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### The German Political Foundations: NGO or Part of the Foreign Policy Machinery. The Case of Israel and Palestine

The six German political foundations – the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), the Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung (HSS), the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung (FNSt), the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (HBS) and the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung (RLS) – are legally treated as Non-Governmental-Organizations (NGO's), but they are almost entirely financed through taxes paid by the German State. Thus, these foundations in terms of their domestic and foreign activities are unique institutions. While focusing on political education, scientific research and scholarship-programmes domestically, the foundations are carrying out activities in the field of dialog and political consulting in more than 100 countries abroad. The foundations maintain offices in these countries headed by resident representatives that are trained in Germany by the foundation itself.

The character of the international work differs depending on the project country. Thus, the engagement of the foundations in the industrialized countries is generally conducive to the development of international relations and political contacts. The aim in the developing countries is focused on promoting and consolidating social structures. This work at home and abroad makes the foundations an important part of the political culture of Germany. The foundations have political influence and are connected to the policy decision makers, because the foundations are usually close to the parties represented in the German Bundestag and share their political values and aims. This means that they possess significant influence on and access to the key political actors. Through informing and advising they also strengthen the relationships with their partners in the project countries and their influence on the policy abroad. The main goal of their international work is to foster democratic political structures and to prevent conflicts. Fostering democracy means promoting a democratic change in a state and in a society, where the political system is not yet a representative democracy. This change is an inner process based on the society itself, but external actors can influence it as well, through foreign policy. What role do the German political foundations play in this field? What impact do they have on the German foreign policy? Are they think tanks or are they independent political

actors? And how do they influence the political landscape in the countries, they are working in? These questions should be discussed in this thesis.

The work of the political foundations in Palestine and Israel should be analysed in a case study. All six German foundations have been active in this region for many years. The FES, the KAS and the HBS have regional offices in Israel and Palestine. This large amount of projects in a geographically small area offers a good opportunity to analyse the work of the foundation and their influence. Furthermore, this case study points out the problems of strengthening democracy in the specific political and social framework of the Middle East. Politics in Palestine and in Israel have nationwide relevance. They are also one of the main topics in German foreign policy. That is why this case study is ideal for monitoring the influence of German political foundations on German foreign policy and on the political landscape itself.

The whole study will be based on the scientific concept of foreign policy analysis (FPA), a sub-field of the study of international relations. According to one of the most prominent scholars of this field James Rosenau, FPA focuses on the action of the states, however this does not necessarily mean that analytically the state is viewed as the main focus of research. Thus, the actual research focus in FPA is regularly put in broader theoretical, methodological or empirical context. FPA is, on an operational level, less state centred than many of its critics claim. In fact, through its very focus on the actual functioning of foreign policy machineries in different states, FPA pays at least as much tribute to the common sense claim that 'the black box of the state' needs to be opened. For this, "opening" it is useful to draw from the sociological neo-institutionalism, which has offered a compelling theoretical and empirical account on how modern actor hood is in fact a creature of specific structural confines within the world polity. This is what this study is supposed to do, on the one hand it should analyse how the German political foundations affect the German foreign policy and on the other hand it should examine the impact on the political partners in the foreign countries.

This research will reflect the current scientific discussion in the field of FPA and combine it with the concept of neo-institutionalism. Specific literature and scientific journals will be the primary source of this research and the case study will be based on publications and studies about the international work of the foundations as well as on annual reports and guidelines published by the foundations. Certain inquiries will be done through interviews with the resident representatives of the foundations in Israel and Palestine, with the partners of the foundations in this region and with the German politicians who focus on foreign policy. The interviews will be done according to a guideline developed after studying the core political issues of the region and the long-term concepts of the foundations. The time-period of this inquiry starts with the end of the Second Intifada in February 2005 and will conclude with the latest peace-talks in Washington D.C. initiated by President Barack Obama in 2010. It focuses on the main working fields of the foundations.

The case study should prove the main assumption that the impact of the German political foundations on the German foreign policy, in a complex global world, is growing due to the wide

network and the well-grounded information that the foundations provide through their sustainable work abroad.