Taiwan Journal of Democracy, Volume 14, No. 1: 1-24

Three Angles on the Alliance Options of Authoritarian Regimes

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Abstract

This essay compares three ways of approaching the broad comparative question that motivates the collection of case studies presented in this journal issue. What method best explains the evident disposition of many non- and not very democratic regimes to cooperate among themselves to resist pressures for international democratization? The post-Cold War period is the main focus of concern. In addition to explicit strategic antidemocracy alliances, it is important to more tacit and partial forms of cooperation, and diffusion effects. The first approach draws on the comparative politics literature and postulates that such cooperation or collaboration among authoritarian regimes can be derived from shared structural features of this regime type, motivated by the imperative of regime survival (an internal "rational choice" perspective). The second angle derives foreign policy orientations not from domestic factors but from the logic of competition in an anarchical international system (IR "realism"). The third perspective is drawn from the "constructivist" approach to international relations. This produces a less parsimonious, but more encompassing, angle of vision. The essay provides illustrations and points to some limitations of each of these three standpoints. The conclusion is that all three have significant explanatory value; that they can be complementary rather than mutually exclusive; and that the processes we seek to understand are sufficiently heterogeneous and open-ended to require more than one approach. This conclusion also brings into question "binary" assumptions separating the alliance strategies of democracies from those of nondemocracies. There are some differences between the two, but in the post-Cold War period they are not that categorical.

Keywords: Authoritarian regimes, constructivism, cooperation, democratic regimes, hybrid regimes, IR realism, leverage, linkage, regime type, regime survival.

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The idea that democratic regimes may cooperate and promote the diffusion of cooperative practices intended to both protect existing democracies and promote new ones has extensive backing—theoretical, historical, and ideological. The "mirror image" of this would be the idea that authoritarian rulers may either learn similar practices from the democracies or generate equivalents from their own resources. In some cases, they may even draw on *longue durée* traditions that precede the rise of modern democracy, and that may even be a source of democratic cooperation (e.g., the Westphalian principle of religious toleration between Protestant and Catholic regimes). At the theoretical level, this raises the question whether "cooperation" of a voluntary and self-binding kind is possible only for democracies, or whether those in command of authoritarian regimes also can merge their wills in the same way.[1] In historical terms, one also can investigate under what conditions and to what extent democracies commit themselves to such practices, and whether the record indicates that authoritarian rulers sometimes pursue the same course, at least to some extent.

The essays in this journal issue present the third stage in a network project (led by the GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies–Hamburg) concerning the "international diffusion and cooperation of authoritarian regimes" (IDCAR), which refers to "authoritarian regimes" rather than to "rulers."[2] The first of the three approaches considered here divides the world into "regime types," and derives a state's alliance choices and diffusion effects from this structural feature of its internal politics. Michael Bratton and Peter Penar's essay on Mugabe's Zimbabwe probes an apparently exemplary case, showing both the relevance and the limitations of such a logic. The model of a binary divide between democratic and authoritarian regimes, each with its own quite different external posture, may be more relevant to the "totalitarian" versus "democratic" divide of the mid-twentieth century than to the first decades of this one. Both theory and recent history indicate a degree of overlap as well as of contrast between these two broad and counterposed regime types, thus raising the question whether these resemblances/differences can be attributed to strictly structural features specific to the logic of a regime. The most plausible version of this first approach is based on every regime's need for a survival strategy.

Thus far, the discussion has focused on a posited binary divide separating two counterposed regime types. However, comparative politics increasingly has drawn attention to the existence of relatively stable intermediate "hybrid" regimes and worked with the notion of a continuum as opposed to a binary contrast. Moreover, multidimensional measurements of the quality of

[1] Christian von Soest and Laurence Whitehead, guest editors, Forum on "Authoritarian Collaboration," *European Journal of Political Research* 54, no. 4 (November 2015), which presented the IDCAR-1 results.

[2] For more on the IDCAR network, its partners, and publications, see https://idcar.giga-hamburg.de/.

democracies have opened space for a more differentiated classification of truly existing post-Cold War democracies. To some extent, the relevant literature also has come to accept somewhat similar patterns of variation within the broad category of authoritarian (perhaps even all nondemocratic) regimes.[3] Clearly, the more heterogeneous the two core regime types, the less confident we can be in deriving a single cooperation and diffusion survival strategy from this general designation.

A further set of considerations concerns the possibility that other determinants of the selection of foreign policy choice/survival strategy may trump regime type. For example, even when a regime remains securely in place, there can be leadership changes that tip the balance from one external orientation to another. This is particularly evident in democracies where elite rotation is periodically mandated through electoral contests. But it is equally possible in authoritarian regimes, as when Gorbachev replaced Andropov, or Sadat succeeded Nasser and was later replaced by Mubarak. Both foreign policy choices and national alliance strategies can be up-ended without regime change. Not only can this happen when leaders rotate but also it can come about within a given governing formula, as when the AKP in Turkey shifted from a prodemocracy to an anti-Western posture under Erdogan. Democracies, too, can change their external orientations without changing their leadership, as when the Spanish socialist party under Felipe González reversed its attitude toward NATO membership. As these examples suggest, the decision to cooperate with one group of allies in opposition to another set of states is not entirely reducible either to the type of regime or to the characteristics of a ruling clique.

International relations theory offers two broad alternative approaches (each containing its own divisions and variations). IR realism is the second angle of vision considered in this essay. Most "realism" assumes that internal factors are of minor relevance. Here, the dominant forces derive from the structure of the international system in which each state is inserted. John Ishiyama's "gravity model" belongs here. Equally, a reverse logic might apply—in order to survive in a hostile environment, revolutionary Cuba could be expected to ally with whatever remote partners might aid its security. But, as the essay by Bert Hoffmann indicates, this contention should be regarded as a plausible and frequently justified hypothesis, rather than as a foundational and universally applicable truth. Like the first idea (that authoritarian regimes practice a particular pattern of external cooperation and diffusion among themselves in order to maximize their chances of regime survival), such "realism" also provides a promising point of departure for comparative study.

[3] Matthew C. Wilson, "A Discreet Critique of Discrete Regime Type Data," *Comparative Political Studies* 47, no. 5 (April 2014): 689-714, highlights the importance of making conceptual distinctions among nondemocracies—illustrating the conflicting placements that can arise with Brazilian, Colombian, and Nicaraguan examples.

The essay by Adele Del Sordi and Emanuela Dalmasso demonstrates how certain authoritarian regimes may respond to such international conditions by "branding" themselves not as radicals, but rather as "moderates" available as liberal partners. This example indicates that IR realism can generate more than one type of alliance strategy.

Both approaches sketched above deserve consideration, but neither exhausts all the empirical possibilities. Hence, a third angle of vision, or framing device—"constructivism"—is also considered here. This is a rival school of IR analysis that treats ideas and ideologies as explanatory factors that are not entirely reducible to material necessity, but that, on the contrary, can play an independent role in determining political outcomes, and may not merely reflect the balance of forces, but in fact rearrange them. Sean Yom's essay on the oil-rich ruling monarchies of the Gulf Cooperation Council well illustrates this theme. Laurence Whitehead and Desmond King extend this type of analysis to United States "exceptionalism" and Washington's resulting alliance strategies.

The Regime-Type Binary and "Mirror Image" Theory

The first approach—regime type—may not cover all the factors that deserve consideration, but it has the merits of clarity and parsimony, and may explain enough of the observable terrain to provide a powerful heuristic guide to policy making. There are two key ideas at the heart of this approach: the underlying driver is the regime survival imperative; and democratic regimes value mutual support as a critical aid to survival in hard times, and authoritarian regimes learn to protect themselves in a parallel manner. (Whether the latter directly imitate the former, or undertake "independent invention," is open to debate within this perspective).

The centrality of regime survival arises from the concept of a political regime, understood as the rules and institutions for governing a modern state in a stable, predictable, and durable manner. The standard features of a democratic regime include an impersonal constitution with an autonomous rule of law and defined citizen rights, separation of powers, and regular alternation in public office via free and competitive elections. But there are clearly many other modern states that are governed in a stable and predictable manner according to alternative rules and institutions. Some analysts group undemocratic regimes together as "autocracies," but that is an unduly personalist construction. After all, military regimes can govern under a junta rather than a single autocrat; a council of clergy can lead a theocracy; and one-party regimes are not always as unified as their name suggests. "Authoritarian regimes" can include all autocracies but add in a wider range of durable institutional structures, capable of providing order and predictability without a democratic fragmentation of authority (in alternative parlance, without last resort institutionalized horizontal and vertical checks and balances). On a continuum view between

democratic and authoritarian types of regime, there also could be hybrids. It used to be argued that such intermediary practices would be too unstable to count as durable regimes—they would either gravitate toward full democracy or toward full authoritarian rule and could maintain themselves permanently in the unpredictable nether world between the two fundamental alternatives. But "hybrid" regimes of various kinds not only have persisted in the post-1989 world, but also seem to have flourished there.[4]

A system of government constitutes a regime only if it is reliably capable of maintaining and reproducing its core features over time and defending itself against periodic challenges and crises. This applies equally to democratic and authoritarian regimes, which is why "regime survival" can be postulated as a systemic imperative for both types, despite their differences in other respects. Modern regimes have both structural sources of resilience and strategic capacities for self-preservation, with synergies between the two. All existing regimes can rely on a certain degree of acquiescence and habituation, together with at least some sources of active support from service beneficiaries.

More positively, modern regimes have various means for generating "legitimacy"—through media, education, law, religion, and welfare. They also have enforcement capacities: police, intelligence services, and military forces. Democratic regimes differ from authoritarian counterparts to some extent, but in structural terms they also have much in common. Differences are more apparent when it comes to strategies of self-preservation, and the capacity to absorb crises, particularly those originating from internal sources. Thus, for example, democracies have well-honed electoral methods for resolving leadership succession crises, which are often a source of peril for authoritarian regimes. Democracies can fall back on "procedural" sources of legitimation when their performance delivery is bad. Authoritarian regimes may be more exposed to delegitimization on this score, particularly if they prove incapable of error correction.

However, the focus of the IDCAR project is a regime's structural and strategic resilience in the face of external challenges. The idea that authoritarian regimes borrow from democratic counterparts to learn equivalent strategies of cooperation and self-preservation can be termed a "mirror image" theory of how survival strategies are chosen and diffused. This is an extreme (and exceedingly parsimonious) extension of the binary "regime-type" method of explaining international self-preservation practices. It can be queried on several grounds. Authoritarian learning may draw on many sources of instruction, not only from the examples set by the democracies. Also, in terms of democratic theory, it has been argued that democracies have a better capacity to cooperate with each other to ward off threats to their survival.

[4] Leonardo Morlino, *Changes for Democracy: Actors, Structures, Processes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), chap. 3.

One claim would be that reliance on voluntary consent enables democratic citizens to relate to the predicament of similarly placed communities at risk in other countries, in a way that authoritarian dominance would preclude. Democratic theory also casts doubt on whether authoritarian regimes can cooperate with one another for mutual security on a voluntary and uncoerced basis at all (do they, at best, "collaborate" by means of top-down instructions and vertical controls?). The IDCAR project has generated a wealth of evidence (quantitative, qualitative, global, regional, as well as historical) that provides guidance on these theoretical possibilities.

Generalized Regime Types or Specific Regimes?

Before moving beyond this theoretical level of reflection, it is worth asking whether the selection of an international survival strategy is best analyzed as the product of a specific regime, rather than as a trait associated with a generalized regime type. After all, there are both internationally dominant and globally peripheral regimes in both sets. Likewise, there are geopolitically secure states on both sides, and there are both democracies and authoritarian regimes that are surrounded by uncongenial neighbors. So, it is reasonable to expect that the United States may display a different survival strategy from that of Botswana or Israel, just as China's strategy could differ from that of Cuba or Belarus. Features other than regime type may prove more critical.

The link between cooperation and regime survival is determined by many considerations. For example, all ruling monarchies in the Arab world might seem quite uniform in regard to their political structures. They even have joined together in the Gulf Cooperation Council to institutionalize their cooperation and to collectively defend their system of rule. And yet the survival strategy of, say, Kuwait (which has been invaded, and which now borders on two larger Shi'a-dominated republics) is very different from that of much richer and more assertive Qatar, not to mention Saudi Arabia. Decontextualized regime type is much too thin a feature to determine any specific survival strategy; more input is needed about each regime's capabilities and threat perceptions.

There is a long and strong record of cooperation shared by the intelligence services of the "five eyes" (short for the "AUS/CAN/NZ/UK/US EYES ONLY" system of document classification), and all these Anglophone democracies would regard such cooperation as an aid to regime survival and democracy protection (even though such intelligence cooperation also can include the monitoring of domestic dissidents). But over the recent decades of tight intelligence cooperation, none of these highly similar constitutional polities has experienced existential threats to its survival remotely comparable to those of many other less favorably placed democracies (e.g., the Baltic states). There may be a parallel here concerning collaboration between the security services of Moscow and a few select and well-connected (Russophone?) counterparts. But the democracies with most need to worry about

regime survival are less likely to be included in such security cooperation, just as the more vulnerable ex-communist regimes can be kept at the margins of the Moscow-led equivalent.

Now let us consider likely priorities for international cooperation from the standpoint of the more clearly vulnerable regimes (whether democratic or authoritarian). Think of Israel and Taiwan, on the one side, or Cuba and Zimbabwe, on the other. Survival strategy is a much more pressing and indeed existential concern for these four regimes than for the "five eyes," or for their authoritarian counterparts. So, what does this imply about their external relations and their alliance strategies? Can they afford to limit their cooperation solely to other like-minded regimes, or does their vulnerability dictate that they seek partners wherever they can be found? How trusting of support from other democracies can Israel or Taiwan be? How much can Havana rely on other revolutionary partners, or Harare on like-minded national liberation radicals?

Of course, international cooperation and mutual support take many different forms, not just intelligence, but also economic exchange, diplomatic engagement, political dialogue, media interest, and so forth. Insecure governments and vulnerable regimes can be expected to devote extra attention to all these variants, and to their coordination in an integrated defensive posture. That is why their rulers need a survival strategy, and not just a scattering of disconnected and ephemeral tactics—their careers (and perhaps their lives) depend upon it.

What this section indicates is that even assuming that a binary contrast in regime types conditions alliance options, and even on the assumption that regime survival is the crucial driver of many external alignments, it would not necessarily follow that survival strategy analysis pertains mainly to regime types. To the contrary, one needs to investigate the all-around nature of the threats to survival faced by each specific regime, regardless of type, in order to reconstruct its cooperation and diffusion options.

Leadership Conflicts and Regime Survival Strategies

A more historical (and contingent) level of analysis would be required to "process trace" the crucial strategic choices. Assume that both the type of regime and its other most relevant features (such as being marginal, or geopolitically vulnerable, among others) have been taken fully into account in a given case. Even then, it would be too crude to deduce a consequent unique survival strategy. Quite the contrary—where existential stakes are involved, it is almost inevitable that alternative policy prescriptions will compete for leadership endorsement. Our concern, here, is mainly with authoritarian systems of rule, in which sensitive information is tightly controlled and inner-circle decision making is very restricted. No matter: if the stakes are high enough, insiders are likely to disagree and to clash.

A vertical system may impose collective discipline and the appearance of unity, but whoever wins at the very apex will have leeway to take the whole polity strongly in one direction rather than another. Should the Cuban regime persist in defying Washington with all its might, or should it switch to a cautious reconciliation mode? Should Zimbabwe rely on evading sanctions, or seek to negotiate them away? Should Riyadh continue to export Wahhabism, or turn toward its "moderate" Western partners? In each of these contemporary examples, if the test is how best to achieve regime survival, a case can be made on both sides, and to fail to choose may be the riskiest course.

So, leadership splits also matter. At the end of the Soviet period, Brezhnev was too ill to choose. His successors veered one way, and then Gorbachev seized control to impose an alternative course, which, in his opinion, was needed if the USSR was to survive. It did not, and that memory of failure now conditions Putin's strategy. Run the same narrative with the House of Saud, or with China after Mao, or prospectively in Iran or Zimbabwe. Choices about which allies to trust, how far to compromise with democratic critics (both foreign and domestic), which governmental system to promote or to borrow from—these are all difficult and divisive issues for authoritarian rulers under pressure.

The considerations also can be highly problematic for similarly placed democratic rulers, of course. But at least in these cases there is a procedure for resolving policy debates, and whatever the ensuing choice, responsibility for the consequences can be shared with the electorate. In any event, what these examples indicate is that neither regime type, nor even a specific regime predicament, is sufficient to determine which international alignment and external strategic posture will be selected by a vulnerable set of authorities. Political conflicts and leadership struggles also require careful attention.

Strategic Choices Are Never about Regime Survival *Tout Court*

Threat perception is an inherently speculative business. It involves estimating the potential behavior of other states (or nonstate actors) and making subjective judgments about the balance of future risks. Even when such exercises can be rational and "evidence-based" (which is no easy matter), legitimate differences of interpretation will remain, and probabilities can never be proven. Moreover, the state agencies charged with making such assessments always will have interests of their own to consider—budgets will flow to those who raise the most serious concerns; different armed services will each have their own expertise, networks, alliances, rivalries, and *deformations professionelles*.

In addition, as indicated above, rival factions at the apex of a verticalist regime are likely to formulate alternative diagnoses and prescriptions for their preservation. While each of these positions will marshal supporting evidence and seek credible validation, its prospects of success also will be affected by more arbitrary political considerations, such as good timing, privileged access

to rulers, factional expedience, and presentational skills. In summary, the survival strategy that prevails may not be the technically optimal choice, but the one that best serves the political ambitions of the winning coalition in a power struggle. So, a strategy that in fact increases the risk of regime collapse may be imposed in the name of regime preservation. This can happen in democracies as well as under authoritarian rule, but the closed communications and extreme risks of defeat that characterize many undemocratic systems heightens the likelihood of catastrophic error.

Famously, under the Nazi–Soviet Pact, Stalin purged the Red Army and viewed any subordinate who warned him of Hitler's imminent betrayal as an enemy agent. A more prudent survival strategy was thus precluded, and the Soviet Union was nearly overrun. In Grenada, the New Jewel Movement proved capable of a suicidal misjudgement whereby the leadership came to view Maurice Bishop (the popular prime minister) as a mortal threat to its Revolution who must be eliminated, by force if necessary. General Galtieri persuaded the Argentine junta that the best way to overcome its growing domestic discredit was to seize the Malvinas Islands from London's faltering grasp. Arguably, the Baathist regime in Iraq unnecessarily precipitated its own downfall through its ill-judged selection of survival strategies, which were as much about internal faction dominance as about overall self-preservation.

In all these cases, "groupthink" limited the scope for a fully realistic appraisal of the alternative options theoretically available. As argued below, it is not only in rigid authoritarian regimes that such blinkers may distort optimum policy choice. Ideational inertia, identity loyalties and commitments, and indeed ideological dogmas are liable to distort decision making in a wide array of modern states, even in democracies, and even when regime survival could be put at risk.

The examples above are only illustrative, since not all authoritarian survival strategies are suboptimal (and indeed some may fail, despite being the best options available). The broader thesis of this section is that political contingencies invariably separate the intention to preserve a regime from the precise choice of both strategy and tactics. Rational choice reductionism and "large N" causal models should not obscure these often critical intervening variables.

IR Realists Derive Alliance Strategies from Without

Here, we turn to a second alternative explanatory model, which disregards regime-type characteristics altogether, on the grounds that in an anarchic international system only those rulers who adjust to externally imposed political necessities can expect to remain in control, regardless of the domestic means they pursued to achieve power. My comments on this will follow the same pattern as the foregoing observations about "regime-type" reductionism. Such theories have considerable merit. They are clear and economical, and they

isolate some powerful and recurrent determinants of political organization. Nevertheless, not all regimes are equally constrained by imminent external threats to their survival. A model that works well for Belarus, Cuba, Israel, Taiwan, and Zimbabwe may not be so applicable to Botswana, China, New Zealand, Algeria, or Sweden. So, a good IR theory needs to discriminate among specific regimes according to a rounded assessment of their international characteristics and external predicaments, just as models that focus on internal political structures need to look beyond binary regime-type labels.

In addition, rather than picturing a single uniform external environment that imposes a unique and necessary set of foreign policy responses, good IR theories need to consider the intervening contingent variables that always present some degree of choice between alternative strategies, even when the force of international constraints is at its maximum. Thus, under decades of intense external threat, both Havana and Taipei have displayed the great determination, inventiveness, and operational skill that is essential if they are to preserve some margin of discretion on foreign policy matters. In such conditions, the choice between alternatives must be highly realistic and professional but, here too, the outcome selected is never solely the product of rational optimization.

Bureaucratic agencies compete for resources by promoting rival diagnoses and prescriptions. Leadership factions compete for ascendancy (through elections in Taiwan, or inner circle battles in the Cuban Communist Party), and external policy choices become entangled with these contingent political processes. Fidel was far keener than Raúl on close links with Chavista Venezuela; and Ma's KMT was more willing to seek compromise with Beijing than Chen Shui-bian's DPP. So, even under intense external pressure, foreign alliance strategies are shaped by political contingencies as well as by direct calculus of pay-offs. Some of these nontechnical determinants of policy choice reflect factional advantage, but ideas (as well as identities and ideologies) also matter, as these two examples suggest. Overall, therefore, the broad IR "realist" family of models has considerable merit, if applied sensibly, but it is subject to almost the same limitations as the rival regime-type perspective.

Linkage and Leverage (and Delinkage and Reverse Leverage)

Within the general frame of IR realism, there is a more specific line of argument that has been tailored to the international political dynamics of democracy promotion. In particular, the "linkage and leverage" theorem takes into account the varied conditions of states within the international system. Starting with a cluster of strong and secure democratic states, what channels of influence are available to them if they seek to promote democratic regime change in other states that are, by assumption, less secure in their forms of government, and therefore open to external inducements to democratize? Such target states can

be differentiated according to the extent of their "linkage" to the democratic community (which can provide positive incentives for them to join in); and through their vulnerability to "leverage" (pressure or sanctions) if they resist. This variant on realist modeling has proved a persuasive and parsimonious approach to the comparative analysis of democracy promotion experiences in the post-Cold War world.[5]

However, the approach focuses on the conditions for effective democracy promotion, and the pathways to success. This is only one side of the international dynamics that requires consideration. The IDCAR project concentrated attention on the opposite sequence, in which the costs and risks of such democracy promotion prove increasingly high, and the results are mostly other than those intended. As the post-Cold War period has morphed into an extended "war on terror," and as the main targets of Western democracy promotion have accumulated experience of how linkage and leverage can be operationalized in practice, resistance has grown more coordinated and effective, and this antidemocracy promotion "pushback" has acquired an international dynamic of its own. The result, as it appears at the present time, is that confidence in the "linkage and leverage" capacity of the world's leading democracies has waned. Arguably, indeed, that the community of democracies has become so beset by internal problems that its will to promote democracy and its capacity to "scare" resisters into compliance have been compromised. This does not mean that the initial model has been disproven, only that its scope has proved more restricted than first realized. The opposite dynamics (which can be summarized as "delinking" and "reverse leverage") seem to merit equal consideration.

As an illustration of this theme, consider the evolving external posture of the Erdogan-led AKP regime in Turkey. Schematically, one could view both the EU and NATO as alliances of democracies with an interest in promoting this regime type. Then Turkey could be presented as a valuable target on which to work, with the EU primarily acting through its strong "linkages" with the Turkish Republic (notably the incentives associated with accession), and NATO operating mainly through its military alliance "leverage" (mostly obligations and constraints). This is only a first approximation, however, since in reality both alliances worked mainly in tandem, and the EU could deploy some soft disciplines, while NATO also had positive incentives at its disposal. Beyond that, the EU was more about economic integration than political liberalization, and NATO was more about "Free World" security than internal democracy. Moreover, of course, these are both complex interactions extending across many decades.

By the time the AKP was in a position to carry out a regime change (roughly in the first decade of the present century), both democratic alliances

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[5] Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, "Linkage versus Leverage: Rethinking the International Dimension of Regime Change," *Comparative Politics* 38, no. 4 (July 2005): 379-400.

were saddled with the burden of some heavy historical legacies that would constrain their ability to influence Turkey's domestic agenda. In particular, although NATO was founded on a theoretical commitment to Western standards of democracy (which normally are thought to include civilian supremacy over the military), in Turkey it was tacitly—or indeed actively—associated with a succession of military coups against elected governments, and with the internal dominance of a politically unaccountable security apparatus. Such "leverage" as it possessed was associated, in the memory of the Turkish people, with democracy prevention more than democracy promotion. That historical memory resurfaced (perhaps unjustly) in the wake of the July 2016 failed coup attempt.

As for the EU, although it has dangled the prospect of Turkish association for more than half a century (and of full membership since 1999), and has long engaged in explicit political conditionality negotiations under which the positive benefits of its strong linkage would induce Ankara to conform to the "Copenhagen criteria" for democratic governance, soon after the AKP took office, it became all too clear that Brussels would not be in a position to grant accession for many years, if ever.

In this very telling case, neither linkage nor leverage lived up to the bold ambitions of the standard theory. Instead, what the Turkish experience suggested was that, behind a smokescreen of noble promises, these democratic alliances were able to play manipulative games, with almost no end in sight, however much the target regime strove to comply. From Erdogan's standpoint, the West was playing him for a sucker, and disrespecting his democratic credentials. Concretely, NATO's version of democracy privileged military reserve power, and the EU's version played up secularism, while many Turkish voters saw democratization in terms of demilitarization and the dismantling of secularist fetters. Western claims to be supporting Turkish democracy may have seemed credible in Washington and Brussels, but they were met with growing scepticism in Anatolia.

Such historical legacies and conceptual divergences have fed the processes of "delinking" and "reverse leverage" that currently are so much in evidence, to the apparent surprise of most Western policy makers and democratization analysts. Delinkage from the EU means abandoning political reforms sought by Brussels, and instead constructing an illiberal and intolerant (neo-Ottoman?) political model. Delinkage from NATO is less explicit (Turkey is more likely to distance itself than to withdraw from the military alliance, nor is it likely to be expelled), but drastic restructuring of the Armed Forces and the security services and the embrace of non-NATO military objectives signal a drastic downgrading on this front as well. As for "reverse leverage," just consider Erdogan's policies on the control of refugee flows to Europe, and the concessions (both economic and political) that he is demanding in exchange. In brief, the negative pole of "linkage and leverage" currently prevails over

the original optimistic variant, at least in this case. And Turkey is not unique in this respect.

Thus far, the argument has proceeded within the framework of a broadly realist approach to the IR of regime change. This has many virtues. But there also is a rival constructivist approach, and the time has come to consider what that might add. After all, as just illustrated by the sketch account of Turkey, subjective perceptions, divergent historical memories, and the "groupthink" delusions of powerful policy makers (including "democracy promotion" schools of policy making) can produce strong real-world consequences and tip the balance from a positive dynamic to a negative one.

Constructivism Is Looser but More Encompassing

So, let us now turn to the third alternative approach. This brings ideas and ideologies to center stage. In order to formulate state decisions about international commitments and alignments, or to activate Carl Schmitt's friend/enemy distinction (the core of any analysis of threat perception), modern governments need to deploy well-developed justifications. Indeed, a "strategic doctrine" is probably required in order to coordinate the different levels and agencies of government and to stabilize external commitments over the long run. This is not just about presenting a coherent case to domestic opinion. Well-articulated arguments also are needed to convince allies of the seriousness of the proposed engagements, and to win over external waverers as well as deter potential adversaries.

The need for a strategic doctrine is very apparent when democracies band together to protect and promote their shared theories of good government. It is also the case when other regimes respond by seeking common defense against the features of democracy promotion that they view as threatening or undesirable. Moreover, on a broader historical canvas, it has been equally apparent whenever explicitly antidemocratic rulers (imperialist, fascist, communist, theocratic, or dynastic) have come together to actively advance their preferred model of government at the expense of the currently available alternatives. The ideas deployed in such undertakings are not just empty rhetoric: they have structure and consequences with independent causal impact. As the various "constructivist" strands in IR theory argue, they therefore require a separate level of consideration, and should not be marginalized, as in many regime-type and IR-realist reductions.

In practice, of course, all three approaches (rational choice, realism, and constructivism) come in various shades, some of which are more flexible and mutually compatible than others. But whereas the strongest selling point of the first two is their clarity and potential parsimony, the constructivist family of interpretations is inherently multifactorial and therefore open to criticism for lack of precision. On the positive side, however, it is more encompassing, and therefore better suited to pattern recognition across heterogeneous cases and

processes. Practices of cooperation and diffusion among authoritarian regimes are surely phenomena of that type.

In the early post-Cold War period, undemocratic and hybrid regimes faced a barrage of criticisms intended to drive them to democratize. But over the past decade, those that did not comply have become far more effective in orchestrating "counter-stigmatization" strategies, and recently have become quite successful in sowing doubts about the merits of Western democratic values, even in their heartlands. In many cases, it seems that over time the targets of Western criticism studied the methods used against them and learned how to turn such techniques back against their adversaries. Constructivist scholarship on democratic "norms cascades" long assumed that this was a unidirectional phenomenon,[6] but current experience shows it to be a two-way process.

So, what are the specific practices that would come to the forefront in a constructivist analysis, in contrast to the alternative approaches? Three categories may be highlighted: the use of government information (and propaganda) services to build support for the officially chosen external strategy; the international coordination of a unified legitimizing discourse across the relevant regimes; and ideational counterattack (as democracy resisters counter the claims of democracy promoters). As constructivists would stress, when there is a "clash of doctrines," contending parties also can seek the moral high ground in their use of terminology. Thus, "democracy resisters" may (not always entirely insincerely) seek to repackage themselves as advocates of a more authentic version of democracy, and "democracy promoters" need to take seriously the counterclaim that they are really just imperialist interventionists.

Consider the following illustrative examples of each practice, taking authoritarian regimes as the source. Under the first heading, it would be worth examining the role of the Qatari-funded *Al Jazeera* broadcasting network (both the Arab-language and the slightly more liberal English-speaking variant) after the Arab Spring. This was an ambitious attempt by a very well-funded and -staffed broadcaster to build support for causes favored by the ruling family of a small Gulf state. (A litmus test was the absence of any critical reporting concerning domestic Qatari issues). Naturally, to gain external credibility, it had to reach beyond crude propaganda, and in some respects, it may have helped create a better-informed international public opinion. But eventually it overreached, especially in relation to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and in any case early success spurred its neighbors to first imitate and later outmaneuver it.

Therefore, second, the question arises whether authoritarian regimes are capable of cooperative joint action in the production of justificatory discourse,

[6] Kathryn Sikkink, *The Justice Cascade: How Human Rights Prosecutions Are Changing World Politics* (New York: Norton, 2011).

or whether—perhaps in contrast to Western democracies—the imperative of vertical control blocks the scope for horizontal cooperation. Here, a good test case might be to trace the arguments promoted with such domestic success by the Chinese media, and to investigate how far they are taken up by like-minded regimes in the rest of East Asia, or along the "Silk Road."

The third topic concerns the dialectical interplay between Western prodemocracy discourses and the counter-discourses of alternative state clusters. Consider the Moscow-based RT, still a relatively active and not totally ineffective challenger of Western news and advocacy orthodoxies. In order to attract an external audience and to exercise persuasive influence, RT tries to adjust significant parts of its output to the concerns and opinions of its viewers. It therefore engages in explicit dialogue with the Western news sources it wishes to discredit, and it invites well-known Western commentators to perform as talking heads. What this means in practice is that it tends to advocate ideas and values that may prove acceptable to democratic audiences—where possible—but always with a counter-hegemonic twist, of course.

Such examples in no way exhaust the research potential provided by a constructivist, as opposed to a rationalist or a realist, perspective on our theme. For example, such state broadcasting initiatives are only a visible fraction of the broader discursive output of leading authoritarian regimes. Russia's social media manipulations currently are attracting intense concern, but think of Saudi-funded "charities" promoting Wahhabism across the Islamic world or China's "Confucian Institutes." More subtle and indirect methods (business lobbying, conditional arms transfers, or the funding of pliable election candidates in money-dominated democracies) also merit close attention. Some of these practices even can be subsumed under a "realist" account of international relations, and others may be construed as instances of "survival strategies." But to cover the full range, and to capture the active potential and the operational logic of these activities, an encompassing "constructivist" framework is superior.

This is all the more the case since interest in IDCAR extends beyond the deliberate and conscious policy choices of the regimes under study, to include the more indirect and unplanned impact of "diffusion" effects. This aspect involves a vast extension of our subject; one unsuited to the tightly causal explanations privileged by rational choice and realism. A single illustration must suffice here. Whatever benefit Beijing derives from its international television broadcasts or its Confucian Institutes is dwarfed by the leverage it gains from its reputation as an economic and political high achiever and potential exemplar. This is a form of "soft power" projection that diffuses its influence and wins over voluntary emulators, without making any direct and focused policy choices. It provides to the Chinese regime a highly persuasive argument against the counterclaims of the Western democracies, and it promotes good will and the disposition to listen attentively when Beijing seeks external allies. A constructivist perspective highlights such discursive gains, which tend to be underestimated by the other approaches.

Constructivism Is Dynamic and Multivocal (Not Static or Binary)

In principle, a focus on discourse and ideology as independent explanatory variables does not preclude binary confrontations between opposed democratic and "totalitarian" doctrinal positions. Such static and binary polarization may persist in a few corners (as in the two Koreas), but in the post-1989 period it has become relatively marginal. Islamist fundamentalists have occupied the space previously taken by the more extreme of the Marxist revolutionaries, but they still constitute a minor minority strand in international discourse, with not a single territorial state in place, and therefore no existing "regime." Major competitors to the Western democracies—such as China, Iran, and Russia—embrace a considerable amount of constitutional and popular sovereignty discourse, so that the battle over political ideas has become mainly a question of detailed content and sincerity of delivery, rather than a challenge by frontal negation.

Therefore, the constructivism of relevance, here, is far more multivocal than binary. Take the confusing political rhetoric of the contemporary Arab world as an illustration. There is at least one coherent experiment aimed at exemplifying more or less conventional constitutional and pluralist democratic values—the struggling regime in Tunisia, which has the support of the main local Islamist party. There is at least one frontally antidemocratic regime—Saudi Arabia—which has long practiced fundamentalist and theocratic principles of government (implacable in its imposition of this at home, albeit more ambiguous in its external rhetoric). But multiple other voices also contribute to the Arab political medley: Muslim Brothers, secular nationalists, liberal technocrats, semi-constitutional monarchies, Shiʻa revivalist movements, Copts, and many more.

Such alternative ideas and rival political projects are all vying for support in the turbulence that has followed the initial upheavals of the Arab Spring. Some have tried to restore Schmitt's "friend/enemy" binary logic: between defenders of the Assad regime and friends of the Syrian opposition, or between Sunni and Shiʻa, or between agents of Israel versus true Arab patriots. But there is no single and stable divide here, and most significant actors find themselves cross-pressured, forced into second-best expedients, and unable to formulate a clear and durable doctrinal justification for their actions. Ideas matter, but foundational debates remain unresolved, the balance of forces keeps shifting, and the gap between proclaimed values and feasible outcomes confounds intellectual coherence. This also means that if they are to reflect reality and rally support, credible discursive positions cannot remain static. They must evolve, adapt, and take on broad challenges from rival positions. Assad must listen to advice from Putin; Riyadh may be forced to modify its objectives in Yemen because of UN criticisms; the ruling family in Qatar can be forced to backtrack on the Brotherhood. In general, discursive positions are shifting and multivocal, not static and binary.

Obviously, there is nothing parsimonious about this portrayal of the predicament of Arab regimes in the post-Spring melting pot. Life would be easier for comparative analysts if they only needed to know the regime type in question (or the regional balance of power) in order to deduce how each set of rulers would go about choosing its international alignments and its alliance strategies. The cost of adopting the constructivist approach is that these reliable theorems cannot be replaced by any equally solid alternative. The gain is that a looser and more encompassing framework may more accurately map the dilemmas and predicaments confronting Arab regimes (however democratic or otherwise) in the contemporary period. The claim, here, is not that constructivism always trumps the other angles of vision, only that at least in some highly relevant contexts it sheds a light that the others cannot.

Authoritarian Alliances: The Historical Record

Looking back over the international conflicts that structured twentieth-century politics, an all too simple but easily assimilated summary would be that in the First World War the Western democracies (notably Britain, France, and the United States, with precious support from Australia, Canada, and New Zealand) eventually defeated a militarist challenge led by Germany, with the support of Austria and Turkey (an "authoritarian alliance"). In 1945, another alliance of democracies (much like the first) defeated the Axis Powers—with Italy and Japan allied to a Third Reich that already had incorporated Austria and Vichy France (another "authoritarian, or indeed "totalitarian," alliance). Finally, during the Cold War, a larger and more robust combination of democracies (more clearly led by the United States and sometimes labeled the "Free World") eventually faced down the third great authoritarian or totalitarian alliance, this time led by Moscow, at first in partnership with Beijing. In this third phase, most of Germany, all of Italy, and Japan belonged to the "democratic" camp, and the "authoritarian alliance" eventually unraveled from within rather than losing on the battlefield.

There are many difficulties with this too convenient schema. For instance, in 1914, Britain and France were empires allied with a very authoritarian tsarist Russia; in 1945, the bulk of the sacrifices to defeat Nazism were made by the Soviet Union; and in the Cold War, the "Free World" included quite a few authoritarian regimes, so the other side could sometimes attract a scattering of democracies (notably India, Chile, almost Cyprus, Greece, and, very temporarily, Portugal). But our concern, here, is with the record of the "authoritarian/totalitarian" alliances rather than with the inconsistencies of the self-styled democratic camp. It is worth briefly revisiting these big threatening pre-1989 combinations for two reasons: to test the "realist" assumption that such alliances can be derived from the logic of the international system, and to reflect on a competing constructivist claim—that each configuration is the product of misplaced memories derived from a previous conflict. Both of these

contentions run counter to the third idea under consideration: namely that the internal structure of authoritarian regimes determines their alliance choices.

So, in very condensed summary, what do the three great antidemocratic alliances of the twentieth century teach us about these alternatives? If regime or "regime-type" factors explain Berlin's choice of partners and the Kaiser's willingness to provoke world war by invading Belgium, what part do such considerations play with regard to Tsarist Russia, on the other side? Or alternatively, if the constructivists are right, was it the passions and unresolved legacies of Napoleon and the war of 1870 that serve better to explain the alliance choices of both Berlin and St. Petersburg? Or were the realists right to say that security rivalries (over naval supremacy, food supplies, and access to oil) suffice to account for both the outbreak of conflict and the alignment of states in the confrontation? On my reading, these three rival interpretations still compete for the attention of scholars a century later. This suggests that more than one perspective needs to be entertained in such cases.

How about the "Axis" alliance? Here, the crucial player was the Hitler regime. And in this case (in contrast to earlier or later "authoritarian alliances"), the internal structure of the Nazi regime seems to have precluded any possibility of a genuine alliance. The Nazi–Soviet Pact was never more than a time-buying expedient for either side. Likewise, although Hitler's tactical bargains with Mussolini and the Japanese military lasted longer, they never involved the mutual commitments, trust, and restraints required of a genuine alliance. In due course, Il Duce was treated in the same way as Petain. It was only the geographical remoteness of the Pacific theater that kept the German/Japanese parallel offensives from clashing. Even figures as sympathetic to Nazism as Generalissimo Franco realized that there was no possibility of an equitable partnership with the Führer. His entire career, doctrine, and leadership structure precluded genuine and predictable cooperation with other powers, whether authoritarian or democratic. The "survival strategy" of this regime required the subordination of all neighbors, and reliance on threat and strength alone in all external relations. So, in this limit case, the first of our three approaches is of central importance. But here, too, the realists also have something to contribute. Their thesis was that, after Versailles, the international system provided no stable resting place to Germany between humiliating subordination and unrestricted dominance of Europe. That was the unresolved "German Question" that accounts for Nazi extremism. The constructivists also have a valid point, here. Memories of 1870 and 1914 played a part in determining both the attitudes of the victors in 1919, and the extreme nationalism of the 1930s. All three perspectives have something to contribute to a rounded explanation of the Axis phenomenon, and its incompatibility with standard models of authoritarian cooperation.

The "totalitarianism" thesis postulated that Stalin's Moscow was as incapable of generating trust, partnership, and voluntary cooperation as Hitler's Berlin. But the Cold War lasted over four decades, and Stalin's

system began to fade early in that long period. Even before his death, it was possible to contemplate a Soviet Union more capable than Hitler of "peaceful coexistence," and therefore of accepting some external constraints in order to rebuild and demonstrate to outsiders the virtues of its system. It is certainly true that Moscow's inability to tolerate Tito's Yugoslavia demonstrated the absence of a cooperative spirit among ruling communist parties, but by 1956, Moscow's vertical control over all allies was eroding (notably in Poland). In the early 1960s, communist Cuba was able to purge the "mini-faction" of Moscow loyalists, without ceasing close cooperation with the USSR, and soon after the so-called Communist Bloc became visibly more decentralized, and in some cases even a bit pluralist. In short, long before the end of the Cold War, the question of genuine mutuality and institutional give-and-take had made its appearance in the communist world (e.g., the Warsaw Pact).

Of course, this was a "lopsided" form of cooperation under the leadership of a dominant state, but the "Free World" was not immune from that criticism either. For our purposes, the critical point is that alliance ties among nondemocratic regimes can evolve and loosen over time, just as they do among democratic regimes. "Regime-type" and realist approaches can therefore account for only historical realities if they avoid static and monocausal overdetermination. Constructivism may be less parsimonious, but it is better suited to the explanation of dynamic processes. All three approaches are needed to explain the multiple trajectories of world communism since 1945.

Evangelical Discourse vs. Democratic Pluralism

Now, let us return to the post-Cold War world, beginning with the period when the triumphant democracies had their maximum margin to maneuver in the 1990s. There is an evangelical strand to democracy promotion, one that intensified after 1989. The record suggests, and theory would seem to support, the claim that such righteousness, superiority, and rigidity of outlook raises hackles in "target" nations and may be a substantial source of popular backlash. Authoritarian regimes can capitalize on this reaction, and may artificially inflate it, but for its origin one should examine the initiating discourse and behavior of the democracy promoters. This is not to excuse authoritarian counter-moves, but rather to help explain them. It may still be the case that, in the long run, democratic discourse is more solid and compelling than the cynical appropriations and rejectionist rhetoric that it elicits. But if the problem of evangelistic arrogance is not identified and corrected, the run could prove much longer than the respective merits of the two positions would imply. From this "constructivist" standpoint, the discourse of democracy may need to be recast in order to penetrate the barriers that have been erected against it by nondemocratic rulers with an interest in portraying the worst features of the democracy promotion community. A more tolerant, exploratory, and pluralist conception of democracy might be much harder for them to rebuff.

Consider what the democracy resisters claim to be the defects of the other side's evangelism. First, there is the charge of double standards. The critics who find fault with Bolivia's democratic performance under Evo Morales can be far more indulgent about Honduras, where the military seized the elected president in his pajamas and packed him on the next plane to Caracas (in part because he wanted to join ALBA). It would be tedious to list all the many other examples that recently have been invoked. Washington is unable to admit that the removal of Mohamed Morsi was a "coup," since that would result in legal consequences disrupting its funding of the Egyptian military. The internationally recognized Hadi administration is supposed to be the legitimate government of Yemen, despite its lack of territorial control and its complicity with crimes against humanity. Hadi operates from Riyadh, not even from Aden, let alone from Sana'a. These are just two examples in a long list.

Of course, hypocrisy is a universal political reality, and nondemocracies are equally prone to it, but democratic evangelists are particularly exposed to this charge because of the extreme language of their rhetoric and the moral legitimacy that they claim exclusively for themselves. At the heart of this issue is their messianism about democracy, and the lengths they will go to control their definition and impose it on others (sometimes literally to "crusade" for it).[7] Consider three criticisms of democratic evangelism.

First, its advocates begin by invoking the high political capital associated with an idealized conception of democracy. But, once a target regime has capitulated to them, their yardstick of good performance is upended. Think of Afghanistan under Najibullah Ahmadzai, as compared to the same country under Hamid Karzai. Once the "Moscow imposed despot" had been overthrown by Western-backed and tribal insurgents, a "loya jerga" became the acceptable method for choosing a head of state, opium trafficking ceased to figure as an unspeakable evil, collaboration with foreign military occupiers became a worthy career choice—and as for the rights of women, "let us not be unrealistic." The key discursive need became to keep up the pretense, whatever the setbacks, that in the long run the external intervention had put the country on a path toward a "feasible" democracy.

For the community of democracies to counter the charge of double standards and to justify their noble pretentions, they would need to practice restraint in their conduct and a capacity for honest self-evaluation and course correction, as well as assume as much responsibility for the harms they can cause as they demand from their authoritarian adversaries in comparable circumstances. In the end, it is not they who can control what should count as a democratic outcome. It is the people of Afghanistan who suffer the externally driven regime change, and their future generations who will either condemn or condone what the evangelists leave behind.

[7] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Inner Enemies of Democracy* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2014).

But, second, what right have the evangelists to adopt such a high moral tone about the political practices of societies that they do not rule, when the record of their achievements in the territories that already are under their direct control is so unsatisfactory? Before condemning heavy-handed policing in Beijing, might it not be appropriate to address police failings in Ferguson and Baltimore (not to mention in "democratic" Guatemala and Honduras)? When denouncing legal oppression and alleged torture in Cuban jails, perhaps something might be done about Guantanamo. Does an unelected House of Lords really have the credentials to find fault with Iran's Council of Experts? Does the Spanish or Italian judicial system display such unquestionable probity that those countries have the right to lecture others on upholding the "democratic rule of law"? One great failing of authoritarian rule is said to be that it leaves ordinary citizens vulnerable to state surveillance and the interception of private communication (not the National Security Agency, then). Another is that the official media control and distort the flow of news in the interests of unaccountable power-holders (not Murdoch or Berlusconi, of course). If "crony capitalism" has blighted democratization in many post-communist countries, how does that differ from the election financing practices of corporate lobbyists in more than a few Western democracies?

Again, such criticism has legs. But again, a more tolerant, self-critical, and pluralist version of the democratic case would be far more persuasive than the one-sided righteousness that typifies the evangelists. The fundamental point, here, is that democracy promotion needs to begin at home. Only those who uphold and maintain excellence of democratic practice in their own territories have the long run credibility to win more backers for their example around the world.

A third line of criticism concerns the right to autonomy and self-government. This can be stated in ethical terms: only those who actively choose and design their own forms of government (and make their own mistakes) deserve the designation of democrats. Those who simply import or imitate models from abroad (mostly out of deference to external incentives or endorsements) are not true authors of their national destiny, and so do not merit the status of democracy builders. This argument rests on two assumptions: that the nation is still the key bearer of democratic politics, and that each nation must craft its own institutions primarily from within. There is scope for debate over both these assumptions, but it is notable that after a brief period in the 1990s when they fell out of favor, both ideas are once again widely supported, not only within authoritarian regimes seeking shelter from global human rights standards, but also by much public opinion in most democracies, as well.

A more sociological as opposed to ethical way of restating the point is that for ideas (and ideologies) to achieve social acceptability (legitimacy) they need to be locally owned. Does this democratic discourse accord with our history and traditions? Is it in accord with our educational, religious, cultural, and linguistic practices? When the students in the Tiananmen Square demonstrations paraded

a Goddess of Liberty reminiscent of the Statue of Liberty in New York, they were not connecting to the collective imaginary of the Chinese people (by contrast, doing so in that location on the sixtieth anniversary of the May Fourth Movement was discursively empowering). From a constructivist standpoint, virtually the same ideas and arguments often will be received quite differently when they are perceived as foreign imports rather than domestically generated convictions. On this basis, one of the big problems with the evangelists was that they assumed that everyone everywhere would share their parochial and crusading worldview. The obvious counter to this line of criticism would be for democracy advocates to embrace a more open, pluralist, tolerant, and multivocal conception of their discourse, rather than to prioritize democracy's English language and Christian genealogy.

In summary, therefore, nondemocracies have gained confidence and unity in their resistance to recent democracy promoting rhetoric in part because of its exaggerated claims, weak argumentation, and self-serving appearance. Because of these failings, various forms of authoritarian discursive pushback have proved surprisingly effective, notwithstanding their own internal flaws. For democracy promoters to regain the upper hand in this debate, such failings would have to be recognized and corrected—not an easy course, but also far from impossible. If arrogant evangelism gave way to more sober and pluralist forms of advocacy, many of the nondemocracies might prove more open to dialogue, and perhaps even to eventual persuasion.

Conclusion: Context Matters, History Counts, So Do Beliefs

The interest in the IDCAR project arises from its potential to help explain the unexpected (at least for many social scientists and Western policy observers) strength and ubiquity of recent "pushbacks" against the spread of liberal democratic regimes. These reactions have included not just defensive national strategies, but also active programs of international cooperation that have shored up undemocratic regimes and even made inroads with the public opinion of various established democracies.

IDCAR contributors have documented a wide diversity of practices and have offered a corresponding multiple set of explanations and interpretations of how these pushbacks are structured and where they may end up.[8] We should not expect too much closure on a pattern of political activities that is so varied, largely untested, and still ongoing. But this (IDCAR-3) issue on the current state of play points to certain general conclusions that bring some order to the welter of initial reactions and perceptions. This introductory essay

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[8] See footnote 1 for IDCAR-1. For the IDCAR-2 findings, see Andre Bank and Kurt Weyland, guest editors, "Clusters of Authoritarian Diffusion and Co-operation: The Role of Interests versus Ideology," special issue, *Democratization* 22, no. 3 (December 2017).

has set out, in very general terms, the case for each of three main scholarly approaches commonly found in the literature. It sees some merit in all three, but in particular underscores the importance of including insights from constructivism. No single angle alone can prove adequate, given the nature of the phenomena under study. The evidence assembled by the IDCAR project teaches that context matters, history counts, and so do beliefs (ideational variables filtered through interests).

Context matters, so an overly generalized model of "authoritarian regimes" (or, still worse, "autocracies") will prove incapable of identifying the main drivers of most "antidemocracy promotion" and "democracy resisting" strategies. (An earlier IDCAR-related essay in this journal tried to disaggregate the various "strategies in search of a framework" that can arise, and to outline the most likely intervening contextual variables).[9]

History counts, because each political community judges its policy alternatives in the light of collective interests as interpreted out of remembered antecedents. For example, Russian opinions of the Western democracies has been reconfigured around a certain (perhaps distorted) assessment of how their country was treated under Yeltsin; likewise, China draws on a century-long tradition of bitter memories; Arab resistance to democracy promotion is similarly fueled by historical narratives that often are not well understood by foreign interlopers (even dating back to the Crusades). Not all historical memories are adverse to cooperation with democracies, of course—the Baltic states provide an eloquent counter-example. And historical narratives are capable of being reinterpreted—the Chavista account of Venezuela's history is ripe for reexamination, for example. So, to say that history counts is not to lapse into historicism, but only to underscore the role of collective ideas, ideals, and identifications in shaping what is thought possible and relevant to a given society.

Finally, collective beliefs matter when working out with whom to ally; how much trust to invest in a partner; and which demonstration effects have traction in any given context. At one level, the statement is embarrassingly obvious, but in our particular area it deserves restatement and development. British and American beliefs and presuppositions about democracy may not be identical, but they are so densely intertwined that they underpin more transient and pragmatic forms of cooperation and joint action. Russian and Polish memories and understandings rest on no such common foundation, with the result that even when the two countries are bound together in a common endeavor, they are unlikely to make easy partners. Russia and China always were likely to perceive the world through rival lenses, even at the height of their "world communist" convergence, and these strains became uncontainable

[9] Laurence Whitehead, "Antidemocracy Promotion: Four Strategies in Search of a Framework," *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 20, no. 2 (December 2014): 1-24.

once Mao repudiated the post-Stalinist ("revisionist") Communist Party of the Soviet Union.[10] Likewise, a recent history[11] provides a long-run account of the divergent understandings that have separated China and Japan, which continue to overshadow that relationship. It is worth mentioning, here, because today Japan is held up as the democracy and China as the authoritarian regime, whereas a century ago the regime characteristics were inverted. Indeed, many of the impediments to mutual cooperation seem rooted in competing worldviews that predate the arrival of modern politics. More generally, explanations of alliance choices and diffusion effects that disregard such ideational cleavages are liable to prove radically incomplete.

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[10] Alexander Lukin, *China and Russia: The New Rapprochement* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2018) evaluates the post-1989 growth of cooperation between these two contrasting powers, which he views as a missed opportunity for the West to promote a genuinely inclusive post-Cold War system. Lukin blames this misjudgment on the "ideology" of "democratism"—"a one-sided mixture of political liberalism, the concept of 'fundamental human rights', Enlightenment secularism, and colonial theories of western supremacy" (page 3).

[11] June Teufel Dreyer, *Middle Kingdom and the Empire of the Rising Sun* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).