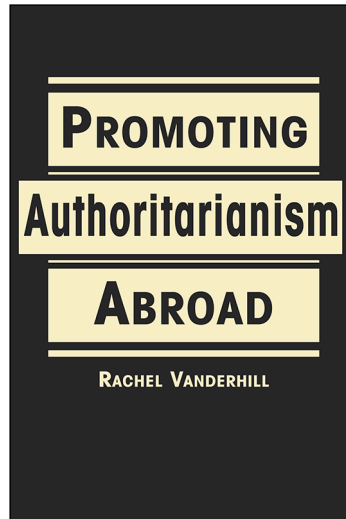


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Promoting  
Authoritarianism  
Abroad

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# Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vii
<b>1</b> Promoting Authoritarianism Abroad: How, When, and Where	1
<b>2</b> Russia in Ukraine and Belarus: Geopolitical Ambitions	41
<b>3</b> Venezuela in Nicaragua and Peru: Chávez's Varying Spheres of Influence	97
<b>4</b> Iran in Lebanon: Seeking Shiite Solidarity	135
<b>5</b> Concluding Thoughts	181
<i>List of Acronyms</i>	187
<i>Bibliography</i>	189
<i>Index</i>	205
<i>About the Book</i>	217

# 1

## Promoting Authoritarianism Abroad: How, When, and Where

Traveling through southern Lebanon after the 2006 conflict, one would have seen billboards advertising Iran's support for rebuilding schools, clinics, bridges, and roads damaged by Israeli bombs. There were brightly colored signs with the slogan "From the people of Iran to the people of Lebanon."<sup>1</sup> At first glance, this would look like generous humanitarian aid. However, upon further examination the story becomes much more complicated. Iran funneled the majority of its aid through the militant organization Hezbollah. Not only was Iran seeking to help a neighbor in need, but it also wanted to increase support for Hezbollah and thereby influence Lebanon's domestic politics. Hezbollah, as a militant organization actively subverting the Lebanese state, is a serious challenge to Lebanese democracy. Iran's support for Hezbollah increases the organization's political influence in Lebanon and therefore facilitates the development of a more authoritarian regime.

The story of Iranian support for Hezbollah is just one illustration of the promotion of authoritarianism that has occurred around the world in the past decade. Although recent events in Tunisia and Egypt have reinvigorated hopes for democracy in states where authoritarianism appeared durable, the resistance of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states to democracy, the failure to establish democracy in

Central Asia, and antidemocratic trends in Central America have raised concerns in recent years about a “democratic recession.”<sup>2</sup> The long-term outcome of the revolutions in the Middle East is still unknown, but even if democracy is the result in some countries, those involved in the promotion of authoritarianism are likely not only to continue their efforts but also to intensify them due to the desire to insulate themselves and their neighbors from a “democratic threat.”

Prior to the 2011 revolutions in the Middle East, foreign policy experts and analysts repeatedly expressed concerns about external support for authoritarian regimes. There were dire warnings about Hugo Chávez’s growing influence in Latin America. US secretary of state Hillary Clinton stated that the increasing influence of China and Iran in Latin America was “disturbing.”<sup>3</sup> The rapid rise of Chinese involvement in Africa also caused unease. A report by Freedom House, Radio Liberty, and Radio Free Asia argues that modern authoritarian states are more sophisticated than the totalitarian regimes of the Cold War and are working “diligently to spread their influence” through a variety of methods.<sup>4</sup> Former Czech president and dissident Václav Havel warned that Russia is advancing a new type of authoritarianism at home and abroad with more sophisticated forms of control and influence than those of the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> Even with the recent democratic developments, US and European officials still need to worry about their loss of influence in these regions and about the effects of external efforts to promote authoritarianism.

Despite these concerns, we know little about authoritarianism and what determines its success or failure. Scholars and policymakers have focused on why Venezuela and other countries seek to support authoritarianism abroad and what the potential implications are for the United States and Europe. Therefore, there are many unanswered strategic and theoretical questions about the promotion of authoritarianism. For example, Chávez’s involvement in the 2006 Peruvian elections contributed to the victory of the candidate he did *not* want to win. In contrast, Iranian support for Hezbollah has helped it gain impressive political influence and power in Lebanon. Why has external support for authoritarianism assisted in the development of an authoritarian regime in some cases and not others? Is it due to unique circumstances, or are there generalizable causes of success and failure? What is the role of local conditions in explaining the effects of external support? How much are states actively “promot-

ing” authoritarianism? How does promoting authoritarianism differ from promoting democracy? How does external support for authoritarianism interact with democracy promotion in recipient countries? Knowing more about the promotion of authoritarianism will also help policymakers design effective policy responses to these attempts to spread autocratic regimes.

The existing literature on the international dimension of democratization has demonstrated that the role of international factors in democratization is complicated and rarely uni-causal. However, the interplay between domestic and international factors is even more complex when there is external support for both authoritarianism and democracy. All five of the cases discussed in this book highlight this complexity and interaction between external support for authoritarianism, democracy promotion, and local conditions (such as the balance of power between liberal and illiberal elites). Therefore, in this book I seek to do three interrelated things: (1) explain how states support authoritarianism abroad through changing elite strategies and capabilities; (2) illustrate how authoritarian promotion and democracy promotion interact to affect the regime outcome; (3) demonstrate that the effectiveness of external involvement, and the eventual regime outcome, depend not only on the nature and extent of outside support—either liberal or illiberal—but also on the interaction between these external factors and the conditions in the recipient state.

## **The International Dimension of Regime Change**

Much of the literature on the international dimension of democratization has focused on the role of EU conditionality and the accession process in postcommunist states. Through demonstrating how EU incentives affect elite calculations about the cost of compliance with external demands for reform, this research has proven that external actors can influence the process of regime change.<sup>6</sup> The extensive empirical and theoretical work done on this issue has provided important insights into how states can promote democracy by providing incentives for elites to support democracy. My own work moves forward from these insights, adding to our understanding of the complex relationship between international influences and regime change, especially regarding external support for authoritarianism. In

this book, I develop theoretical tools to explore how external actors affect domestic politics and regime change in target countries by developing specific mechanisms linking external assistance to changes in regime type.<sup>7</sup>

Another focus of the literature on the international dimension of democratization has been on the role of foreign aid. Data from the World Bank show a tenfold increase in expenditures on democracy promotion since the end of the Cold War.<sup>8</sup> The focus in the policy realm on democracy assistance programs has resulted in increased scholarly attention. On the foreign policy side, scholars have studied why states provide foreign aid as part of programs to promote democracy. Many arguments draw on the democratic peace theory, leading to an assumption that promoting democracy will result in stable, friendly neighboring states.<sup>9</sup> Others have critiqued US democracy assistance programs for their lack of flexibility, lack of attention to local conditions, and short duration.<sup>10</sup> Thomas Carothers, a critic of US democracy assistance, does believe that democracy promotion programs can be influential when implemented well, but that such implementation is a rare occurrence.<sup>11</sup> In contrast to the studies on EU conditionality, most studies of foreign aid have found that it had little effect on democratization.<sup>12</sup> However, more recently, studies that examine only aid that is specifically focused on democratization have shown that democracy assistance programs can improve democratization.<sup>13</sup> Steven Finkel, Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, and Mitchell Seligson's large quantitative study of the US Agency for International Development's (USAID) democracy assistance programs found that targeted democratic assistance empowers prodemocracy actors in recipient countries and positively affects overall levels of democracy.<sup>14</sup> Stephen Collins discusses different types of economic assistance that the United States has used to encourage democracy and argues that aid for election monitoring and civil society development has been the most effective.<sup>15</sup> Although these studies tell us "very little about causality or the pathways of connections between external influence and domestic change processes," they demonstrate that external actors can influence democratization.<sup>16</sup> We can hypothesize that external actors are also able to influence the development of an authoritarian regime.

A third category of literature about the international dimension of regime change developed out of the literature on the diffusion of policy decisions within states. Diffusion involves "the process by which

an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system.”<sup>17</sup> Scholars include many different processes under the general term “diffusion.”<sup>18</sup> The geographic spread of ideas, policies, and institutions from one country to another (or within one state) can involve demonstration effects, diffusion through mimicry or imitation, or modular action.<sup>19</sup> Democratic diffusion is the concept that democratic ideas and norms spread across borders: the more democratic states there are in a region, the more likely it is that an authoritarian state in the region will become democratic. Multiple large-*N* studies have found strong support for the existence and influence of democratic diffusion.<sup>20</sup> Primarily focusing on Russia’s relations with its neighbors, discussions and investigations of authoritarian diffusion have also begun.<sup>21</sup> This book looks at cases beyond Russia in order to further explore the nature and role of authoritarian diffusion.

Building on the existing research about the international dimension of democratization, this book addresses two underdeveloped areas of study. First, the literature has heavily focused on the role of democracy promotion, with limited examination of efforts to export authoritarianism. Only in the past few years have scholars even begun to consider how external factors can promote authoritarianism.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, what little has been studied about promoting authoritarianism comes primarily from a foreign policy perspective as opposed to a focus on regime outcomes.<sup>23</sup> In other words, the existing literature is primarily about why Iran, Russia, or Venezuela would be encouraging the development of authoritarianism in their region, with less attention given to how this support actually influences regime type. Second, the nature of democracy promotion has been well documented elsewhere, but few have investigated how it relates to the promotion of authoritarianism and how these two external factors interact with local conditions to explain the regime outcome. Therefore, two important parts of the story, the interaction between democracy and authoritarian promotion, and their interaction with the recipient side, are understudied. Analysts often falsely conceive of states as passive recipients of efforts to promote authoritarianism, neglecting the role of the domestic political and economic situation. However, external efforts to change a regime, whether to promote democracy or authoritarianism, vary in their effectiveness due to circumstances beyond the control of the external actor. Understanding the recipient country’s domestic political and economic sit-

uation is essential for explaining why external efforts to change the regime sometimes succeed and sometimes fail. I present a comprehensive theory that not only includes the policies of the external actor but also analyzes the economic and political circumstances of the recipient state.

## **Case Studies**

Theory needs evidence to support it, and in this book I examine a diverse set of empirical cases from three regions: Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. These cases include Russia's involvement in Belarus and Ukraine, Venezuela's engagement in Peru and Nicaragua, and Iran's involvement in Lebanon. I chose these three external actors because they are currently the most active in supporting authoritarianism abroad. Although China has received a great deal of attention, especially its activities in Africa, there are no signs that China is actively seeking to influence regime type; rather, China's international engagement has been economic in nature. Chinese support may help a nondemocratic government to avoid international pressure to democratize, but there is no conclusive evidence that the Chinese government seeks to develop authoritarian regimes. In general, the Chinese government has not tried to influence the internal politics of other countries, has not advocated for one political faction, and has not attempted to affect regime type. Instead, China has been seeking to secure access to economic resources, especially energy sources and minerals. China may be enabling authoritarianism, but it is not promoting authoritarianism. In contrast, as I will show in this book, Russia, Venezuela, and Iran are actively supporting the development of authoritarianism in other countries.

Russia, Venezuela, and Iran are similar in that they are regional but not global powers, with significant interest in expanding their influence in their respective regions. All three states also desire to challenge what they see as the global dominance of the United States. They view the spread of democracy as tied to the spread of US influence because of a belief that more democratic states are more likely to support the United States. Furthermore, all three use their oil or natural gas wealth to fund the promotion of authoritarianism. Not coincidentally, the rise in the promotion of authoritarianism has corresponded with increases in the price of oil. Despite these



similarities, these three countries are geographically, economically, and ideologically diverse. Venezuela has an anticapitalist agenda, but Russia has security, not ideological, goals. Iran also has ideological goals, but they are quite different from Venezuela's, as they are rooted in religious, not economic, ideology. Each country also has a unique history with the recipient states. Russia once controlled the territory of Ukraine and Belarus. Iran strongly supported Shiite militant groups during Lebanon's civil war. In contrast, until recently, Venezuela had no major exchanges with Peru or Nicaragua. These similarities and differences offer the opportunity to investigate how states support authoritarianism abroad.

I chose the recipient countries based on several criteria. The countries had to have experienced external support for both authoritarianism as well as democracy. This was important, to ensure that cross-country differences did not distort comparisons between the two forms of external involvement. Second, in order to assess effectiveness, it was necessary to include cases where external efforts succeeded and others where it failed. It was especially important that they include the same external actor, so that I could eliminate differences between external actors as a cause of effectiveness. Third, given that the majority of research on the international dimension of democratization has been based on European cases, there was a need to include cases from other regions (Central America, South America, and the Middle East). Fourth, the diversity of cases also encourages the examination of the role of ideology compared to the influence of material incentives on elite calculations. These cases incorporate both situations where ideology was influential and situations where it was not a major factor. The examination of Russian, Venezuelan, and Iranian support of authoritarian regimes provides a comparative, cross-country approach and the opportunity to assess successful and failed attempts to promote authoritarian regimes.

## **Overview of the Argument**

Through considering Russia, Iran, and Venezuela's efforts to influence the regime type in neighboring states, I examine how states promote authoritarianism and how this interacts with democracy promotion and local conditions to determine its effectiveness and regime outcomes. I divide the argument into two parts: the first looks specifi-

cally at how states promote authoritarianism and the second examines effectiveness and explains regime outcomes. Using this two-part argument, I first describe how states cause regime change by affecting elite strategies and capabilities. States can alter the strategies of the political elite and increase the capabilities of different elite factions. States can offer positive incentives, such as trade agreements or cheap supplies of energy, to alter elites' calculations about the costs and benefits of various strategies. States may also offer negative incentives, such as denial of important energy supplies, to change elite strategies. External actors can also provide additional financial resources that enable authoritarian leaders to purchase support and increase their repressive capacity.

Second, I theorize that along with the nature of the external support for authoritarianism, democracy promotion efforts and local conditions determine the effectiveness of these mechanisms. The local conditions that are most influential are the balance of power among elites and the nature of the linkages between the recipient state and the external actor. If the country is relatively evenly divided between liberal and illiberal elites and there are multiple linkages between the recipient state and external actor (economic, historical, ideological), then promotion of authoritarianism is more likely to be effective. Throughout all the cases, it is important to remember that external actors and events do not work in isolation but instead interact with domestic actors and structures to bring about changes in the regime. As Wade Jacoby argues, "External influence is a multi-stranded process" that works in synergy with domestic factors.<sup>24</sup>

Two important points of clarification need to be made about what this book is, and is not, about. This book is about how states promote authoritarianism and about what determines the effectiveness of those efforts. It is not a book about the foreign policy goals and interests of Russia, Venezuela, and Iran. Therefore, the motives and interests of the external actor are not examined in great detail. However, it is important to note that the external actors generally, as do most states, have self-interested reasons for supporting a particular regime type in other states. Furthermore, the goal of their support for autocratic leaders in other states may not be just to affect regime outcomes; external actors may also have economic or geopolitical goals. In other words, their support for authoritarianism may involve multiple motives and interests. The primary goal of their support may not be to develop authoritarian regimes, but the outcome of their support

is an increase in authoritarianism in the recipient country. In the case of the three external actors discussed in this book, Russia, Venezuela, and Iran, each state views the issue of regime type as connected to issues of global and regional alliances. If a neighboring state is democratic, then it is automatically seen as being supportive of the United States and within the US sphere of influence. For example, Russia fears that if Belarus or Ukraine were to become fully democratic, those countries would then join the EU and NATO, potentially resulting in the placement of US forces on its border. Given the sometimes contentious relations all three states have with the United States, the nature of the regime type in neighboring states can be seen as a matter of national security.

Second, I am not claiming that external factors, whether the promotion of democracy or authoritarianism, are solely deterministic of regime type. Domestic conditions play an important role in explaining regime outcomes. I am also not attempting to develop a comprehensive explanation for the regime outcomes in Belarus, Ukraine, Peru, Nicaragua, and Lebanon. Instead, I examine how external involvement interacts with the domestic political and economic situation and when the interaction of these three factors will change the regime. Multiple internal factors, such as historical conflict among factions, explain why the countries have illiberal regimes. These reasons, outside of how they may affect the influence of external involvement, are not covered in this book. In other words, I am telling one part of a larger story.

Last, when I write that an external actor is “promoting authoritarianism,” I mean that the actor is actively supporting illiberal elites, groups, or regimes through direct assistance. Furthermore, the external actor is not supporting any liberal elites or groups, and the assistance is targeted at specific factions. In general, international assistance is not given for the benefit of the country as a whole.

### *Who Are Elites, and Why Focus on Them?*

Elites are the focus of this book because of their essential role in regime change. Transitions from authoritarianism to democracy are usually determined by the choices of elites.<sup>25</sup> For example, economic elites are important for regime change because of their access to “extensive political resources” that enable them to “influence political outcomes in a wide range of areas.”<sup>26</sup> In addition to financial

resources, economic elites, usually from the same social background as the political leaders, have contacts and connections that give them access to government officials. Business leaders have incentives to engage in politics, as the policies of the government, such as taxation laws, trade policies, and assistance with foreign investment, have enormous consequences for them. Furthermore, Olsonian collective action theory argues that elites are able to mobilize successfully to advance their interests, whereas nonelites struggle to take collective action because they confront formidable barriers to mobilization given their large group size.

During periods of transition, there is a high degree of uncertainty, providing greater opportunity and space for elite choice.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the decisionmaking of elites has a larger influence on the outcome than under more stable circumstances. However, despite the uncertainty of transitional periods, preexisting social relations, economic structures, and political institutions still, at least partially, shape actors' interests, preferences, and capabilities.<sup>28</sup> The interests and preferences of elites are contextually and structurally determined. Structural factors, such as a state's level of economic dependency on other states, are confining conditions that restrict or enhance options available to elites.

Political elites, as party leaders, politicians, and government officials, are heavily invested in a particular regime type and, with their access to government money and power, have the resources to affect regime change. If they currently hold office, political elites may be able to use repression to prevent a change of regime advocated by mass protest. Even in cases where mass protest has contributed to regime change, such as the protests in November 1989 in Czechoslovakia, the choices of political elites are important. In that case, the communist leaders chose not to use military force. If they had, events would have been much different.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, political elites are in positions to influence regime change and have vested interests in the regime type.

In addition to the importance of elites for regime change, research has shown that elites play an important role in determining the influence of international norms. John Ikenberry and Charles Kupchan argue that elite, not mass, receptivity to external norms is essential to the socialization process. In the socialization process, elites "buy into and internalize norms" articulated by the regional or global powers.<sup>30</sup> Democratic or authoritarian ideas and norms may

first take root among the masses, but they “must then spread to the elite level if they are to have important effect” on policy or regime change.<sup>31</sup> Elites are important for both regime change and transmitting international factors into domestic changes.

### *Illiberal Regimes*

Many states are neither fully democratic nor fully authoritarian. The democratic transition literature implies that only democracy or authoritarianism is the equilibrium point where regimes will be stable. The existence today of numerous regimes that fall between these two points (such as Ukraine) challenges this assumption. Due to the lack of a common nomenclature, scholars have used terms such as “pariah regimes,” “hybrid regimes,” the “grey zone,” “electoral democracy,” “competitive authoritarianism,” “pseudodemocracy,” “electoral authoritarianism,” and “in-between” regimes.<sup>32</sup> For clarity in the cases, I use the term “illiberal regime” to refer to countries located “in the middle.” An illiberal regime may have regular elections but lacks rule of law, separation of powers, and protection of some basic civil liberties, such as freedom of the press.<sup>33</sup> Although these countries may not have the level of repression found in consolidated authoritarian regimes, such as North Korea, they are missing many components of a democracy. This definition builds on a liberal conception of democracy, which sees “transparency, civil liberty, rule of law, horizontal accountability (effective checks on rulers), and minority rights” as defining features of democracy along with regular, competitive, and free and fair elections.<sup>34</sup>

### *Regime Change*

*Regime change* has traditionally meant change from an authoritarian regime to a democracy or vice versa. However, this view is relatively unhelpful in understanding the shifts between the different “in-between” regime types and democracy or authoritarianism in the twenty-first century. I redefine regime change to encompass not only shifts from authoritarianism to democracy, but also shifts from illiberal democracy to authoritarianism and vice versa. Change in the regime involves measurable changes in the nature of the political situation. A regime has become more authoritarian when multiple independent observers agree that one or more of the following has

occurred: (1) elections no longer meet international standards for freedom and fairness; (2) there has been an erosion of press freedom characterized by government harassment of journalists, censorship laws, or restriction of private media broadcasting and ownership; (3) political and civil liberties of private citizens have been eroded, such as restrictions on right of assembly, criticism of the government, or formation of nongovernmental organizations.

Measuring regime change requires measuring regime type. There is extensive scholarly criticism of all the major indices and measures of regime type.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, in order to measure the level of democracy, illiberalism, and authoritarianism as well as regime change in each case, I use a combination of sources: Freedom House reports, Polity scores, reports of international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), and reports from independent local journalists and academics. Freedom House reports and Polity scores provide comparative, standard, and annual assessments of democracy (or lack of democracy) in many countries throughout the world. Reports from INGOs, such as Human Rights Watch, and from local, independent journalists provide supplemental sources of information about the protection of civil liberties and minority rights within a country. I use the additional reports to check the accuracy of the Freedom House reports and Polity scores and to better assess the nuances of the political situation within a country. Although all of these measures have flaws, the combination of information from these four sources produces as reliable and accurate a measure of regime type and regime change as is currently obtainable.<sup>36</sup>

### **How States Promote or Encourage Authoritarianism**

A good starting point for analyzing how states promote illiberal regimes is the current literature on the promotion of democracy. The European Union's efforts to promote democracy in postcommunist states showed that international pressure is influential when it is incentive-based.<sup>37</sup> Incentive-based pressure uses conditionality, sanctions, or rewards to influence elite regime preferences, or at least elite behavior, and therefore promote economic and political reforms. Although elites in postcommunist states experienced the diffusion of democratic norms, "collective standards of proper behavior," or a belief in the legitimacy of democracy, democracy promotion efforts

were most successful when they combined democratic norms and incentives.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, democracy promotion involved efforts to change elite behaviors (e.g., end repression of civil and political liberties) and alter the relative balance of power between illiberal and liberal groups in a country (e.g., supporting the development of civil society). Building on the democracy promotion literature, I argue that there are two broad means by which external actors encourage authoritarianism: changing elite strategies and changing elite capabilities.

Despite the important insights from the international dimension of democratization literature, external efforts to promote authoritarianism are not identical to those that promote democracy. Authoritarian states, not constrained by the norms of democracy at home or abroad, have greater freedom of action than democratic states. Democracy implies that the people have a right to choose their government. Therefore, when democratic states are promoting democracy, they cannot interfere to such an extent that they are removing the right of the local people to choose their government.<sup>39</sup> Authoritarian leaders face no such constraints, enabling them to directly fund allies in the recipient states. For example, Russia is willing to finance the political candidates and parties it supports in Ukraine, but the United States has generally been nonpartisan in its assistance to Central and Eastern Europe since 1989. However, there are important similarities to the promotion of democracy, which provide insight about the promotion of authoritarianism.

### *Learning to Be Bad: Changing Elite Strategies*

External actors influence regime change through altering elite strategies or elite capabilities at the domestic level. Similar to much of the international relations and democratization literature, I assume that elites are rational actors. Assuming political elites are rational individuals who seek to maximize their own interests, they desire either to maintain power or, if out of office, to obtain power. Whatever their additional goals are, political elites generally need to have power to achieve them. Autocratic elites have a “menu” of options available to them for how to obtain or hold on to power.<sup>40</sup> Other states can influence the decisionmaking process of elites and provide them either ideas or incentives to adopt particular strategies, such as how to manipulate an election. In the case of promoting democracy, we see set practices and common strategies across cases and regions. For

example, Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik discuss the model of electoral revolutions—transforming elections in an authoritarian state into a genuinely competitive and fair process—which involves a standard set of practices used in multiple cases, such as the Philippines, Chile, Serbia, Ukraine, and Georgia.<sup>41</sup> Surprisingly, we have also seen in the past decade the spread of common practices for how to establish a more authoritarian government. These are often cases of more “sophisticated” authoritarianism, where the state uses limited repression to maintain control and instead manipulate the political realm in subtle ways to prevent any challenges to its rule. For example, leaders in Russia, Venezuela, and Nicaragua have all gained control over the media through a combination of state ownership of major television networks and political ties with the owners of private media. Leaders can choose strategies from a “menu of manipulation” and, as this book will show, we see leaders choosing similar options across regions.<sup>42</sup> This development suggests that there are cross-country influences on these choices.

This mechanism builds on normative approaches focusing on the role of diffusion and incentive-based approaches, where an external actor may offer incentives or sanctions that will influence elite strategic choices about how to gain or maintain power.<sup>43</sup> Although theoretically possible, there is no evidence of authoritarian external actors changing the regime preferences of elites in the recipient state from democracy to authoritarianism. In other words, despite international involvement, political elites’ regime preferences may remain the same (e.g., favoring authoritarianism), but their strategies for how to gain power change because of external influence. The lack of efforts to change regime preferences is one difference between promoting authoritarianism and promoting democracy. Through socialization and learning, democracy promotion activities by external actors can change not only strategies but also the regime preferences of elites. There are three mechanisms through which external actors influence elite strategies about how they obtain and hold on to power: demonstration effects, purposive and collaborative action by external “change agents,” and pressure.

**Demonstration effects.** The first mechanism involves the diffusion of ideas, methods, and policy solutions across national borders. Diffusion generally does not refer to an outcome but “to a process by which policy choices are inherently interdependent—that is, a politi-



cal entity's choices are influenced by others, and these choices, in turn, influence others."<sup>44</sup> In the case of ideas about how to maintain or obtain power, diffusion involves elites learning from the successes and failures of other countries.<sup>45</sup> Leaders exchange information about regime change, politics, and policy. "Political leaders are inclined to work as follows: they recognize a problem in their country, develop some basic theory about how to solve the problem, review the various solutions available, and attempt to ascertain the effectiveness of these solutions."<sup>46</sup> Elites will often know what actions leaders in other countries have adopted. In other words, elites will adopt policies, such as how to gain control over the media, because they have observed their successful adoption elsewhere. As Thomas Ambrosio discusses:

Regimes which aim to strengthen their own power will seek out models which appear to meet their goals. The relative "effectiveness" of an autocratic path might be indicated by the ability of authoritarian governments to achieve economic growth [e.g., China] . . . or to insulate themselves from political pressures, as seen in the Kremlin's multifaceted approach to undermining democratic trends at home and abroad.<sup>47</sup>

In addition, illiberal elites may decide not to adopt certain policies because of the negative consequences of these actions in other states. For example, they may decide not to allow international election observers into the country if they witness international election observers contributing to the overthrow of an autocratic regime elsewhere. For clarity and simplicity, I use the term "demonstration effects" to refer to this mechanism. A demonstration effect can have a normative component, where elites adopt strategies from abroad because they see the sources of these strategies as "legitimate and reputable," and a strategic component, where elites adopt strategies because they are seen as effective solutions to their problems.<sup>48</sup> This mechanism is informal and indirect. If this is the only mechanism observed, then the external actor is not "promoting" authoritarianism, because there is no deliberate action by the external actor.

**Purposive and collaborative action.** The external actor may also take purposive and deliberate action to spread specific strategies and policies on how to obtain or maintain power. The spread of particular strategies for how to manipulate elections may involve not just

the power of successful examples, but also the push of those that have already succeeded.<sup>49</sup> These actions involve active collaboration with elites in the recipient state and are not coercive. People associated with the external actor act as “change agents,” who act intentionally to share the specific details on how change occurred elsewhere.<sup>50</sup> These change agents or “innovators” are responsible for “peddling” ideas and strategies outside of their state.<sup>51</sup> Changing elite strategies this way requires external actors, who have already been successful in restricting democracy, to actively spread their ideas to other states. On the “demand side,” illiberal elites seek to emulate the success of those who have succeeded in establishing authoritarian regimes.

Under the conditions of the promotion of democracy and the global norm of democracy, illiberal regimes have felt the need to develop allies to resist US and European efforts to promote democracy. Autocratic leaders seek to reproduce themselves elsewhere in order to consolidate their power at home and reduce external challenges to their rule.<sup>52</sup> There is power in numbers; the more autocratic states there are in the region, the less likely there will be democratic diffusion. Research has shown that having more democratic neighbors “significantly decreases the likelihood that autocracies will endure”; leaders of authoritarian regimes who are aware of this conclusion will thus desire to prevent democratization in neighboring states.<sup>53</sup> Recent strengthening of relations between Venezuela and Iran, and Venezuela and Russia, demonstrates the desire for “mutual empowerment” and the harnessing of numbers to protect strategic interests. In the diffusion of democracy, networks of local and regional political activists are important for the spreading of strategies about how to defeat illiberal leaders and for helping to develop the components of democracy, such as constitutions, judicial systems, and other institutions.<sup>54</sup> Although the role of change agents and networks may be more visible in cases of democratic diffusion, there are also networks among authoritarian leaders through which they can actively and deliberately share ideas and policies about how to manipulate elections, prevent dissent, or eliminate term limits.

**External pressure.** Through the third mechanism, the external actor will apply positive and negative incentives to encourage, or even force, elites to change strategies. Unlike the first mechanism, demonstration effects, this involves deliberate action on the part of the

external actor, and unlike the second mechanism, purposive and collaborative action, there is an element of coercion involved. External pressure can alter the strategies of illiberal elites through changing the costs and benefits of the various options they have regarding the regime type. The clearest example of this mechanism would be the application of economic sanctions because of violations of human rights and democratic rule. In general, it is more common for external actors to use pressure (or even coercion) in case of democracy promotion (e.g., sanctions on South Africa during apartheid or on Libya in 2011). However, autocratic external actors can pressure leaders in recipient states to adopt particular policies, including policies that further restrict civil and political liberties. For example, when Bahrain experienced large-scale protests in support of democracy in 2011, Saudi Arabia pressured the Bahraini government not to give in to the demands of the protestors.<sup>55</sup> External nondemocratic pressure to change strategies involves a combination of negative incentives or coercion and specific ideas about what policies the recipient state needs to change or adopt.

External actors can also provide incentives to encourage cooperation among elites to support the development of an illiberal regime. Extensive political-party fragmentation and polarization weaken political movements, whether they are prodemocratic or illiberal.<sup>56</sup> Nondemocratic external actors can provide elites with incentives to resolve divisions and offer a “focal point for cooperation.”<sup>57</sup> Preventing divisions among antidemocratic groups reduces the probability of liberalization and helps antidemocratic elites to maintain or obtain office. In other words, external actors may shape the list of options available to elites and change the perceived costs and benefits of particular choices.

### *Gaining the Ability to Be Bad: Changing Elite Capabilities*

External actors can also increase the capabilities or enhance the resources of different groups of elites. States may offer aid, cheap oil, or trade agreements to nondemocratic elites, enabling them to buy off the opposition and finance repression. Through altering the capabilities of particular elites, external assistance helps them to hold state power and may shift the relative balance of power among elites.<sup>58</sup> Elites may also use external assistance to strengthen the “political and economic position of supportive domestic groups and

weaken that of opponents.”<sup>59</sup> Through changing the power of specific groups, external actors can undermine existing democratic regimes and assist groups seeking to establish illiberal regimes.<sup>60</sup> For example, during the Cold War the Soviet Union provided weapons, money, and training to communist groups in Africa and Asia to assist them in establishing communist regimes. Efforts to enhance the capabilities of illiberal groups may occur through four different mechanisms: the provision of technical and financial assistance for political parties, assistance for civil society, overall economic assistance, and assistance for repression.

**Assistance for political parties.** The first mechanism involves external actors directly providing technical and financial assistance to illiberal political parties and thereby increasing their ability to run political campaigns, mobilize supporters, and win elections. This is most likely to occur when the recipient state is an illiberal or hybrid regime that still has relatively competitive multiparty elections. Under these circumstances, illiberal political parties cannot resort to repression to guarantee their victory. Therefore, they have to resort to more indirect methods, such as monopolizing the media or bribing election officials to commit fraud. All of these activities require resources. External actors can provide nondemocratic elites the resources to run a campaign and to pay for electoral fraud. In Ukraine’s 2004 presidential election, Russia’s financial support for Victor Yanukovich (tens of millions of dollars) helped him bribe thousands of election officials, contributing to electoral fraud.<sup>61</sup> In addition, external actors can “train” domestic allies to effectively manipulate election results. Among other methods, this training may include strategies for how to corrupt absentee voting, vote counting, and voter registration.

The promotion of democracy may counterbalance this support by providing assistance for democratic parties. International assistance helps parties mount effective campaigns by recommending fundraising strategies, candidate selection methods, and ideas for party platform development.<sup>62</sup> Recent research on the influence of international assistance for political parties finds that its effectiveness in promoting democracy is limited and depends significantly on the “institutional environment in a given country.”<sup>63</sup> The EU accession process and transnational relationships between Western European political parties has had some influence on the development of polit-

ical parties and democracy in postcommunist states; however, the effectiveness of this mechanism in other regions is questionable.

Along with offering financial and technical assistance, autocratic external actors can also provide political support for nondemocratic parties. Publicly stating that a fraudulent election was free and fair can confuse the situation internally and weaken international condemnation. International public recognition of an autocratic leader as the winner of an election can grant that leader some legitimacy, even in the case of a stolen election. Furthermore, if the autocratic state has strong linkages with the recipient state, its support for the non-democratic leader may enhance his or her prestige and increase their domestic public support.<sup>64</sup> Powerful external allies can also help prevent votes against autocratic leaders in international organizations, such as the United Nations Security Council.<sup>65</sup>

**Assistance for civil society.** Financial and technical assistance to civil society is another way to increase capabilities. Many people see civil society activity as promoting democracy. However, there are also nondemocratic “civil society” organizations (e.g., the Ku Klux Klan). Nondemocratic pressure can encourage the growth of non-democratic civil society and thereby promote authoritarianism. States provide financial assistance and training to terrorist organizations, radical groups, and others to promote a particular ideology, alter another state’s policies, or to change the regime. This support encourages radicalism, intolerance, insecurity, and distrust in target states, which may promote public support for nondemocratic regimes. Furthermore, as Sheri Berman has argued, the effect of civil society growth and development on regime type depends on the political context.<sup>66</sup> When political institutions are weak, civil society can challenge the legitimacy and sovereignty of the state. The existence of internal sovereignty is an important precondition for democracy. The development of civil society organizations may support either democratic or authoritarian regimes.

**Assistance for economic stability.** States can also increase the capabilities of nondemocratic political leaders by providing them with the resources they need to maintain the economic stability and patronage networks necessary for their survival. In some cases, international financial support enables an authoritarian regime to produce economic growth or at least maintain minimal living standards,

which grants some legitimacy to the regime. Assuming that state authority depends on some internal support and voluntary submission, external assistance may help the leadership avoid a legitimization crisis. If severe, an economic crisis can cause political “disintegration” or a revolt against the government.<sup>67</sup> Governments can survive severe economic crises (e.g., the North Korean dictatorship over the past decade). However, most leaders prefer to avoid the potentially destabilizing effects of economic turmoil, because economic hardship can lead to major public protests against the regime, as the recent events in Tunisia and Egypt so clearly demonstrate. If international assistance allows the regime to avoid economic problems, then there is less domestic pressure to liberalize.

In addition, if nondemocratic elites resort to violence or repression to maintain power, this can cause democratic countries to impose economically costly sanctions and suspend economic assistance. For example, the 2009 coup in Honduras led to a six-month suspension of foreign aid, leading to a loss of \$320 million in grants and loans.<sup>68</sup> For the third poorest country in mainland Latin America, the loss of aid significantly hurt the economy and government finances. Economic aid from illiberal states can help to counter the costs of economic sanctions and assist in maintaining relative economic stability.

**Assistance for repression.** Giving leaders the equipment and resources to suppress dissent is a fourth mechanism through which states may promote authoritarianism. International assistance, in the form of either weapons or money, can make it easier for leaders to develop an internal security apparatus and block democratic aspirations. The provision of weapons and other military equipment by international allies directly aids the suppression of democracy. However, nondemocratic leaders can also use financial assistance to buy more weapons and pay for more internal security forces. Maintaining an authoritarian regime often requires substantial police and military forces, the financial costs of which are less if a foreign patron provides assistance. When external actors provide military and economic resources, this allows the ruler “to detach his repressive state apparatus from its social base and to dispense with domestic reforms.”<sup>69</sup> The existence of international financial assistance increases the domestic autonomy of the ruling elites, making them less dependent on domestic societal interests. In more extreme situations, the exter-

nal actor may actually provide soldiers and equipment to enable the recipient state's leadership to suppress protests in support of democracy. A recent example of this is Saudi Arabia, which sent a thousand soldiers to Bahrain to support the government's repression of protests; similarly, Iran has reportedly provided equipment to Syria to be used against protestors there. These cases are unusual; in the post-Cold War era, authoritarian states generally do not resort to military actions to support authoritarian neighbors.

\* \* \*

All four of these mechanisms strengthen the capabilities and resources of elite factions in the recipient country. The existence of more than one mechanism increases the probability of the external actor successfully shifting the balance of power in favor of its domestic allies. There are some similarities between the methods to promote authoritarianism and those used to promote democracy. Like the promotion of authoritarianism, democracy promotion also seeks to aid political parties (although not usually financially), civil society, and economic stability. However, there are two major differences. Democracy promotion efforts, at least as undertaken during the past two decades, do not provide aid for repression. Second, a significant way of increasing democratic elite capabilities is through election monitoring. Democratic external actors help increase political competition and improve the likelihood of fair elections by providing independent election monitoring. Although these actions are usually nonpartisan, by their nature they challenge an illiberal government's monopoly on the control of information and assist pro-democratic elites in eroding the legitimacy of the ruling elites.<sup>70</sup> Helping to ensure a fair electoral process increases the likelihood of democratic opposition groups gaining power. Although elections are only one part of democracy, evidence demonstrates that this form of aid has significantly increased the authenticity of elections in transitional states.<sup>71</sup> Independent, international reports about electoral fraud can be a powerful tool against illiberal governments.

Over the past few years, in response to the success of international election monitoring in illiberal democracies, we have seen authoritarian states borrowing ideas from democracy promotion by developing their own version of election monitoring. Russia has devised an alternative election-monitoring organization to counter the influence of democratic international election-monitoring orga-

nizations, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Having competing reports from "independent" election observers can confuse the situation in the country and reduce the influence of international assistance in support of democracy. This development illustrates how authoritarian governments have borrowed from democracy promotion and how they worry about independent reports on elections.<sup>72</sup>

### **Explaining Effectiveness and Outcomes**

The preceding section outlined how states support the development of authoritarian regimes in other countries through changing elite strategies or increasing elite capabilities. However, these activities do not happen in isolation and do not alone determine the regime outcome. Whether or not external support for authoritarianism tips the balance in an illiberal regime toward authoritarianism depends not only on the extent and nature of the external support, but also on the influence of countervailing international support for democracy and the local conditions. In other words, the effectiveness of external support for authoritarianism is the result of the interaction of three major factors: the degree of external support for authoritarianism (discussed in the preceding section), the nature and degree of external support for democracy, and the local conditions. The combination of these three factors determines why external efforts to change the regime (either toward authoritarianism or democracy) succeed in some cases and fail in others. Furthermore, the interaction of these three variables determines the regime outcome in all five cases discussed in this book.

#### *Countervailing International Influences: The Promotion of Democracy*

External support for authoritarianism interacts with countervailing pressure to democratize. All of the cases in this book (and many other countries) have experienced external support for both authoritarianism and democracy. Democracy promotion efforts have involved attempts to change elite strategies, especially cooperation among democratic opposition parties, and increase the capabilities of, in this case, pro-



democratic groups in recipient states. The existence of international pressure to democratize can reduce the effectiveness of external support for authoritarianism (and vice versa). For example, international aid to both democratic and autocratic factions may result in no real change to the balance of power among elites. In addition, external support for democracy provides people and leaders with alternatives to the policy solutions proposed by the autocratic state. In their analysis of the influence of authoritarian and democratic diffusion on Russian local government, Vladimir Gel'man and Tomila Lankina found that the regions of Russia with greater interactions with the EU were more likely to retain directly elected mayors, against the wishes of the Russian federal government, than the regions with few connections to the EU. "Western involvement and the availability of alternative models" made it harder for the Russian federal government to obtain more authoritarian local government structures.<sup>73</sup> The two external factors interact with each other and when states are subject to international pressures from multiple sources the outcomes are less deterministic.

Furthermore, through what is called "counter-promotion," external actors may promote authoritarianism in response to democracy promotion efforts.<sup>74</sup> Democracy promotion may trigger a reaction not only to entrench the authoritarian regime at home but also to strengthen neighboring regimes. In response to perceived threats to its survival, the Russian government has actively countered democratizing efforts in Central Asia and Eastern Europe.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, in order to explain the degree of effectiveness of external support for authoritarianism and the regime outcome, it is necessary to examine the role of democracy promotion in each case.

### *Interaction with Local Conditions*

International support for authoritarianism and for democracy both interact with the local conditions in the recipient country. There are multiple structural conditions (such as level of economic development) that explain why each country is an illiberal regime as opposed to a consolidated democracy or autocracy. However, a full discussion of the structural and elite-level reasons for the development of an illiberal regime is outside the scope of this book. I focus here on how international factors interact with the existing structural conditions to bring about regime change and how local conditions may prevent

external actors from altering the regime. Previous research has shown that impact of external promotion is dependent on the local conditions, especially on “domestic receptivity.”<sup>76</sup> Receptivity influences the success of deliberate efforts to change elite strategies and of international assistance. Domestic elites must adopt the strategies, policies, or norms being promoted in order for the external actor to change the regime.<sup>77</sup> Elites generally accept new strategies and resources from external actors because they perceive them as being in their interest. There are two general factors that influence receptivity and therefore the effectiveness of external support: the balance of power among elites and the linkages with the external actor.

**Balance of power among elites.** An important component of explaining the effectiveness of authoritarian promotion is elite receptivity to external involvement. Accepting external support can be costly for elites in illiberal regimes, where success still somewhat depends on public support and there is some free media. Citizens of countries can react very negatively to external “interference” in their sovereign affairs. As studies about economic sanctions demonstrate, external pressure can produce domestic feelings of resentment about foreign interference and thereby produce negative backlash against anyone seen as connected to foreign governments.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, international assistance usually comes with conditions attached, which may be unpopular or costly for elites. In exchange for economic aid, Russia has demanded control over Belarus’s natural gas transit company and pipelines. Accepting outside assistance can have clear costs for elites. External support for autocratic elites during elections may also have the unintended effect of strengthening the democratic candidates by shifting the debate away from domestic issues and toward the role of external involvement in an election. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, one reason why Ollanta Humala lost the 2006 Peruvian presidential election was because of his association with Hugo Chávez. Therefore, there are costs and benefits to accepting external assistance.

Elites are more likely to accept outside support under circumstances where the benefits of external support outweigh any potential costs. One such circumstance is where there is a relatively equal distribution of power between liberal and illiberal elites. When this occurs, then elite conflict over the regime type can be severe. Under these circumstances there is no agreement about regime type (democ-

racy or authoritarianism is not the only game in town) and there are real possibilities that the country could move in either direction. Therefore, elites are fighting over the regime type and potentially their very survival. When elites perceive themselves to be threatened, “external factors are more likely to have more influence.”<sup>79</sup> In circumstances of intense inter-elite conflict, at least one elite faction, if not more, may believe that the incentives or sanctions from the external actor will help tip the balance of power in their favor.

External actors will be most likely to alter the relative power balance between these two groups, or facilitate new alliances, through changing elite strategies and capabilities when at least one faction believes that it can use the external actor to further its own interests. Two different types of literature have noted the importance of external allies for political elites. International socialization approaches argue that political elites will use international norms to further their own interests in policy debates.<sup>80</sup> Research from the area of diplomacy and international bargaining observes that leaders may use international bargains to strengthen “the political and economic position of supportive domestic groups and weaken that of opponents,” with the “ultimate aim of permanently changing domestic structures.”<sup>81</sup> Therefore, some elite factions may calculate that international criticism, incentives, or sanctions help them shift the balance of power in their favor. The more elites who view external actors as potential allies, the more likely it is that the external pressure will be effective in changing the regime.

If either the liberal or the illiberal elites hold the majority of the power, then whoever holds power is more confident in their position and less in need of external resources. Facing few immediate threats to their rule or control over the state, they are less likely to seek or accept international involvement in domestic policy. If they still accept international assistance, it is less likely that this assistance can shift the balance of power, because the asymmetrical distribution of power makes this more difficult. Where there are consolidated authoritarian regimes, such as in Saudi Arabia, the supporters of democracy are so weak relative to the autocratic forces that the normal strategies of democracy promotion are unable to shift the balance of power enough to have any real effect.

**Linkages between the recipient state and the external actor.**  
The relationship between the recipient state and the external actor

will affect how receptive elites are to external involvement. In terms of demonstration effects, elites are most likely to be aware of developments in states that are regionally proximate or with which they have close cultural, ideological, or historical ties. Elites are more likely to look to states they perceive as similar. The networks connecting states—trade, culture, ideology—provide important conduits for information and aid. There are few formal international organizations designed to facilitate linkages among authoritarian states (the Shanghai Cooperation Organization being a rare exception); therefore, most of the networks are informal. In addition to linkages encouraging the spread of strategies, if the two states have a close and positive relationship, there are fewer costs for accepting financial or economic assistance from abroad.

Research on the diffusion of democracy has found that proximity influences the likelihood of democratic ideas being adopted.<sup>82</sup> The recent uprisings in the Middle East, where protests spread from Tunisia to Egypt to Libya, highlight the role of geographic proximity. The more democratic countries that are present in a state's neighborhood, the more likely that state is to transition to democracy. However, proximity alone is not the only determinant of the relationship between the recipient state and external actor. Physical location does matter, but not on its own.<sup>83</sup> Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way have argued that the greater the linkage to the West the recipient state has, the more likely the state is to democratize.<sup>84</sup> The three dimensions of linkage relevant for the promotion of authoritarianism are ideological agreement, common cultural and historical backgrounds, and the nature of the economic relationship.

First, political ideological agreement between the external actor and illiberal elites increases the likelihood that elites will respond favorably to outside involvement. In this book, I define a political ideology as a system of collectively held ideas, beliefs, and values about the fundamental goals of politics. It is a source of legitimacy for a particular group's right to authority, and its principles express the institutional, economic, or social goals of the group. This incorporates the main elements of most definitions.<sup>85</sup> It is important to note that political ideologies can be viewed as transnational. In other words, elites in different states can have similar ideologies. The literature on alliance formation between states provides some guidance for how ideological agreement or disagreement may affect elite receptivity to external pressure for regime change. Research on

alliance formation has found that ideological similarities between state leaders increase the incentives for allying together. “The greater the ideological similarities among states’ leaders, the more likely they are to see one another as supports to both their domestic interests and the security of their state.”<sup>86</sup> The success of ideological allies in other states strengthens politicians at home. Therefore, elites are more likely to care about the political success or failure of ideological allies in other states and be more willing to work with them to gain or maintain power.

Furthermore, elites with similar ideological positions are more likely to see each other as members of the same group, even if they are from different countries, especially because political ideology is transnational.<sup>87</sup> As social identity theory has found, people see the members of their group as more trustworthy and members of the out-group as untrustworthy and threatening. If the external actor and recipient elites have similar political ideologies, they are more likely to see commonalities with the external actor and to perceive that actor’s involvement positively. Elites view incentives offered by an ideological ally more favorably and as having greater benefits than those from other states. Political ideological agreement may also cause elites to seek out external actors as natural allies. The ideological agreement between Daniel Ortega and Hugo Chávez makes Ortega more likely to accept Chávez’s assistance and use it to strengthen his internal political position.

Ideological disagreements or tensions between the external actor and elites can reduce the probability of success in promoting authoritarianism or democracy. If the ideological disagreement is strong, it may even cause elites to reject economic assistance. The greater the ideological disagreement, the more likely elites are to be suspicious of the external actor’s objectives and involvement. This may be especially true if there is a history of ideological conflict. The cases from Latin America illustrate how the previous involvement of the United States in the region along ideological lines limited the effectiveness of its efforts to promote democracy. In the 2006 Nicaraguan elections, US condemnation of Ortega and threats to reduce aid if he won the election may have damaged efforts to encourage democracy. Ideological disagreement can significantly limit the potential positive effect of valuable economic incentives.

Second, shared cultural similarities or historical experiences facilitate interconnectedness between a recipient state and an exter-

nal actor and enable leaders to make analogies across cases.<sup>88</sup> Leaders are more likely to see their situation or problem as similar to that of the external actor if they share a similar culture or historical experience with that actor.<sup>89</sup> “Individuals who need to deal with a complex set of choices are inclined to regard the actions of other individuals with perceived common interests as a useful guide for their own behaviour.”<sup>90</sup> This sense of familiarity can make elites more willing to accept outside input on what strategies to adopt to establish a more authoritarian regime. In addition, if there are close cultural or historical ties between the two states, the costs of accepting aid from the external actor may be less, because if the mass public views the external actor as a close ally, then they are more willing to accept external involvement. However, the historical relationship between the external actor and the recipient state can also reduce the effectiveness of its support. If there has been a long history of interference in the internal affairs of the state by the external actor, then citizens of the recipient state may react very negatively to any real or perceived interference in its politics. The long involvement of the United States in Central America can lead to backlash against any US actions to promote democracy in the countries there, especially if those efforts are seen as trying to directly influence the outcome of elections.

Third, the nature of the economic rewards and sanctions offered by the external actor and the degree of economic dependency of the state on the external actor defines the economic relationship between the two states. The economic value of the incentives (positive or negative) offered by the external actor affects elite receptivity to external pressure.<sup>91</sup> Clearly, if elites believe that an incentive is economically valuable, they are more likely to accede to international demands for regime change. For example, if the external actor offers a positive incentive, such as membership in the EU, elites determine the value of this incentive by considering the benefits of membership (e.g., amount of structural adjustment funds and influence over decision-making), the opportunity costs of not gaining membership, and the nature of their current and future economic relationship with the EU. In other words, how important is trade and investment with the EU to the economic growth and development of their country and therefore to their prospects for staying in power? Generally, the more the country is dependent on the external actor, the greater the value of the incentives. Research on economic sanctions and interdependence

demonstrates that close economic ties and trade dependency increase the probability of external actors having political influence.<sup>92</sup>

Economic dependency relies not only on the amount of trade and investment between the two states, but also on how easy it is for the target state to find other trading and investment opportunities or to ameliorate the effect of sanctions.<sup>93</sup> Economic dependency does not imply a “total transfer of authority over economic policy” to another state or entity, but instead refers to situations where the majority of a country’s trade and investment come from a single state or regional organization.<sup>94</sup> A state with multiple trade and investment partners is likely to have greater economic and political autonomy. However, if a country is highly economically dependent on one specific external actor, then elites will give greater value to incentives presented by that external actor.<sup>95</sup> In addition, if it is difficult or impossible to find alternatives to the goods provided by the external actor, then the target state may be especially vulnerable to external pressure.<sup>96</sup> Belarus and Ukraine are vulnerable to pressure from Russia because of their dependency on Russian natural gas, which is an essential material not easily replaced. In situations of economic dependency and vulnerability, elites may still decide to defy the wishes of the external actor, but there will be political and economic costs.

In addition, it is harder for external actors to encourage elites to change the regime when elites in the recipient state have extensive domestic economic resources. When a country has substantial resources, the country is less vulnerable to the external actor and elites have more policy options available. The elites of relatively small, poor states do not have significant internal economic resources and are dependent on regional powers, international organizations, or the United States for economic investment and trade. As Peter Katzenstein argued, small states are more dependent on a wide range of imports than larger countries, because they do not have the economies of scale necessary for all the industries required for a functioning domestic economy.<sup>97</sup> In addition, because they have small domestic markets, these states have to export products in order to achieve economies of scale. Therefore, the small countries, “because of their small size, are very dependent on world markets.”<sup>98</sup> Although Katzenstein was writing about Western European states, his conclusions about the higher level of dependency of small states on the global economy describe the international economic position of other states throughout the world. All of the recipient cases discussed

in this book are, on a global economic scale, small states (Belarus, Ukraine, Nicaragua, Peru, and Lebanon). They are all dependent on international trade and investment for economic growth.

External pressure is more likely to be effective when states can offer incentives that are economically valuable to elites in the target state. The value of incentives depends on the nature of the incentive and the economic relationship between the external actor and the target state. Therefore, if the country is severely economically dependent on a state, then the elites will give greater value to the incentive offered by that state. On the other hand, if the country is only weakly dependent on the state, then elites will place less value on the incentive and be less willing to comply.

## **Measurement of Variables**

### *Balance of Power Among Elites*

I use political parties as a proxy for elite factions in each country. The electoral strength and degree of public support for each political party provides an approximate measure of the division of power among elites. In addition, in situations without free elections, the level of suppression directed at the prodemocratic parties and organizations offers insight into the relative power of autocratic elites and democratic opposition. If the degree of suppression is high, such as in Belarus today, then the autocratic elites have a predominant amount of coercive power and there is an imbalance of power. The combination of these three factors enables a general measurement of the relative distribution of power among prodemocratic and autocratic elites.

### *Linkages Between the Recipient State and the External Actor*

**Ideological agreement.** I assess ideological agreement by examining two different measures. One is the ideological rhetoric and actions of both the external actor and the receptive elites in the target state. If both the leadership of the external actor and the elites make similar ideological statements, such as condemning capitalism and globalization, and advocate similar actions, such as nationalizing



major industries, then there is a high probability of ideological agreement. The second measure uses public opinion surveys to examine widespread perceptions about the external actor. Although not an exact measure for ideology, greater positive public opinion about the external actor may reflect ideological support. For example, positive views in Nicaragua about Venezuela and Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez would represent some public support for Chávez's more socialist political ideology. The combination of these two measures provides a good idea of the ideological position of each side and their potential agreement or disagreement.

**Common cultural and historical backgrounds.** In order to determine the degree of cultural linkage, I examine the historical relationship between the recipient state and the external actor. Have they had similar historical experiences, such as communism? Were there any previous military actions taken by the external actor against the recipient state? Do they speak a similar language? Do they share a common religion? In addition, I assess the public comments in each state about the external actor. Do leaders reference a long and positive relationship in their comments? Are they highly critical or positive about the external actor? What do regional experts say about similarities between the two? Through considering these questions I am able to develop a proxy measure of the cultural or historical connections between the recipient and the external actor.

**The economic relationship.** The economic relationship between the two states is a function of both the nature of the rewards and sanctions offered and the degree of economic dependency of the state on the external actor. The rewards offered can include promises of increased trade, aid, or investment. Sanctions can consist of threats to restrict trade, reduce or deny aid, decrease investment, prevent financial transfers, ban travel of elites, and the like. I use public statements about promises (or threats) of increases or decreases in aid, investment, and trade by the state, the amount of financial assistance given by the state, and the existence of sanctions to evaluate the nature of the incentives being offered.

The degree of economic dependency is a function of the size and strength of the internal market of the recipient state, its reliance on trade for growth in gross domestic product (GDP), and the availability of domestic financing—in other words, whether or not the coun-

try is capital-poor. Economic dependency is a continuous, not dichotomous, variable. In the globalized economy, almost every state is on some level dependent on elements of the international economy. However, the degree of dependency varies from state to state. The greater the volume of exports and the greater the percentage of the recipient state's GDP that derives from exports to one specific external actor, the greater the dependency of the state on that external actor.

Despite widespread use of trade data as a proxy for dependency, there are limitations to this measure. The two main critiques of using trade data for economic dependency are that it fails to compare the "value of the incentive with the alternatives available" and fails to determine the "ability of the target state to compensate for the effects" of disruptions in trade.<sup>99</sup> In order to address these problems, I incorporate into my measure of economic dependency the probability of alternative sources of trade and investment and the resources available to elites to compensate for sanctions or the loss of positive benefits. If the majority of a state's GDP comes from trade with one state, if there are few alternative sources of trade and investment, and if elites have few resources available to ameliorate the effects of incentives, then the state is very economically dependent on that external actor. I use economic measures such as trade data, GDP, and the amount of foreign direct investment, along with economists' assessments of the economic situation of the country, to determine its degree of economic dependency.

## **Structure of the Book**

The next three chapters lay out and test my argument about how states promote authoritarianism. Chapter 2 compares and contrasts the cases of Ukraine and Belarus, two countries where Russia has attempted to establish authoritarian regimes. Without Russia's continued support for authoritarianism in Ukraine and Belarus, each country would have a more democratic and free regime today. Russia has been especially successful in obtaining the regime type it desires in Belarus, but has been less effective in Ukraine, especially during the 2004 presidential election. The domestic conditions played an important role in determining the degree of effectiveness of Russia's involvement. Russia's initial failure in Ukraine to obtain a nondemocratic, pro-Russia president was because of the strength of the democratic opposition and the influence of counter-

vailing international democratic pressure. Although there are many similarities between these two countries, they responded differently to Russian pressure, which highlights the importance of the domestic situation for explaining the regime outcome. For Ukraine, the chapter focuses on the 2004 presidential election, or the Orange Revolution, which provides clear examples of Russia's failed attempt to promote authoritarianism in Ukraine. For Belarus, the chapter covers the post-independence period and documents how Russia's support was essential for President Alexander Lukashenko to develop an authoritarian regime.

In Chapter 3, I further test the theory by examining the influence of Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez in Latin America. Since becoming president in 1999, Chávez has sought to challenge US influence in Latin America and promote "twenty-first-century socialism," or Bolivarism, throughout the region. Chávez's support has, at minimum, aided the continuation of illiberal regimes, and in some cases, such as Nicaragua, helped the development of more autocratic governments. However, Chávez's efforts to encourage ideologically similar regimes have not always succeeded, the most obvious case being the 2006 Peruvian presidential election. This chapter investigates how Chávez has supported authoritarianism in the region through providing a model of how to suppress democracy and offering financial aid to allies. I use Nicaragua as a case because of Chávez's strong support for its illiberal leader, Daniel Ortega, and because of the clear erosion of democracy since Ortega's election in 2006. I also examine the important role domestic factors play in explaining why Chávez's efforts failed in Peru.

In Chapter 4, I study Iran's support for Hezbollah in Lebanon, which provides an example of a different form of international promotion of authoritarianism, one based on a religious political ideology. Despite this difference, Iran's support for Hezbollah has similar effects, changing both elite strategies and capabilities in Lebanon. Iran's support for Hezbollah has involved the transfer of billions of dollars of resources, significantly helping Hezbollah increase its political influence in Lebanon. The religious linkages between Hezbollah and Iran help to facilitate Iran's involvement in Lebanon, even when Iran has forced Hezbollah to adopt detrimental policies. Despite its growing strength, Hezbollah has been unable to seize complete control in Lebanon because of the countervailing international support for democracy, the diversity of international linkages, and the high degree of elite divisions within the country.

Chapter 5 offers an opportunity to review the argument and conduct further cross-regional comparisons. In this chapter I explore the empirical and theoretical implications of these cases, evaluate the mechanisms of promoting authoritarianism, and identify avenues for further research. I also discuss some of the differences between promoting authoritarianism and promoting democracy. The book concludes by considering some implications of these attempts to encourage authoritarianism for US and European democracy promotion efforts.

While foreign policy in the West has been focused on democratization, other states in the world have been seeking to promote a more limited political arena. It is important to understand the methods and effectiveness of their actions if we are to better comprehend the forces shaping political outcomes abroad.

## Notes

1. Logan, "Iran Rebuilds Lebanon to Boost Hizbollah."
2. Diamond, "The Democratic Rollback," p. 36.
3. "The Dragon in the Backyard," p. 19.
4. Walker, *Undermining Democracy*, p. 11.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
6. For examples, see Epstein and Sedelmeier, "Beyond Conditionality"; Kelley, "International Actors on the Domestic Scene"; Magen and Morlino, *International Actors*; Pridham, "Effects of European Union Conditionality"; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, "Introduction: Conceptualizing the Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe"; Schimmelfennig, Engert, and Knobel, "Costs, Commitment, and Compliance"; Vachudova, *Europe Undivided*.
7. Pace, Seeberg, and Cavatorta, "The EU's Democratization Agenda in the Mediterranean," p. 6.
8. World Bank, *World Development Report 2004*.
9. The extensive discussion surrounding the democratic peace theory both in the academic and policy spheres illustrates this assumption and some of its critiques. For example, President Bill Clinton stated in his 1994 State of the Union address, "Democracies don't attack each other. . . . [U]ltimately the best strategy to insure our security and to build a durable peace is to support the advance of democracy elsewhere"; "Excerpts from President Clinton's State of the Union Message." For discussions of democratic peace theory, see, for example, Owen, "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace"; Maoz, "The Controversy over the Democratic Peace"; Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace*.

10. Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad*; Burnell, *Democracy Assistance*.
11. Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad*; Ottaway and Carothers, *Funding Virtue*.
12. See Carapico, "Foreign Aid for Promoting Democracy," p. 56; Burnell, *Democracy Assistance*; Knack, "Does Foreign Aid Promote Democracy?"
13. Scott and Steele, "Sponsoring Democracy."
14. Finkel, Pérez-Liñán, and Seligson, "The Effects of U.S. Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building," pp. 410, 414.
15. Collins, "Can America Finance Freedom?"
16. Magen and Morlino, "Hybrid Regimes," p. 12.
17. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, p. 10.
18. Doorenspleet and Mudde, "Upping the Odds," p. 823.
19. Bunce and Wolchik, "International Diffusion and Postcommunist Electoral Revolutions," p. 287; Gel'man and Lankina, "Authoritarian Versus Democratic Diffusions," p. 45; Beissinger, "Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena."
20. See Gleditsch and Ward, "Diffusion and the International Context of Democratization"; Brinks and Coppedge, "Diffusion Is No Illusion"; Doorenspleet and Mudde, "Upping the Odds."
21. Ambrosio, "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion"; Gel'man and Lankina, "Authoritarian Versus Democratic Diffusions."
22. Burnell, "Is There a New Autocracy Promotion?"
23. Ambrosio, *Authoritarian Backlash*; Bader, Grävingholt, and Kästner, "Would Autocracies Promote Autocracy?"
24. Jacoby, *The Enlargement of the European Union and NATO*, p. 4.
25. Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy," p. 360; Linz and Stepan, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*, 16; Alexander, *The Sources of Democratic Consolidation*; Haggard and Kaufman, *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions*, p. 5.
26. Payne, *Brazilian Industrialists and Democratic Change*, p. 5.
27. O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, p. 5; Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," p. 6.
28. Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," p. 6. See also, among others, Haggard and Kaufman, *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions*, pp. 5–6; Mahoney and Snyder, "Rethinking Agency and Structure in the Study of Regime Change," p. 5; Ruhl, "Unlikely Candidates for Democracy."
29. There are various reports that the Czechoslovak military leaders were willing to repress the demonstration, but the Communist party leaders decided not to call out the military.
30. Ikenberry and Kupchan, "Socialization and Hegemonic Power," p. 283.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 284.

32. Pridham, "Uneasy Democratizations"; Beichelt, "Autocracy and Democracy in Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine," p. 114; Way, "Kuchma's Failed Authoritarianism," p. 131; Diamond, "Thinking About Hybrid Regimes."

33. Zakaria, "Rise of Illiberal Democracy," pp. 22–24. "Illiberal democracy" is becoming a prevalent term to refer to "in-between" regimes.

34. Coppedge et al., "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy," p. 253.

35. See *ibid.* for an overview of the debates.

36. Michael Coppedge and John Gerring's proposal for a new approach to conceptualize and measure democracy that corrects for some of the common problems with the existing indices may in the future provide a better measure; see Coppedge et al., "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy." However, currently there are few other options than using these four measures.

37. For example, see McDonagh, "Is Democracy Promotion Effective in Moldova?"; Schimmelfennig, Engert, and Knobel, "Costs, Commitment, and Compliance."

38. Klotz, *Norms in International Relations*, p. 17; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, "Introduction: Conceptualizing the Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe," p. 9.

39. There are occasions when external actors promoting democracy attempt to more directly influence electoral outcomes. However, these are not common in the post–Cold War era and when they do occur they often backfire and give more support to the illiberal candidate.

40. Schedler, "The Menu of Manipulation."

41. Bunce and Wolchik, "International Diffusion and Postcommunist Electoral Revolutions," p. 289. See also Bunce and Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries*.

42. Schedler, "The Menu of Manipulation."

43. For example, see Vachudova, *Europe Undivided*; Pridham, "The Effects of European Union Conditionality"; Pridham, "Uneasy Democratizations"; Whitehead, "Three International Dimensions of Democratization"; Pevehouse, *Democracy from Above*; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, "Introduction: Conceptualizing the Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe."

44. Ambrosio, "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion," p. 378.

45. The majority of the literature on diffusion focuses on elites. However, recent work by Johan Elklinc suggests that diffusion may also affect mass publics, influencing the popular opinion about the regime; Elklinc, "The International Diffusion of Democracy."

46. Doorenspleet and Mudde, "Upping the Odds," p. 827.

47. Ambrosio, "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion," p. 382.

48. Gel'man and Lankina, "Authoritarian Versus Democratic Diffusions," p. 45.

49. Beissinger, "Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena," p. 266.
50. Gel'man and Lankina, "Authoritarian Versus Democratic Diffusions," p. 58.
51. Bunce and Wolchik, "International Diffusion and Postcommunist Electoral Revolutions," p. 287.
52. Beissinger, "Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena," p. 265.
53. Gleditsch and Ward, "Diffusion and the International Context of Democratization," p. 925.
54. Bunce and Wolchik, "International Diffusion and Postcommunist Electoral Revolutions," p. 293; Doorenspleet and Mudde, "Upping the Odds," p. 826.
55. Tomlinson, "Saudi Troops Enter Bahrain to Help Regime Quell Revolt."
56. Vachudova, *Europe Undivided*, p. 18.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 178.
58. Snyder, "Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships," p. 384; Crawford and Klotz, *How Sanctions Work*, p. 32.
59. Evans, "Building an Integrative Approach to International and Domestic Politics," p. 416.
60. Gleditsch and Ward, "Diffusion and the International Context of Democratization," p. 919.
61. Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution*.
62. Carothers, *Confronting the Weakest Link*, p. 93.
63. Burnell and Gerrits, "Promoting Party Politics in Emerging Democracies," p. 1071. See also the entire issue of *Democratization* 17, no. 6 (December 2010) for more discussion about the efficacy of international political-party assistance.
64. Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, p. 49.
65. Russia's permanent seat on the UN Security Council is one reason why there has been no UN action taken against Belarus, despite major violations of human rights.
66. Berman, "Islamism, Revolution, and Civil Society."
67. Crawford and Klotz, *How Sanctions Work*, p. 28.
68. "The Cost of a Coup," p. 79.
69. Snyder, "Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships," p. 385.
70. Freyberg-Inan, "Which Way to Progress?" p. 156; Vachudova, *Europe Undivided*, p. 142.
71. Collins, "Can America Finance Freedom?" p. 380.
72. McFaul and Spector, "External Sources and Consequences of Russia's 'Sovereign Democracy,'" p. 128.
73. Gel'man and Lankina, "Authoritarian Versus Democratic Diffusions," p. 6.

74. Burnell, "Promoting Democracy Backwards."
75. Jackson, "The Role of External Factors," p. 102.
76. Bunce and Wolchik, "International Diffusion and Postcommunist Electoral Revolutions," p. 301.
77. Jackson, "The Role of External Factors," p. 102.
78. Crawford and Klotz, *How Sanctions Work*, p. 32; Doxey, *Economic Sanctions and International Enforcement*, p. 146.
79. Jackson, "The Role of External Factors," p. 115.
80. Cortell and Davis, "How Do International Institutions Matter?"
81. Evans, "Building an Integrative Approach to International and Domestic Politics," p. 416.
82. Gleditsch and Ward, "Diffusion and the International Context of Democratization"; Kopstein and Reilly, "Geographic Diffusion and the Transformation of the Postcommunist World."
83. Ambrosio, "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion," p. 385.
84. See Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*.
85. For discussions about ideology, see Hamilton, "The Elements of the Concept of Ideology"; Eagleton, *Ideology*.
86. Haas, "Ideology and Alliances," p. 42.
87. *Ibid.*, pp. 47–48. Mark Haas argues that group identification goes beyond citizen/noncitizen and that "when leaders from different states recognize that they both share a commitment to the same ideological objectives and possess the same ideological enemies, they will tend to view one another as closer to their own political identities than are those decision makers who do not meet these conditions." Ideological agreement can override citizen/noncitizen identification.
88. Beissinger, "Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena," p. 263.
89. Bunce and Wolchik, "International Diffusion and Postcommunist Electoral Revolutions," p. 297.
90. Doorenspleet and Mudde, "Upping the Odds," p. 828.
91. In extremely asymmetrical relationships, elites may be receptive to international pressure from the external actor without explicit incentives, threats, or sanctions. If elites are in positions of great dependency, they may take into account the demands or concerns of the external actor because they fear jeopardizing an essential economic relationship.
92. Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence*; Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*.
93. Crumm, "The Value of Economic Incentives in International Politics," pp. 314–315.
94. Lake, "Escape from the State of Nature," p. 60.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
96. Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 2nd ed., chap. 1.



97. Katzenstein, *Small States in World Markets*, p. 81.

98. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

99. Crumm, "The Value of Economic Incentives in International Politics," pp. 314–315. See also Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*; Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence*; Wagner, "Economic Interdependence, Bargaining, Power and Political Influence"; Bayard, Pelzman, and Perez-Lopez, "Stakes and Risks in Economic Sanctions."