Antidemocracy Promotion
Four Strategies in Search of a Framework

Laurence Whitehead

Abstract

International democracy promotion strategies have broadened and deepened since the end of the Cold War, and a heterogeneous set of regimes (authoritarian, hybrid, and some unorthodox democracies) has begun experimenting with counter-strategies. These are variously motivated—by regime survival tactics, alliance strategies, and domestic political calculations and principle (usually the defense of national sovereignty), among other factors. Multiple patterns of response are possible, given the variety of regime types and strategic calculations, international learning, trial and error, and experiments with coordinated resistance. Proceeding inductively, this essay compares and contrasts the ongoing “antidemocracy promotion” strategies and repertoire of alternatives available to regimes pursuing “antidemocracy promotion strategies,” notably by Venezuela’s Fifth Republic; Putin’s Russian Federation; the House of Saud; and the People’s Republic of China. While acknowledging the diversity and incompleteness of all these processes, it also develops a deductive framework intended to facilitate the structured comparison of these strategies, in general, which are not simply a “mirror-image” of Western-inspired “democracy promotion” strategies. While the essay focuses both inductively and deductively on internationally directed strategic choices, the balance between domestic and external drivers of policy remains an open question, and the resulting “menu of options” can include single-country and inward-looking strategies.

Keywords: Democratization, antidemocracy promotion, regime type.

Consider the following four episodes in recent international politics, and how they relate to the Western-based “democracy promotion” agenda that (at least rhetorically) occupied center stage in the two decades following the dismantling of the Berlin Wall:

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1. In June 2009, the elected President of Honduras was arrested in his palace by the Armed Forces (acting under a Supreme Court authorization) and sent into exile. The Venezuelan government under President Chavez received him as the still legitimate constitutional ruler, and attempted to support his restoration to office. Most Latin American democracies viewed these events as a “coup” in violation of the OAS Democratic Charter. The U. S. administration was equivocal. It sought to temporize until Zelaya’s term of office expired. From this perspective, “democracy promotion” in Honduras was best secured by living with the outcome of the coup until an orderly election would restore constitutional normality. This way, President Chavez and his Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) allies would be denied the satisfaction of installing an ally and claiming the outcome as a victory for democracy. For Washington, this coup was a lesser evil and so compatible with its definition of democracy promotion. For Caracas, it was a further demonstration that the chavista conception of genuine democracy required an “antidemocracy promotion” strategy.

2. In February 2011, inspired by prodemocracy upheavals in Tunisia and Egypt, protesters occupied a public square (the Pearl Roundabout) in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, calling for the Sunni ruling family to grant civil and political rights to the country’s Shi’a majority. The initial demands revolved around activating the dormant Constitution of 2002, and escalated into calls for the overthrow of the monarchy only after a violent domestic crackdown. The following month, the King proclaimed martial law, and, with the help of troops sent from the adjoining ruling monarchies of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the protests were put down by force. At first, the protesters may have believed that they were acting in accordance with Western democracy promotion prescriptions (the U. S. Fifth Fleet has a naval base in Bahrain, which is the seat of the U. S. Navy Central Command in the Gulf), but before long they were cast as instruments of Iranian expansionism. If Washington was reluctant to allow President Chavez to appropriate the language of democracy in Honduras, it was all the more resolved to deny Teheran any such foothold, however theoretical. By contrast, the House of Saud was viewed
as an indispensable Western ally, notwithstanding its unambiguously autocratic/theocratic political philosophy. While Caracas could make a case for its democratic credentials, Riyadh was beyond all doubt engaged in an antidemocracy promotion strategy.

3. In February 2014, after three months of mass protests in Maidan Square in the center of Kiev, escalating violence led eventually to the flight of Ukrainian President Yanukovych, who four year earlier had won narrowly in a second-round electoral victory, marred by controversy. Once the ouster of this pro-Moscow leader was clear, President Putin annexed the Crimea to the Russian Federation, and began a campaign of destabilization in the east of Ukraine. From a Western democracy promotion standpoint, any hesitations concerning the initial ousting of a democratically recognized president were soon superseded by indignation at the forcible transfer of territory in disregard of international boundaries, and by acceptance of the outcome of the May 2014 Ukrainian election that filled the country’s vacant presidency in a manner widely regarded as acceptably democratic. But from the standpoint of Moscow, the matter was presented far differently. Ten years after the “Orange Revolution,” by which Western democracy promoters were claimed to have conspired to detach Ukraine from its natural Russian sphere of influence, the NATO powers had gone further, this time using violence to overthrow a democratically elected president, with the aim of locking that nation into dependency on the West. At least in the short run, President Putin rallied massive Russian popular support behind his denunciations of Western hypocrisy, and more specifically, with antidemocracy promotion rhetoric. There is still much scope for debate over whether this reflects a premediated Putin strategy, and if so, how the underlying motives relate to the public justifications. What is not in doubt is the systematic and organized nature of the communication component of this unfolding Moscow strategy.

4. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Tiananmen Square repression that brought prodemocracy demonstrations to an end in Beijing, the People’s Republic issued a White Paper concerning the “one country, two systems” formula
to govern Hong Kong. It attracted intense attention there because, while it appeared to accept the commitment to authorize election by universal suffrage for the next governor of the territory (due in 2017), it also indicated that the choice would be among a shortlist of candidates vetted in advance. It also contained language concerning the patriotism to be expected of the judiciary (seen by some as infringing on the separation of powers), and the ultimate locus of authority resting with the national leadership in Beijing. This Chinese stance on democracy promotion in Hong Kong was obviously far more nuanced than the position taken by Riyadh about Bahrain, or Moscow’s line on Kiev. Perhaps it is more similar to the way the United States approached the gradual and controlled management of democracy in Honduras. But, in any case, without engaging in direct “democracy prevention” (at least in this instance), the PRC was setting out the limits it wished to impose on Western-style “democracy promotion” within its national jurisdiction. There are evident implications for Taiwan, and perhaps more widely. Here, too, it is reasonable, therefore, to refer to an “antidemocracy promotion strategy.”

It is noteworthy that, while the first three episodes listed above (the Honduran coup, Bahreini radicalization, and Kiev ouster) were “triggers” that prompted emergency responses from discomforted neighboring regimes, the last (the Chinese White Paper) was simply another step in a long and premeditated institutional minuet. The discussion that follows makes distinction between “emergency” and “normal” strategic responses, and between “trigger” events and more routinized processes. However, the examples just quoted also indicate that such binaries can, in practice, prove quite permeable. The fact that the Kiev protests overthrew Yanukovych and so triggered the annexation of the Crimea does not prove that the Kremlin was caught entirely unprepared. On the contrary, the speed of the annexation means that some strategic preparations must have been in place before the emergency. Conversely, the fact that the Chinese White Paper is part of a long drawn out sequence of developments does not preclude the possibility that it was also “triggered” by the Tiananmen anniversary and associated protests.

In the light of these four very significant, albeit recent and incomplete, episodes, this essay develops an interpretive framework that can be useful for comparing, contrasting, and mapping the range of alternative trajectories and outcomes encompassed by the terminology of “antidemocracy promotion strategies.” The four episodes above are clearly diverse in character, and likely to unfold in divergent directions. Nevertheless, they can be grouped together as
reactions to a set of international pressures that (for the time being, at least) can be perceived as stemming from a common source (Western-based democracy promotion endeavors) and that may be experienced as sufficiently challenging or disruptive to merit a sustained strategic response.

The four illustrations make it clear that there is no single one-size-fits-all strategy available. At best, there will be a “family resemblance” among various strategic responses (perhaps a “menu of options,” with each respondent choosing a strategy partly in the light of what can be observed about the behavior of other similarly situated respondents?). Each individual experience will need to be examined very closely and carefully to see how much common ground there really is, especially as we acquire longer-time perspectives. But at this stage there is already enough material to justify first attempts to generalize. This essay pursues that agenda, first by situating these reactive strategies in their current international context, then by reflecting on the importance “strategy,” then by attempting to construct a deductive framework within which not only present but also potential future episodes can be examined, and finally by comparing the abstract deductive framework with the four inductive cases that provide the empirical core of the analysis.

The International Context

“Democracy promotion” became an explicit and coherent element of international policy only after the Cold War. The timing and content of this development was therefore quite precise. A large body of scholarly literature has emerged detailing its objectives, instruments, and achievements over the past two decades. During the 1990s, this policy gathered such momentum that some observers began to view it as unstoppable and irreversible, but in the following decade it encountered growing resistance and indeed “pushback,” such that one can speak of the spread of antidemocracy promotion strategies developed by “democracy resisters,” which are mostly nondemocratic or partially democratic regimes.


Since the turn of the century, it has become apparent that not all authoritarian regimes are headed toward democratization, and that a substantial proportion of those that have undergone “transitions” are establishing what may prove relatively durable political systems that are, at most, intermediate (or “hybrid”) regimes rather than full-fledged liberal democracies. Indeed, even some longstanding “consolidated” democratic regimes are manifesting illiberal and dysfunctional features that can weaken the appeal of Western democracy promotion agendas. Thus, “democracy prevention” has emerged as an increasingly pertinent object of study, which can draw on several promising innovations in the scholarly literature that reflect such real-world political developments. Recent work is helping to refine the classification of regime types, and to deepen understanding of comparative dynamics. The international factors that may help to account for the resilience of authoritarian regimes, and the emergence of hybrid ones, have also received increasing attention.

**Democracy Prevention and Antidemocracy Promotion**

“Antidemocracy promotion strategies” overlaps with, but needs to be differentiated from, the more established literature on “democracy prevention.” In general, prevention is broader. (It could be pursued even in the absence of international democracy promotion pressures). Both include international components—helping allies to resist democratization pressures—and both are typically rooted in the desire to insulate one’s own regime from destabilization.

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6 Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization.*
from without. This essay concentrates on the reactive features of policy making in a particular time-limited post-Cold War context, when concerted democracy promotion efforts have displayed a potential to destabilize a variety of established regime types.

Three features of the recent drive to generalize democratic forms of government are at issue here. First, the resisters question the credentials of the promoters: what entitles them to judge and find wanting the political arrangements of target regimes? Second, the authenticity of the promotion agenda is also questioned: what hidden realpolitik objectives may be concealed behind the prodemocracy rhetoric? Third, although some resisters still explicitly reject aspects of the liberal democratic agenda on principle, an alternative approach has gained increasing traction, as some resisters purport to extol antihegemonic variants of democracy (such as the redistributive welfare participation model advocated by the Chavez government in Venezuela). These features of an antidemocracy promotion strategy would involve redefining the issues at stake. The democracy promotion community defends its position against these three criticisms, notably by reaffirming its credentials, disavowing ulterior motives, and disqualifying unorthodox variants of democratic experimentation. Such claims and counter-claims merit objective evaluation, and the various possible categories of resistance need to be differentiated, both at the level of theory and in the light of the comparative evidence available.

“Strategy”

Strategy involves steering a developing situation toward a desired outcome in a conflict of wills. So, strategic action includes threat as well as bargaining and persuasion. Moreover, the study of strategy must include not only its original content, but also subsequent adjustments in response to unanticipated developments.7 The deductive framework set out below shows how the minimum demands of a “strategic” response to democracy promotion are quite exigent. But in practice, strategies can exist even though policy making may also appear myopic, erratic, driven by interbureaucratic rivalries, and conducted with inadequate planning or forethought. As illustrated by the various recent episodes listed above, in most cases, key decisions are likely to seem improvised and tactical. Even so, for comparative purposes, it is essential to investigate the strategic rationale that could underpin such apparently impulsive responses. Just as, in practice, many democracy promotion initiatives can appear arbitrary and poorly prepared, so, too, with antidemocracy promotion policies. Nevertheless, in both cases, a longer-term body of doctrine and expectations can anchor specific tactical choices. Therefore, the deductive framework proposed below

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includes the idea of a “strategy,” meaning a relatively coherent, durable, and coordinated approach to antidemocracy promotion activities. Such a strategy need not seek to foresee and control all contingencies, provided it allows for the monitoring of feedback and the readjustment of positions as events unfold.

Not all the regimes considered in this essay can meet the above requirements, not least because some variants of authoritarian rule are too rigid to cope with such demands. But antidemocracy promotion strategies can be pursued not only by authoritarian and hybrid regimes that feel under pressure from Western democracy promoters. Such strategies could also be embraced by regimes that are not opposed to internally driven processes of democratization. They could even favor indigenous, or domestically grounded democracy-building projects, while still opposing forms of democracy promotion that they view as inappropriate, intrusive, inauthentic, or threatening to national sovereignty.

Although a few contemporary authoritarian regimes may remain defensively wedded to the preservation of longstanding and traditional forms of political domination (the kingdoms of Bhutan, Brunei, Lesotho, Saudi Arabia, Swaziland, and, until recently, Nepal fit this description), more significant sources of resistance come from regimes that concentrated power in order to address twentieth-century challenges of development and modernization. By far the most important of the post-Cold War resisters, and builders of their own models, are the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China, which are the most consequential of all countries under review here. But, as the references to Saudi Arabia and Venezuela make clear, it is not only the largest former communist regimes that are capable of developing and implementing elaborate and sustained antidemocracy promotion strategies. More modestly placed regional powers may also display such capabilities (not least, if they happen to be in possession of huge hydrocarbon reserves).

A Definition and a Deductive Framework

Definition
The antidemocracy promotion strategies covered here involve sustained external policy initiatives intended to shelter or preserve allied regimes that appear to be at risk from international (Western) democracy promotion activities. This definition has various implications.

First, the focus is not on missteps or improvisations but on sustained policy initiatives. There must be consistency and follow through, and persistence in the face of criticism and setbacks. This is a necessary screening requirement to avoid the inclusion of fleeting policy choices.

Second, a strategy must be fully articulated and the product of analysis and deliberation, not just an impulsive or purely tactical response. Policy initiatives are not entirely self-contained packages, but usually partially autonomous components of a larger and more standard policy mix (democracy promotion as a subcomponent of development aid, for example; or an antidemocracy
promotion strategy as a theme within a national security agenda). There is always a question about attributing intentionality to any political initiative. In the case of antidemocracy promotion strategies, it is quite possible that no identifiable actor wishes to take explicit responsibility for advocating what may be seen as an illegitimate policy choice. Even then, it is possible to attribute “design” if the policy initiative is systematically structured to shelter or preserve widely recognizable nondemocratic regime features (such as censorship, torture, and the repression of peaceful protest).

Third, the focus is on large-scale national strategic choices by twenty-first-century states. The options available to nonstate actors, such as Al Qaida, Al Shabab, and ISIL (known in Arabic as Daish) are not included here. These choices must be sufficiently durable and well-articulated for communication (and negotiation) across international boundaries. They may not be embedded in formal treaties, but they require bureaucratic commitment, secure resources, and active supervision to assess outcomes and ensure continuity. The strategic choices may be informal (and they can include covert action), but they need coherence and staying power if they are to elicit external reciprocity. Similarly, on the domestic front, for a strategic commitment to be credible, it needs a solid base that can resist challenge from bureaucratic rivals with other competitive priorities.

Fourth, a single state acting in isolation and seeking to escape all external entanglements, in principle, might adopt an antidemocracy promotion strategy aimed at its own survival through delinking with the rest of the world. It is not our aim to rule out “hedgehogging” of this sort. But modern state actors in the contemporary world select their regime-defining strategies under the glare of international monitoring and accountability, and under strong pressure from prevailing discursive orthodoxies. Isolated regimes are vulnerable, and since democratizations tend to “cluster,” an authoritarian regime that stands back when allies founder puts its own survival in play. So, this definition concerns strategies that are selected, shaped, modified, or discarded as a consequence of international interactions.

Fifth and finally, the focus of this essay is on alternative possibilities for diffusion, cooperation, coordination, and dissemination of state-led antidemocracy promotion strategies. Although the regimes concerned will try to present an appearance of unity, the selection of a strategy is often highly conditioned by external power asymmetries, not least among authoritarian allies. Voluntary cooperation among autonomous regimes provides the normative framework for democracy promotion, and can sometimes be found among antidemocracy promotion allies (such as Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela). It is far more questionable whether authoritarian resisters such as Saudi Arabia and the Gulf emirates, or Moscow and its Eurasian partners, can genuinely cooperate in this sense, given their illiberalism.
A Deductive Framework

From this definitional starting point, it is possible to develop a deductive framework designed to accommodate the range of strategies available to those regimes that aim to resist prevalent international democracy promotion pressures. The regimes in question are diverse (from absolute monarchies to unreformed communist regimes, but also including postcommunist, hybrid, and even some relatively democratic regimes such as Bolivia). Further, the pressures they face are also far from uniform (from economic sanctions to international ostracism, but also adverse media criticism, support and training for dissidents, and, in some cases, even covert operations). And their resilience and capacity to respond is also highly varied.

For these reasons the proposed framework must embrace a wide range of alternative possibilities. The aim here is not to exhaustively catalogue every theoretical option, but rather to generate a broadly encompassing schema. This should provide the major dimensions required for comparing and contrasting the main strategic experiments currently in existence, together with enough space to incorporate future developments and further antidemocracy promotion strategies as they may arise. So, this deductive framework will depend for its utility on the inductive “reality checks” that follow.

Drivers

The drivers of an antidemocracy kind of strategic choice can be identified under the following four headings: Why, who, how, and when?

Why? An antidemocracy promotion strategy involves a substantial commitment, sustained organization, risks, and costs, and requires a strong justification. The most obvious and persuasive argument for such strategies is regime survival, in response to a perceived threat from the democracy promotion camp, or as a signaling strategy to show that pressure leads to increased resistance and retaliation. Signaling can reassure likeminded allies of continuing support, raise the morale of regime supporters, and weaken dissenters at home. There can be both reactive and proactive motives for pursuing an antidemocracy promotion agenda. The proactive could include a platform of shared antidemocratic beliefs. The defense of national sovereignty is back in vogue in the post-Cold War period as a justification for rejecting liberal internationalism.

Who? If the motive is regime survival in the face of an imminent threat, policy makers are likely to be high-level and broad-based. A central autocracy or ruling group may decide that the adoption of an antidemocracy promotion
strategy is worth the effort, and that the expected benefits should outweigh the costs. This may be an entirely top-down initiative, although pressures from society could also play a part. Since diverse regime types can be involved, and since other motives are also possible—the wish to win favor from powerful allies, wrong-foot internal dissidents, or implement an ideological or doctrinal project—narrower, more specialized, interest groups such as hard-line factions, security forces, ideologists, theocrats, or agents of external protectors could also be pivotal. In this case, a strategic choice may not be broad-based or even explicitly cleared at the highest level, and it may not reflect a consensual cost-benefit analysis. Thus, an antidemocracy strategy may emerge as the product of factional conflict. Deception can obscure the true nature of the resulting choice.

How? Large-scale strategic choices in a modern state require planning, preparation, and the study of implications and alternatives. Even if decisions in autocratic regimes involve only a restricted circle, a collective process of decision making is necessary nonetheless. There will be a foreign policy component to the strategy, since it involves the international promotion and dissemination of the relevant choice. Even the most authoritarian regimes must formulate a communication strategy to explain, justify, or disguise the choices involved, so that its supporters have some guidance, and its critics can be contained. Indeed, all types of democracy resistance require strenuous and sustained rebuttal of mainstream international prodemocracy news and commentary.

When? Such an organized commitment involves a major policy move, so “trigger” conditions must be taken into account. Arguably the most common recent precipitant has been the shock effects of external regime upheaval, which might prove “contagious” and can be attributed (sincerely or not) to the machinations of the Western democracy promotion community. The Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, the Arab Spring of 2011, and the Maidan events of 2014 provide exemplary illustrations of such “triggers.” But, in addition to such “emergency” timing of reactions, there also can be more “normal” policy-making sequences (as with China and Hong Kong). In such cases, a threshold rather than a trigger may precipitate the strategic commitment.
Once the initial commitment has been made, there must follow an extended process of monitoring, feedback, and policy adjustments in the light of its consequences. For example, it will be necessary to assess the responses of international allies and domestic constituencies as well as the nature and strength of resistance by democracy promoters. There are also cost-related issues to consider: have they been realistically estimated, who will bear them, how reliably can they be distributed and then justified?

At the outset of a large-scale strategic move, it is usually impossible to forecast accurately how these factors will interact, so it may be necessary to recalibrate the policy once its impact is better known. Early ambitions may have to be scaled back, and the locus of responsibility within the regime may shift.

A Grid of Alternatives

As can be seen above, our simple initial definition raises a series of questions, which, in turn, open up a fan of diverging possibilities. In a deductive model, the options are most conveniently set out as a series of binary alternatives, as illustrated in the tables below. But, as already noted above, in the real world, such binaries are far too stark. Moreover, a proliferation of binaries soon generates an excessively large number of empty cells. After all, at present, there are relatively few “really existing” antidemocracy promotion strategies available for analysis and each of these requires holistic examination. Nevertheless, for heuristic purposes, this essay lays out a highly stylized deductive grid of alternatives that could also serve to accommodate new cases as they arise. It then identifies four deductive combinations that can be checked against provisional evidence from the four ongoing cases.

Thus, the key binaries in the theoretical grid are:

- **When?** Normal times, or triggered by an emergency;
- **Why?** Regime survival, or principle; reactive, or proactive;
- **Who?** Personalist leadership, or civil bureaucracy or security services;
- **How?** Unilateral or multilateral; improvised or premeditated and/or adaptive.

Another critical binary which involves both who and how, concerns the role of covert action and its relationship to free expression by the media. Some alternatives can be chosen, others are simply givens. A wide variety of regime types may feel threatened by democracy promotion, not just closed systems (such as ruling monarchies or one-party states) but also electoral authoritarians, and even some relatively competitive electoral regimes. The scope for choice among options reflects such variations (e.g., between personalist regimes and ruling communist parties, among others). Some regimes are accustomed to behaving as alliance leaders (the Russian Federation, for example), but not all.
Similarly, some are well-resourced and even extravagant (Qatar or Venezuela), others not. Some are committed to a resolutely antidemocratic ideology (Saudi Arabia), whereas others are more equivocal.

Table 1 below presents four alternatives derived from the discussion so far. These do not include all the variables just mentioned, but they cover enough ground and provide sufficient variation to demonstrate the need for a grid, and to provide a framework for the inductive comparisons that follow. For simplicity, the question when a strategy comes into operation (threshold or trigger) can be held over until the empirical comparisons in table 2.

Table 1. Binary Alternatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives</th>
<th>Why</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>How</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Reactive/regime survival</td>
<td>Media/covert</td>
<td>Unilateral/improvised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Proactive/principled</td>
<td>Civil bureaucracy/security</td>
<td>Unilateral/adaptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Proactive/principled</td>
<td>Personalist/security</td>
<td>Unilateral/improvised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Reactive/regime survival</td>
<td>Personalist/media</td>
<td>Multilateral/adaptive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 provides a schematic guide to many of the major contrasts and comparisons that can be tracked through the contemporary evidence. These four alternatives are tested against four major empirical cases (see below). Other variations are obviously possible, and could be developed if required by future developments. Some theoretical combinations may seem improbable (principled with covert; or civil bureaucracy with improvisation, for example) but the empirical evidence includes examples of such boundary crossing. This framework may also be useful to help assess which alternatives are more likely to prove durable and effective.

An Inductive Reality Check

The grid of alternatives can be elaborated only in quite general terms when the reasoning is based on first principles. To go further requires more comparative and evidence-based work, but a deductive framework can be useful for laying out the principle dimensions’ worth that may merit further inquiry.

This section investigates alternatives A to D in table 1 by comparing them to stylized interpretations of the antidemocracy promotion strategies pursued over the past decade by four of the world’s most prominent democracy resisters: Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela. This covers only four leading and well-resourced regimes, so this selection does not cover all the theoretically available options. However, it does focus attention on states that are well-placed to pursue the type of sustained strategy highlighted in
the initial definition. Not only do they illuminate the grid, but also they have considerable scope to make strategic choices. Their economic resources confer substantial “reverse leverage” that they can deploy against the democracy promotion community. This set also encompasses four continents and includes two cases of electoral authoritarianism, as well as two closed authoritarian systems. Working outward from this initial group, the final part of this section briefly considers a wider variety of cases, noting how that increased diversity adds to the grid of alternative democracy prevention possibilities.

Table 2 presents highly schematic comparative data on the four countries, thereby permitting comparisons both among them and with alternatives A-D. The timing question (threshold or trigger for the strategic commitment) is incorporated into this more empirical tabulation. There follows a paragraph of commentary on the main features of each case, intended to amplify the summary judgments contained in the table, and to establish how closely Russia corresponds to alternative A; China to B; and seriatim.

Table 2. Profiles of Four Opponents of Western Democracy Promotion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When?</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threshold</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trigger</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survival</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalist ruler</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security forces</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil bureaucracy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass mobilization</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media activism</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covert action</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unilateral</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilateral</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvised</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 indicates the diversity of the strategic profiles of these four prominent opponents of recent Western democracy promotion initiatives. They vary on multiple dimensions. However, they also all share certain common characteristics: in all cases, the security forces play a substantial role in democracy resistance; they all pursue both unilateral and multilateral strategies (although the mix between the two can vary); and they also all combine
proactive and reactive responses (again, in a mixture of combinations). These shared traits reflect the direct pressure they have been under from the international spread of democracy. Even so, the differences are also substantial and multistranded.

One alternative (B—best exemplified by China—although, here, “party” could stand in for “bureaucracy”) is to plan well in advance, coordinate operations effectively, monitor feedback, and adapt smoothly to new developments. Alternative D is more like Venezuela—personalist and reliant on mass mobilization and media activism, but poor at adapting when policy blunders produce unwelcome feedback. Russia is reasonably well-aligned with alternative A (although the two question marks reflect a persisting lack of clarity about the underlying drivers of the Putin regime’s democracy prevention strategy). Finally, with some effort, the Saudi case can be shoehorned into the framework provided by alternative C. But is a ruling monarchy “personalist”? Not according to standard terminology, although power is tightly held. Since the Saudi regime views itself as the custodian of an implacable religious tradition, does that make its democracy resistance “principled”? Given the secrecy that surrounds it, there is inherent uncertainty about the unilateral and improvised features of its strategic choices.

The classifications and contrasts in the table are clearly oversimplified in various ways. The question marks express both some mismatch among categories and cases and an absence of evidence. The categories are static, whereas processes evolve over time (personalism in Venezuela, and improvisation under Putin, to give just two examples).

A particular issue arises over timing. In the Russian case, it seems likely that the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 constituted a critical trigger that set in motion Moscow’s subsequent antidemocracy promotion program (2014 may have reconfirmed this commitment and deepened it). In line with this argument, China can be seen building gradually to a threshold of commitment, whereas Russia changed course under unforeseen emergency pressures. This contrast probably has some validity, but Beijing already had faced its own defining prodemocracy crisis in 1989, and it remains plausible that preparations for a tough new strategy were already in progress in Moscow before 2004. More generally, the “yes-no” polarity required for the table sharpens contrasts in a manner that can clarify only provided it is not taken too far. For that reason, the next step in broadening the analysis is to add a summary interpretation of each of the four leading countries.

**Putin’s Russia**

In contrast to China and Saudi Arabia, the Russian Federation had about a decade of experience of Western-encouraged democratization, mainly under Boris Yeltsin. So, the democracy prevention stance that has grown in strength over the past decade is a discontinuity rather than an extension of longstanding political commitments. At the same time, in contrast to Venezuela, Russia has
signaled a return to patterns of behavior that were well-entrenched and deeply internalized during Soviet times. Those reflexes help explain Russian resistance to Western rhetoric about the universal values of democracy, a skepticism reinforced by experience of its results under Yeltsin in the 1990s. Putin’s personal trajectory as an intelligence officer turned elected president linked these predemocratic and postdemocratic connections in a single career and lifespan. Moscow’s strategy since 2004 may have been triggered by perceived Western involvement in Kiev’s Orange Revolution, but it also reflects deep collective memories and the weight of a much longer national history.

Unlike during the Cold War and in contrast to contemporary democracy promoters, Moscow’s strategy is not global in ambition, but focuses only on the near abroad, where Russia’s immediate security interests could be harmed by the extension of Western political influence. Although the strategy can be classified as multilateral, this term must be contextualized: Moscow collaborates best with subordinate partners. (Similar factors apply to the other three countries considered below).

Within these limits, over the past decade, Putin’s team (with a strong base in the security services and the state bureaucracy) has pursued a full-fledged antidemocracy promotion strategy that has been well-resourced, extensively coordinated, and actively communicated through vigorous media campaigns. (The extent of the media manipulation has become much more apparent since the annexation of Crimea). It also has involved a covert action component, which has emerged since the annexation of Crimea as a much more central feature than was previously realized. There is a clear capacity for monitoring a feedback, although whether the strategy can be classified as “adaptive” or “improvised” is less clear. It is still a matter of debate whether this option is viewed by Moscow as required to maintain regime survival, and it is possible that a key motive could be described as “principled” (the restoration of national dignity and external respect). Following Schedler, disagreement on this issue reflects the institutional and informational uncertainties that beset authoritarian regimes.

**One-Party China**

The events in Tiananmen Square in May 1989 provided an early trigger for China’s antidemocracy promotion strategy. The crucial domestic decision was thus taken before the end of the Cold War, and the precipitant was an internal crisis rather than a perception of external threat. However, with the end of the Cold War, China’s international strategy was subsequently elaborated and fine-tuned to contend with Western democracy promotion pressures that had followed from the initial clampdown, and then became more structured in the early 1990s. The initial motive may have been regime survival with domestic

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opinion as the major target audience. Since the principal challenge was from within, and the rest of the communist bloc was in turmoil, the management of relations with allies was a secondary concern. But subsequently, as an emerging global power, China passed a threshold and came to exert considerable international leadership, working at times with diverse partners, but always following an essentially unilateral path. The party-state progressively built up an external strategy, which included elaborate and successful measures to enlist the support of useful partners (Singapore, for instance) to face down potential prodemocracy forces in its neighborhood (in Hong Kong and Taiwan), and to modify the policy priorities of its Western critics (notably swaying the Clinton administration in Washington).

Two of China’s post-1989 foreign policy strengths have been its adaptability and its nonprescriptiveness. As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, it has supported some democracy promoting activities (in Haiti), while opposing others (in Iraq). It has counterbalanced Western pressures against some undemocratic regimes (Myanmar and North Korea) but avoided prescribing any single regime type. Even within its sphere of influence, it has tolerated more diversity than seems acceptable to Russia. China’s far greater political stability and economic success has helped it to project an alternative to Western hegemony, and to cultivate good relations with democracies such as South Africa, hybrid regimes such as Venezuela, and traditional communist systems, as in Cuba. This complex and sustained foreign policy has incorporated but not been dominated by an antidemocracy promotion strategy. The top leadership has doubtless managed that strategy, but in accordance with one-party doctrine, and more through teamwork than personal direction. It also has involved strong participation from and coordination among the foreign policy bureaucracy, the security services, and propaganda specialists. Communication strategy has emphasized nonintervention in internal political matters, rather than opposition to democracy promotion as such. This stance justifies a strong line against the democracy movement in Hong Kong, without signaling resistance to well-supported democracy movements that may arise in some more distant partner countries. Even on sensitive matters such as Hong Kong, mass participation from below has not been a priority. It would risk reopening internal divisions.

The House of Saud

Saudi Arabia has a traditional and theocratic ruling monarchy, rather than a personalist leader or a one-party state. The unique features of this regime make it particularly difficult to pigeonhole under such generic labels as “personalism” and “bureaucracy.” Its opacity also obstructs the attribution of motives (Wahhabism as an antidemocratic principle) or the description of methods (adaptive and covert). However, it has long defended its undemocratic system against Arab nationalists, secularists, global jihadists, and, most recently, the Muslim Brotherhood-derived parties that emerged as a consequence of
electoral politics in Egypt, Tunisia, and elsewhere after the 2011 Arab Spring. While that event could be regarded as a trigger for a renewed antidemocracy promotion strategy, in the Saudi case, this was just the most recent in an unbroken succession of policies designed to preserve the ascendancy of the House of Saud and to project its universal status as the guardian of Islam’s most holy sites. The principles at stake are therefore not just the preservation of regime privileges (although the world’s largest oil producer and exporter certainly has major interests to defend as well as its doctrinal commitments).

Like China, Saudi Arabia pursues an essentially unilateral foreign policy, while collaborating with a wide range of partners. Its strategy is only partly about fending off Western democracy promoters, for it is a key partner and protégé of Washington and London. Its financial strength means there are no cracks through which rights-based NGOs might penetrate its territory, and it can use its wealth to buy off external criticisms. It offers a golden exile to ousted autocrats such as Idi Amin and Ben Ali. So long as the Saudi regime sees its domestic base as secure from any taint of Western democracy promotion influence, it can concentrate its energies on managing external challenges. It might even take a mildly favorable view of democratization in those distant contexts where the beneficiaries could be potential allies (Bangladesh, Indonesia, and parts of the former Yugoslavia). But in its own neighborhood (its “near abroad”), it leads an alliance of like-minded Sunni oil monarchies (the Gulf Cooperation Council) and funds groups that are root-and-branch opponents of both Shi’ism, the Brotherhood, and also of liberal democracy—including through covert actions. On the propaganda front, there is a stark divide between the active proselytism of its Sunni sectarian message in its region, and its wary communications with Western unbelievers; and although its security forces are powerful in the immediate vicinity (Bahrain, and the border with Yemen), the policy instrument that really counts is its monetary firepower. In order to preserve its crucial ties to Washington, and other capitals where Wahhabi principles are potentially toxic, it projects a moderate account of itself to the non-Arab world, far different from the role it plays in its own neighborhood.

**Bolivarian Venezuela**

After 1999, the Venezuelan “Fifth Republic” developed a highly polarizing form of presidentialist electoral politics that meets (or even exceeds) all the criteria for populism, and has generated major confrontations with the U. S.-supported democracies of Latin America. Hugo Chavez did not install a straightforwardly authoritarian regime, like the three discussed above. His defenders would argue that his “Bolivarian” model is more authentically democratic than its rivals, and point to features such as the recall election to support that claim. For the purposes of this comparison, it suffices to classify this regime as a hybrid, and to note that it is also proving more erratic and unstable than the preceding three, now that the personalist founder has died.
The trigger for Venezuela’s embrace of an anti-Western democracy promotion agenda was the failed coup against the democratically elected President Chavez in 2002. On his return to the presidency, he was clear which of the region’s democracies would have tolerated (or even welcomed) his unconstitutional ousting, and which would have remained opposed to a conservative military rollback of his populist innovations. Since Washington and Miami seemed in the forefront of support for the coup, Caracas proceeded to build an alliance (the Bolivarian Alternative) that opposed USAID and its works, while claiming the mantle of democracy for itself. Thus, a domestically hybrid and populist regime can lead an ambitious and well-resourced antidemocracy promotion alliance without repudiating democratic principles.

Admittedly, there is a longer history to consider, and the ALBA alliance was inconsistent on democratic principles—Cuba was included at its core, and media and judicial freedoms were not well-protected. But many Latin American democrats were prepared to overlook such failings, not least because there were low-quality democracies on both sides of the resulting regional divide. Venezuela’s leading role in ALBA was made possible by its oil wealth (a regional-scale counterpart to the main Saudi source of strength), while Chavez’s personalist appeal and propaganda gave this strategy an intense additional impulse.

In contrast to the first three cases, mass participation from below also contributed substantially to both the energy and the disorder of the chosen strategy in Venezuela. The escalating cost of the initial commitment failed to encourage restraint or reassessments of the kind envisaged in the feedback section of the grid above. As a reality check, it may be proposed that populist regimes may not react to adverse feedback with the same prudence as more orthodox survival-based rulers. The strategic choices made by the Chavez administration were principled, actively justified, broadly based, well-resourced, and characterized by a remarkable degree of vanguardism, while also orchestrating a strong multilateral dimension. But their relative incoherence and instability over time distinguish them from the strategies of China or Saudi Arabia.

While these four cases provide the best reality checks on our theoretical grid, they do not exhaust the range of antidemocracy promotion strategies worthy of consideration. Other contemporary instances could include Angola, Algeria, Bahrain, Belarus, Bolivia, Cambodia, Cuba, Ecuador, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Morocco, Nicaragua, North Korea, Oman, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Rwanda, Sudan, the UAE, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe, plus other possible recent candidates such as Egypt, Hungary, Iran, Myanmar, and Pakistan, among others. Overall, there are dozens of democracy resisters to study, and a more comprehensive examination would doubtless stretch the theoretical grid of alternatives still further. Most of these other cases are more resource-constrained, less stable, and less externally influential than the leading four, and so less likely to develop a full strategy. But they should not be overlooked when drawing up a “menu of options.”
The “Menu of Options”

As the foregoing analysis shows, there are multiple possibilities for strategic choice in antidemocracy policy space, and the factors influencing the adoption of any particular alternative are numerous and diverse. Even so, the combination of the initial definition with the specification of a relatively precise context (national regimes that have reason to perceive themselves as under substantial pressure from post-Cold War Western democracy promotion programs) sets some precise and definite scope conditions for the inquiry. Let us turn now to some of the options most worthy of comparative investigation.

**Hedgehogging**

If the sole objective of the policy is to secure the survival of an insecure undemocratic regime, it might be more effective to avoid attracting international attention, to maintain vigilance, and to convey a disposition to strike against any unfriendly acts. The case against a bolder approach would be that entanglement with other insecure regimes would import their problems. Democracy promotion is notoriously selective, so it could be best to remain invisible and let the pressure fall on others. Since democracies also pursue stability and prosperity, it may be possible to survive without democratizing by catering to these alternative interests. Finally, activism incurs costs and stirs up expectations, when the best route to survival is to keep a low profile. This is the case for a “hedgehog” strategy, and it represents a significant option for a certain set of regimes.

**Principled Resistance**

There are strong reasons why hedgehogging is not that common, however. It may not work if the democracy promotion momentum is strong, or if it can be interpreted as evidence of weakness. Moreover, regime survival is often not the single most important goal: the leaders of Communist China believed that they would be betraying their heritage and doing a disservice to their country if they followed the Gorbachev route; the monarchy in Saudi Arabia has religious commitments and a view of the national identity that inform its decisions; Chavez seemed to have, and Putin appears to have, objectives that extend beyond mere defensive persistence, and for whom a principled stand has more appeal than a hedgehog strategy. The evidence suggests that, at least in the post-Cold War period, some kind of justificatory stance is the norm rather than the exception for antidemocracy promotion strategists.

**Alliance Building**

All modern states are enmeshed in a complex web of international relationships managed by diplomatic specialists, so the building of a specific antidemocracy promotion alliance can make use of such links. As highlighted in the comments
on China and Saudi Arabia, even very active democracy resisters pursue other foreign policies as well, and therefore adopt graduated (polyheuristic) approaches. There are multiple alternative possibilities within this general framework. A leading state with a clear and united strategy (such as China) may find these tensions easier to manage than a divided regime with unstable priorities. However, even a relatively weak and secondary player may achieve significant results if the leadership is willing to make it a priority. But relations between leading alliance members and their subordinate partners are unlikely to be trouble-free since these particular multilateral associations bring together regimes that are particularly sensitive about their sovereignty, and inherently distrustful of democratic decision making. Effective partnerships of this kind may depend more than anything on tacit and informal linkages. For example, the Gulf Cooperation Council owes its recent success more to the family connections and shared dynastic assumptions of its rulers than to its declaratory activities or its organogram.

**Signaling Opponents**
If diplomats are required for alliance building, the security services are needed to help handle the opposition, both at home and abroad. But this leaves a variety of options open for consideration. Starting with the external opposition, the first requirement for an active strategy is to gather intelligence about its capacities and intentions. That is likely to involve monitoring organizations such as USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy (and covert counterparts), and identifying their local and exile sources of information and assistance. Turning to domestic opponents, the security services may seek not just to monitor their activities but also to infiltrate their leadership and manipulate divisions within their ranks. The range, skill, and subtlety of such operations vary greatly, and outcomes also will depend on the composition and effectiveness of the opposition forces in question. Repression is one obvious possibility, and the harshest variants are likely to attract the most attention and visibility. In general, however, the more fundamental security component of an antidemocracy promotion strategy concerns its signals to the opposition. Its existence will be known, its operations monitored, some degree of activity tolerated (as a means of evaluating the potential of opposition forces), but it will be taught which lines cannot be crossed with impunity.9

**Resourcing the Strategy**
A modern state will need to assign a budget and human and institutional resources to implement strategies. Both Saudi Arabia and Venezuela have recently allocated budgets for this purpose that considerably outspend Western democracy promoters, and China is also well positioned to carry through its

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strategy. The major oil producers (including the Russian Federation) have a very disproportionate presence in the antidemocracy promotion camp, although there are also a few weighty players in the opposite camp (notably Norway). In any case, direct public expenditure is only one aspect of the resource commitment. There is also the provision of government services and even a range of “internationalist” personnel (from Wahhabi preachers to Cuban medical personnel). Other elements include the work of charitable foundations, the granting of contracts to political allies, arms trading, and the deployment of mass media resources. Large-scale and costly resource commitments may be involved, although as with Western democracy promotion some of these activities will be “dual purpose,” so that not all the costs should be attributed solely to the antidemocratic strategy.

**Communicating the Strategy**
Communication of the strategy to those whose support it may call for the services of media specialists and perhaps propaganda departments. In personalist regimes, as under Chavez, the leader himself may take charge of much of this. But in more institutionalized systems, such as Communist China, an elaborate and specialized bureaucracy may be involved. There is also the question of transparency. In Bolivia, most of the information involved is public and subject to critical scrutiny, quite unlike in Saudi Arabia. Further, where the strategy is actively endorsed and even promoted through a mass public, high visibility communications become necessary. If a small elite determines the strategy, the mass media may remain uninformed (as is often the case in contemporary Cuba). Finally, different agencies or interests within the governing coalition may be in conflict over aspects of the strategy. In that case, the communication policy may become an arena of contestation.

**Coordination Issues**
It is no easy task to coordinate diplomats, security services, media specialists, and various other operatives necessary to sustain a large-scale strategy. One choice is to keep all these potentially fissiparous agencies under tight top-down control. But there are rigidities and distortions that often accompany this model, and it is not an option equally available to all regimes. It may be applicable in China or Saudi Arabia, but not elsewhere. In Venezuela since Chavez’s death, the absence of a personalist leader and a well-structured coordination system may invite interagency conflict. Some allege that the current structure is held in pace only by Cuban support. In Bolivia, these top-down and interagency processes operate under the scrutiny of a relatively informed citizenry and mass organizations with their own views about relations with leading Western democracies. Thus, coordination issues can vary considerably among regimes, and each solution may acquire a momentum of its own that leaves only limited scope for further choice of methods.
Managing Feedback over Time

Antidemocracy promotion strategies are extended processes rather than merely one-off decisions. A critical option for their authors is how to manage successive stages in the process: monitoring, evaluating, and responding to feedback from supporters and opponents. The crucial choices are whether or not to delegate these responsibilities to a suitably equipped and institutionalized agency or agencies, and how to manage the ensuing responses. If the strategy is a durable priority for the regime, it could be very costly to neglect such management tasks. Different management techniques will be appropriate for powerful and well-institutionalized regimes that aim to play a leading role in designing antidemocracy promotion strategies. The general point is that none of the other menu items listed above will deliver its expected results if this crucial aspect is neglected.

Conclusion

Strategies designed to obstruct or reverse the spread of democracy are nothing new. If one includes the Peloponnesian War, they are almost as old as Western democracy itself.10 Prominent historical examples include the 1815 Holy Alliance to restore hereditary rule in Europe; collaboration to repress the democratic revolutions of 1848; the Warsaw Pact reaction to Marshall Aid; and the alliance among Portugal, Rhodesia, and South Africa to preserve white minority rule in southern Africa in the 1960s.

This essay narrows a potentially very open field of inquiry by focusing on the twenty plus years following the end of the Cold War, when the Western democracy promotion agenda was most prominent and unified, and had the best prospects for international success. Recent antidemocracy promotion strategies can be understood as reactions to the previously prevailing democracy promotion agenda, but not as its mirror image. The democracy resisters do not aspire to reverse democracy throughout the world, only to limit its presence as a destabilizing element in their domestic and regional affairs. They also differ from the democracy promotion community in terms of their mutual suspicions and divergences, and their inherent difficulties in working together as voluntary and mutually trusting partners. Divisions among authoritarian regimes are deeper than those among democracies (those between Iran and Saudi Arabia come to mind as an example). Even similar regimes (military

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10 “By and large, Athens could count on the support of the lower classes and the hostility of the wealthy and aristocratic families—hence her active backing of local democracies. It is a fair guess, furthermore, that, if we had the evidence, it would show the reverse situation among members of the Peloponnesian League, for, as Thucydides says (1.19), ‘The Spartans did not make their allies pay tribute, but saw to it that they were governed by oligarchies who would work in the Spartan interest.’” Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War, ed. M. L. Finley, trans. Rex Warner (London: Penguin, 1972), 611.
ones, for instance) can find it hard to cooperate, or to trust one another. Further, the overall international system is still fairly rule-based and dominated by liberalizing norms, in contrast to, say, during the rise of fascism in the interwar period. And the economic and technological aspects of globalization continue to run counter to many forms of antidemocratic resistance, such as the need to observe some human rights principles in order to export to world markets, or the challenges that the digital revolution poses to traditional methods of censorship.

There is an additional asymmetry. The ultimate goal of today’s democratic community is often described as extending democracy throughout the entire world system. By contrast, there is no equivalent unifying objective toward which the democracy resisters either could, or would, rally. So, they are on the defensive and mainly drawn together by the perception of a common threat. Such coordination as they do achieve is likely to be episodic and subject to fracturing. However, recent experience indicates that these reactive strategies can prove remarkably durable and effective. (On a longer time horizon, it is evident that democracy promoters also can be fractured and thrown onto the defensive in periods of authoritarian upsurge).

The previous section reviewed eight areas of choice (a “menu of options”) for the pursuit of antidemocracy promotion strategies. But the possibilities under consideration are not equally available to all players. Each regime is heavily constrained by its historical, structural, and inertial characteristics, so long-run history needs to be taken into account as well as any recent threshold or trigger event. Moreover, regimes with great oil wealth will have the resources and incentives to pursue strategic options quite different from those available to resource-poor states. Democracy promotion poses different threats to hereditary and theocratic monarchies than to revolutionary one-party regimes or to populist or personalist forms of rule.

The consequence of such variations is that antidemocracy promotion strategies are best analyzed and compared on a grid of possibilities, rather than as a unitary phenomenon. This essay has set out the common features that could be derived (in theory) from a unifying definition. It has probed the limits of that theoretical stance in view of evidence derived from four leading cases. Finally, it has explored a menu of eight potentially available options for those regimes mounting antidemocracy promotion strategies. The dimensions of choice thus identified are intended to provide an inclusive checklist for those engaging in further work in this new field of comparative politics.