meeting between Antall József and Helmut Kohl.] Antall József személyes iratai, 242. doboz, June 23, 1993.

7 Unterrichtung durch die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration – Migrationsbericht 2003, Drucksache 15/2262, December 18, 2003. 64.

interest in the institutionalization and observance of minority rights in Eastern Europe: by it, a traditional cause of discord in the region could be neutralized while the situation of the German minority abroad could be improved.

Germany had an interest in making minority rights as stable as possible and having them to comply with the political requirements laid down in international documents like that of the OSCE. (Kiss J., 2002) Judging by the reports of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Germany did expend significant political capital to do just that after 1990. Germany was supportive of the codification of individual minority rights through the Council of Europe (CoE), such as the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages of 1992, the recommendation 1201 of 1993 and the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities of 1994. Bonn also supported the Copenhagen Document of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 1990. All these documents provided wide ranging individual rights for the minorities. According to a Hungarian report, Germany was ready to put pressure on France to equip the recommendation 1201 of the CoE with a much tougher wording. Chancellor Helmut Kohl even hinted that otherwise he would not attend the forthcoming CoE summit, but to no avail: the French position prevailed.[8] Yet those minority rights standards that are in force currently in Europe were codified with Bonn's support.

More importantly, Germany was ready to expend some bilateral political capital on the issue. For example, Germany put pressure on Romania and Slovakia, where the situation of the Hungarian minority was less than satisfactory.[9] In 1995 the German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel urged his Romanian colleague to reach out to its Hungarian minority and sign the long-awaited Basic Treaty. (Smith, 1999: 142) Earlier, Kohl also expressed his worries about Romania's internal developments to President Ion Iliescu.[10] Because of the problematic human rights situation, Germany cancelled all financial and economic assistance to Yugoslavia by 1991, Kohl assured Hungarian Prime Minister Antall József. (Jeszenszky, 2016: 192) Yet Germany's activism in this respect clearly had its limits: to Hungarian requests to put pressure on Bratislava or Bucharest it usually suggested that Budapest should strive to hold its neighbours responsible to the international norms embodied in the OSCE and CoE documents. In other words, instead of counting on German help in solving the problem, Hungary should multilateralize its grievances.[11] Bonn also politely but continuously opposed the goal of the Hungarian governments, namely the idea of giving collective minority rights (in essence, autonomy) to the various ethnic communities. Here, two civilian power-goals clashed: on the one side there was the commitment to human rights, including minority rights. On the other hand, there was the overarching goal of political stability in Central and Eastern Europe. According to the

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8 *Német követ véleménye a magyar–magyar csúcs közös nyilatkozatáról ás az ET 1201 ajánlásáról.* [Opinion of the German Ambassador on the joint communique of the Hungarian–Hungarian Summit and the Recommendation 1201 of the Council of Europe.] KKM Irattár, Külügyminisztérium Admin, 109. csomó, 7173, August 7, 1996.

9 *W. Schäuble látogatása a nagykövetségen.* [The visit of W. Schäuble at the Embassy.] MNL OL, Külügyminisztérium Tük, 28. doboz, 00179, January 15, 1993.

10 *Jelentés a bonni konzultációról (1995. május 11.).* [Report on the consultations in Bonn, May 11, 1995.] KKM Irattár, Külügyminisztérium Tük, 3465-7, May 16, 1995.

11 *1993. évi nagyköveti beszámoló jelentés.* [The Ambassador's yearly report of 1993.] MNL OL, Külügyminisztérium Tük, 28. doboz, 002122, June 28, 1993.

prevailing German perspective, calls for autonomy might open a Pandora's box and could destabilize Europe. This is why even the "token" stability of the region is more important to the German Government than the effective solving of minority problems, sighed an exasperated Hungarian diplomat in 2002.[12] Ultimately, Germany saw the region's EU membership as the ultimate solution to the issue of ethnic minorities.[13] No doubt, this fell far short of what successive Hungarian governments were expecting from Germany. Still, in essence, Germany's role performance in the area of minority rights matched those of a civilian power.

Germany and the EU and NATO Enlargement

The ultimate proof of Germany's civilian power vocation was the Eastern enlargement of the European Union which was set in motion and strongly supported by Germany. This story has been recounted many times. (Baun, 2000; Jerabek, 2011; Becker, 2011) Even if the German position was occasionally characterized by stalling and ambivalence as to the conditions and date of the accession, there can be no doubt that Bonn was one of the motors of this epochal development. (Becker, 2011: 147–155) One must not forget that the Kohl and Schröder governments had to expend significant political capital on this issue, because the enlargement was by no means particularly popular with the German society at large or with various sectoral economic stakeholders. (Becker, 2011: 140–141) Through it all, Germany evinced a civilian power approach to the question. In effect, Germany had no dedicated, CEE-strategy after 1990: it substituted this with the enlargement policy of the EU, which became Germany's regional foreign policy strategy. (Lang, 2012) Also, Bonn was committed to shape the process true to its belief in multilateralism: Bonn continuously and sincerely tried to reassure Paris (as well as Moscow) that it is not out to dominate Europe in the process. (Lang, 2012) Hungarian diplomats were repeatedly reminded by their German colleagues to focus their efforts on convincing France (and other sceptical countries) of the benefits of enlargement.[14] German diplomats also suggested the establishment of a common German–French–Hungarian working group on the level of ambassadors to allay French fears, an idea picked up by the Hungarian side.[15]

Less noted at the time, but a similar strategy was used by Germany when it came to the Eastern Enlargement of NATO. Here, Germany's high regard for a multilateral approach manifested itself in the way that it tried to allay the fears of the Russians while keeping the pro-enlargement Americans on board and, at the same time, persuade the

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12 *Konzultáció Berlinben.* [Consultation in Berlin.] KKM Irattár, KKM Irattár, Külügyminisztérium Admin, 2773, February 4, 2002.

13 *Jelentés a Kormány részére Joschka Fischer német külügyminiszter magyarországi látogatásáról (1999. január 7.).* [Report for the Government on the visit of Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer in Hungary, January 7, 1999.] KKM Irattár, Külügyminisztérium Admin, 499-3, January 12, 1999.

14 *Jelentés a Kormány számára Horn Gyula miniszterelnök látogatásáról az NSZK-ban.* [Report for the Government on Prime Minister Horn Gyula's visit to Germany.] KKM Irattár, Külügyminisztérium Admin, 109. csomó, 6510-27. October 10, 1995.

15 *Heinichen nagykövet Németország támogató szerepéről, a német–francia különleges kapcsolatokról.* [Ambassador Heinichen on Germany's supportive role and the special relationship between Germany and France.] KKM Irattár, Külügyminisztérium Admin, 64. doboz, 483-7. June 2, 1994.

more sceptic French of the usefulness of the eastward expansion. (Asmus, 2003; Overhaus 2008) While not ready to give Moscow a veto over the enlargement, Bonn repeatedly took into account the views of Russian President Boris Yeltsin, going so far as to deliberately slow down the whole process it set in motion when it threatened to weaken the relatively cooperative Yeltsin's domestic position – all this in accordance with Paris and Washington. (Asmus, 2003: 211) Without alienating any of its partners too much, Berlin realized its goals in 1999, 2004 and 2007, when the countries of the CEE region successfully joined the EU and NATO. Germany was now completely surrounded by allies, a satisfied German diplomat told Hungarian Foreign Minister János Martonyi in 1999.[16]

Germany as a Civilian Power after 2004

Having achieved the region's EU and NATO accession by 2004/2007, Germany's civilian power foreign policy towards the CEE had to change inevitably. Germany no longer had the leverage over the countries of the region as before. Once in, the CEE countries had more room to manoeuver and were no longer reliant on German support. This was very much in line with expectations that relations between Germany and the Visegrád countries should continue to loosen after the enlargement. (Baun, 2005: 374) Put it simply, the countries of the region now could afford to oppose German positions. Gone were the days when EU accession conditionality and the need for Germany's support limited the options of the CEE countries. (Not that Germany often threw its weight around: in case of Hungary, we could only identify one instance for a coercion-like behaviour, when in 1995–96 Bonn refused to grant the country a cheap loan and instead pushed the socialist–liberal government to enact austerity measures and apply for a credit line from the IMF.) (Hettyey, 2018) Overall, the cost of non-compliance with German positions lowered significantly once Hungary and the other countries of the region joined the EU and NATO.

Still, one might ask whether there is still a residue of civilian power in Germany's foreign policy towards the Eastern European member states. After all, Germany's overall civilian power approach to international affairs did not change in the period since the CEE countries joined. We argue that, in effect, what happened was that Germany's civilian power approach was multilateralized after 2004/2007. Berlin's civilian power approach now works through the EU, and, to a lesser extent, NATO. This is made all the more easier as many scholars argue that the European Union as a whole has a civilian power role concept of itself. While in no way accepted by the whole scientific community, some authors claim that the EU's approach to foreign policy can be characterized as that of a civilian power. Based on Francois Duchene's ground-breaking study in the 1970s, there has been a certain tendency to describe the EU as an international actor with a principled behaviour in the international sphere. (Duchene, 1972) The civilian power concept is not just the description of an economic giant with little political power, but the representation of an international actor that spreads civilian and democratic standards of governance on the basis of an

[16] *Jelentés a Kormánynak Martonyi János külügyminiszter bonni tárgyalásairól.* [Report for the Government on the negotiations of Martonyi János in Bonn.] KKM Irattár, Külügyminisztérium Admin, 109. csomó, 6173-4, December 7, 1998.

"ethics of responsibility" which is usually associated with home affairs. (Lucarelli, 2006) The EU's goal of strengthening human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as well as the aim of spreading prosperity and achieving convergence between the member states can be seen as quintessentially civilian power goals, very similar to Germany's role concept, we might add. (Jünemann–Schörnig, 2002)

German civilian power foreign policy can be detected in traces in the European Union's behaviour towards rule of law issues, especially in Poland and Hungary. Take the controversial Hungarian media law of 2010. After its adoption by the Hungarian Parliament, the Merkel Government quickly called upon the Commission to investigate whether the law was in compliance with the European norms. Due to the pressure from the Commission, the Hungarian Parliament later modified the bill.[17] Berlin has taken a similar stance in various following rule-of-law-arguments with Hungary. Similarly, in 2017 Germany supported the European Commission in initiating Article 7 procedures against Poland.[18] These episodes show elements of the preferred tactic of the successive Merkel governments. Berlin opted to "multilateralize" criticism and, in a sense, "hide" behind the seemingly un-political façade of the Commission. The troubled German–Polish history was another reason why Berlin dearly wanted to avoid to bilateralize the disagreement over the state of democracy in Poland.[19] In other words, Berlin wanted to make it clear that the argument is not between Germany and Poland but between the European Union as a whole and Poland.

In our view, Germany's, and more specifically Chancellor Angela Merkel's handling of the 2015 refugee crisis can also be partly understood in terms of the civilian power vocation of the country. The "moral leadership" displayed in August 2015 when Merkel repeatedly proclaimed "wir schaffen das" was rooted in the peculiar identity of Germany after 1949: an innate openness toward refugees, the upholding of international law provisions and a sense of indispensability. (Bulmer–Paterson, 2016: 7–9) Obviously, migration is an issue which is viewed very differently in many CEE countries: Germany's role concept and the role concept of Hungary, for example, seem to be diametrically opposed in this regard. The rift in the identities, histories, perceptions and world views of the two societies and of the decision makers seems to be well-nigh unbridgeable. Yet what put German foreign policy on collision course with many CEE countries over this issue were not only competing role concepts but the fact that Germany did not remain true to its civilian power method: instead of a multilateral approach, Berlin, at least initially, acted unilaterally. As Bulmer and Paterson observed, Merkel showed none of the reluctance that has characterized her position in other crises. Nor did she indulge in the exhaustive consultation, which has been such a major feature of German civilian power foreign policy. International consultation was restricted to the then Austrian Chancellor Faymann. (Bulmer–Paterson, 2016: 7) No such privilege was granted to the CEE countries.

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17 Bundestag: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Katrin Werner, Sevim Dagdelen, Annette Groth, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE, Drucksache 17/7468, November 11, 2011.

18 Welt.de: Auswärtiges Amt hofft auf endgültiges Aus für umstrittene Justizreform [Online], July 24, 2017.

19 Zeit.de: Das Ende der Geduld [Online], December 20, 2017.

On a more positive note, Germany continued the support of the region's economic modernization after 2004/2007. The change taking place was that Germany more or less ceased its *bilateral* assistance. Instead, the German contributions to the EU's (and NATO's) common budget played this part. Berlin was true to its word. After 2004, Germany was consistently among the biggest contributors to the Multiannual Financial Framework, as the EU budget is called. To take two snapshots: in 2012, Germany was the third biggest net contributor in terms of share of GDP, fourth biggest in contributions per capita and the biggest in absolute numbers (–0.44% of the GDP, –146 euro per capita and –11.95 billion Euros, respectively.)[20] In 2016, the same applied: it was the third biggest net contributor in terms of share of GDP, fourth biggest in contributions per capita and the biggest in absolute numbers (–0.46 per cent of the GDP, –176 euro per capita and –14.3 billion Euros, respectively.)[21] As can be seen, Germany's overall net position decreased significantly in the intervening years along all three measures. Once again, Germany's civilian power foreign policy goal of stabilizing and modernizing the CEE countries through various forms of economic assistance did not disappear: only, its execution changed from bilateral to multilateral avenues.

Conclusions

When summing up whether Germany was faithful to its civilian power role concept in the CEE region, it seems useful to identify two distinct periods: before the Eastern enlargement of the EU in 2004/2007 and after. In the first period, Bonn very much lived up to its role concept, both in terms of various forms of economic assistance and in its support for EU and NATO enlargement, often in the face of significant domestic and international scepticism and/or outright opposition. Even in the field of minority rights Germany was ready to expend political capital, if not to the extent Hungary wished. One caveat must be added: the three (later four) Visegrád countries were heavily favoured in terms of economic assistance, while the Baltics and Romania and Bulgaria were relatively neglected. Yet Germany supported the latter's EU and NATO accession, as well. Compared to other European big powers and measured against its own yardstick, Germany delivered in the CEE region, without unilaterally dominating the region.

After 2004/2007 Germany's civilian power approach towards the CEE region changed considerably. First of all, the classic civilian power approach "moved on" in a geographic sense, as it became much more visible in the Western Balkans region, where the traditional civilian power methods of conflict prevention and bilateral economic assistance were increasingly applied. (Obradovic-Wochnik, 2014: 10) These traditional instruments were no longer applicable or necessary with the already-member CEE states. What changed with regards to the CEE countries was that, in effect, Germany's role concept was multilateralized by the EU: instead of bilateral avenues, German foreign policy increasingly flowed through Brussels, be it rule-of-law criticism or German financial contributions through the common EU budget. This is not to say that bilateralism stopped between Berlin and Budapest (or

[20] Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung: Top 5 Nettozahler und Nettoempfänger in der EU, 2012.
[21] Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung: Nettozahler und Nettoempfänger in der EU, 2016.

Warsaw, for that matter) – witness the current disagreements between Germany and Poland over the World War 2 reparation issue. Yet, by and large, Germany took advantage of the fact that its role concept is very close (if not identical) with the EU's role concept. This has enabled Germany to sometimes "hide" behind the seemingly objective face of the Commission when it came to criticizing CEE countries. At its optimum, this also gives Berlin an even bigger leverage over the CEE countries: the common weight of the EU apparatus *and* Germany is considerable. What happens if Germany moves unilaterally, was shown in 2015, when the German response to the refugee crisis Germany laid bare the risks of a departure of its traditional way of conducting foreign policy. It seems that the tried and tested civilian power approach still does the best services for Berlin.

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