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THE NEW GLOBAL MARKETPLACE OF POLITICAL CHANGE

Thomas Carothers and Oren Samet-Marram

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Summary

Western democratic powers are no longer the dominant external shapers of political transitions around the world. A new global marketplace of political change now exists, in which varied arrays of states, including numerous nondemocracies and non-Western democracies, are influencing transitional trajectories. Western policymakers and aid practitioners have been slow to come to grips with the realities and implications of this new situation.

New Marketplace Realities

A transformed transitional era. Despite overall global democratic stagnation since 2000, the era of widespread national-level political flux that marked the 1980s and 1990s has not ended; its character has simply evolved. It no longer has any overarching directionality, with countries moving as often away from democracy as toward it or into civil war as out of it.

A widespread phenomenon. The marketplace is not limited to high-profile hot spots like Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen. Competition for influence among diverse external actors impacts all countries experiencing fundamental political change.

A new normal. The marketplace is not a temporary condition. It is a fundamental feature of the changed international political order that is emerging as a result of the global diffusion of power away from the West to "the rest."

How States Operate in the Marketplace

Motivations are complex and often nonideological. Framing the marketplace as a contest between democracy promotion and autocracy promotion would be erroneous. The motivations of governments seeking to shape political change in other countries are highly diverse and hard to neatly categorize.

Methods of influence are increasingly forceful. The marketplace is characterized by the widening use of intrusive methods, especially military force and political cash on the part of nondemocracies. Non-Western democracies usually hew to softer methods and often try to act through multilateral institutions.

Marketplace power is asymmetrical. Fueled by a perception of urgent national interest and taking advantage of local ties and knowledge, relatively

weak countries are sometimes able to exert significant influence on transitions near them, rivaling or even outweighing that of major Western powers.

Pushback is a by-product. As competition for influence widens and intensifies, a growing number of countries are pushing back, not only against Western powers, but against all states attempting to exert cross-border political influence.

Rules are scarce. The new global marketplace is a rule-less domain in practice. The many different states reaching across borders to influence the political life of other countries do not conform to any shared set of norms, principles, or standards regulating the permissible forms of action.

Introduction

In the 1980s and 1990s, fundamental political change, or at least the apparent start of it, hit over 100 countries in Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Soviet Union, primarily in the form of the collapse of authoritarian regimes. The United States and other established Western democracies dominated the international dimension of what many Western observers described as a global wave of democracy. Employing diplomatic levers, economic carrots and sticks, military power, democracy-related assistance, and other tools, established Western democracies sought to support democratic outcomes in the many politically transitional countries.

Of course, Western governments had many other foreign policy preoccupations besides democracy support and were often inconsistent in their commitment to democratic principles. Moreover, they were not necessarily successful in many of their efforts to help foster and consolidate democracy. But unquestionably they were deeply involved in trying to shape the direction of the political change unfolding throughout the developing and post-Communist worlds.

Some other countries, especially regional powers such as China and Saudi Arabia, also attempted during those years to exert influence in at least some of these transitional contexts. China, for example, supported the African National Congress in its struggle to end apartheid in South Africa. Saudi Arabia sought to have a hand in Yemen's long-simmering civil conflict. But these and other non-Western powers were absorbed with domestic political and economic challenges of their own and had only limited capacities to be influential beyond their borders.

Given the still-tremendous concentration of global power in the hands of the United States and its close allies during the immediate post–Cold War years, Western powers were usually the most significant international actors weighing in. What for decades throughout the Cold War had been a dualistic contest for political influence across borders between the United States and its allies on one side, and the Soviet Union and its allies on the other, became something much closer to a one-sided global framework.

That situation no longer prevails. Fundamental political change—that is, change in the basic character of a political system, not simply alternation of power between contending political groups that both accept the same political rules of the game—continues to occur in many countries. Sometimes it takes place as a result of the collapse of a regime due to protests, military force, or other forms of disruption, such as in Ukraine and Thailand in 2014. Other times it occurs through elections, when a victorious party or politician emerges

that seeks to make a fundamental, that is to say, systemic, break from old ways, such as in Sri Lanka in early 2015.

Where fundamental change is occurring, much more varied arrays of states are thrusting themselves into the process than has been the case previously. Many of the states now in the fray are acting with striking determination, considerable resources, and sometimes notable skill to shape events. Some are nondemocratic, like China, Iran, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Venezuela; for these states, influence over processes of political change around them is a crucial part of larger strategic efforts to mold new regional security orders to fit their interests. Others are democracies, such as Brazil, India, Indonesia, South Africa, and Turkey, that are evolving beyond their traditional attachment to noninterventionism and seeking to be more politically influential regional powers. Although established Western democracies are still actively engaged in seeking to affect the course of political change in countries around the world, their efforts are now much less dominant than they once were, and in some cases, they are significantly challenged or outweighed by the efforts of others.

Although established Western democracies are still actively engaged in seeking to affect the course of political change in countries around the world, their efforts are now much less dominant than they once were, and in some cases, they are significantly challenged or outweighed by the efforts of others.

This intensified and diversified transnational involvement in national-level political change is glaringly evident in blood-drenched hot spots like Ukraine and Syria, which have become tragic theaters of militarized cross-border political interventionism. Less appreciated, however, is how pervasive such involvement has become, even when it is less openly conflictual. Egypt, for example, has seen not just the United States and various European countries laboring (largely in vain) to impact its political direction since the ouster of then president Hosni Mubarak in 2011—but a host of other countries forcefully weighing in as well, especially Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. Similarly, ever since Burma's ruling generals cracked open the long-closed political door of that country, a plethora of actors, including China, India, Japan, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States, have been trying to influence the direction of Burma's new political path.

In short, a new global marketplace of political change now exists. This marketplace is not a limited or temporary condition, an isolated, short-term flare-up of internationalized tensions in a few unstable countries. It is a widespread feature of the changed international political order that is emerging as a result of the global diffusion of power away from the West to "the rest." Of course, states seek to exert political influence across borders in all kinds of countries, not just ones experiencing political flux. A normal element of statecraft is the search for political influence in other countries to help maintain a useful friendship or alliance or to open doors for trade and investment. The focus here is on the exertion of political influence in countries experiencing fundamental political change with the goal of trying to affect the basic direction or outcome

of that change. Such contexts are places where both the vulnerability to outside influence and the political stakes are unusually high.

Coming to grips with the full reach and complexity of the global marketplace of political influence is imperative, especially for the community of Western policy and aid actors engaged in supporting democracy in other countries. This paper seeks to help meet that need. It starts with a short analysis of the altered, multidirectional nature of political change that now defines the international landscape. It then examines the operation of the marketplace in five key regions—the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia, the former Soviet Union, and Latin America—highlighting the different configurations of states active in trying to shape political directions and outcomes in each region. Various key features of the marketplace emerge from this analysis, including the complex mix of motivations at work and the inadequacy of any binary "democracy promotion versus autocracy promotion" framework; the strikingly frequent employment of military methods, especially by nondemocracies; how asymmetric power patterns often put less powerful states in a dominant role in contexts of change; and the multiplication of conflicts between governments trying to exert influence across borders and governments on the receiving ends of such efforts. The paper concludes with implications for Western policymakers, above all the need to reformulate the basic question that Western democracies face regarding their role in processes of political change around the world.

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The Altered Landscape of Political Change

The global wave of national-level political change that marked the 1980s and 1990s had a dominant initial directionality. Most of the countries engulfed by this wave experienced the breakdown of long-standing authoritarian regimes, whether they were military juntas in Latin America, Communist governments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, or personalistic dictators in Africa and Asia. Political observers at the time too easily assumed that movement away from authoritarianism automatically meant democratization when, in fact, many countries that the enthusiastic observers proclaimed to be transitioning to democracy were actually transitioning into a political gray zone populated by hybrid systems that combined features of both democracy and authoritarianism. Other countries made brief forays away from authoritarianism but then lapsed quickly back into renewed dictatorial rule. Nevertheless, the many exits from authoritarianism combined often enough with at least some movement toward political pluralism and openness that the widely used

label of "the Third Wave of democracy" was at least a plausible account of what was happening.

Yet then, rather abruptly, during the first decade of the new century, democracy stopped advancing in the world. A lively debate exists among democracy specialists as to whether democracy is now in recession globally or just stagnant, but the loss of forward momentum is clear—the overall number of democracies today (as measured by the various global political indices) is roughly the same as it was in 2000.[1]

This change does not, however, mean that the era of widespread, national-level political flux that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s has ended. It simply means that its overall character has evolved. It no longer has any clear overarching directionality. Authoritarian exit has occurred in some countries in the past decade and a half. In a few of these places, such as Tunisia, it appears to be leading to serious attempts at democratization. In other places, authoritarian demise has led almost directly to civil war, as in Libya, or to a period of instability followed by authoritarian reconstruction, as in Egypt.

In a much larger number of countries, political flux has taken the form not of authoritarian exit but of democratic exit. Larry Diamond has identified 25 cases of democratic breakdown that have occurred since 2000, with some states returning to democracy after their breakdowns and others not.[2] Some of these countries, like Nepal and Pakistan, have experienced frequent political turmoil and change over the past several decades; they are seemingly trapped in transitions defined by no clear directionality at all.

Another component of the current landscape of political change is the many countries moving in or out of civil war. Part of the dominant directionality of the 1990s was movement away from civil war, as dozens of old Cold War–fueled conflicts, especially in Africa and Central America, ended.[3] Since the 1990s, a few civil conflicts have ended, such as in Sri Lanka, or possibly entered their final phase, such as in Colombia. But a larger number of countries have fallen into civil conflict rather than moved out of it, including Iraq, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Syria, and Yemen.

The global era of political change that commenced several decades ago is now about change that involves an almost bewilderingly diverse array of starting points, directions, halfway houses, side alleys, and endpoints.

In short, significant amounts of fundamental national-level political change continue to occur around the world, despite the democratic stagnation since 2000. But the ongoing era of global political change no longer has any clear overarching direction or shape. Countries are as frequently moving away from democracy as toward it, and more often moving into conflict than out of it. The global era of political change that commenced several decades ago is now about change that involves an almost bewilderingly diverse array of starting points, directions, halfway houses, side alleys, and endpoints.

The Marketplace at Work

The countries experiencing fundamental political change in recent years are primarily concentrated in the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, and South and Southeast Asia, although some are in the former Soviet Union and Latin America. The operation of the global marketplace in each of these different regions takes very different forms. A brief cross-regional tour highlights the basic shape and dynamics of the marketplace in these contexts.

The Middle East

For decades, the Middle East was the most politically stable region outside of North America and Western Europe—the one region of the developing world almost untouched by the Third Wave of democracy. During the last five years, however, it has experienced extremely high levels of political flux: changes of regime in Egypt and Tunisia, regime breakdown and civil war in Libya and Yemen, a cataclysmic civil war in Syria, continuing violent conflict in Iraq, and massive public protests and a harsh crackdown in Bahrain. Even some of the Arab states that have maintained relative overall stability in this new time of turmoil, including Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco, have nevertheless experienced significant public protests or other strains.

At least five distinct and often clashing vectors of cross-border influence are making themselves felt in this extraordinarily volatile context.

The first of these is the United States and its major European allies. After the U.S.-led jolt of political change in Iraq in the early years of the previous decade and at least some Western diplomatic pressure for democratic reforms in other Arab states, the United States and Europe largely returned to being comfortable with the political status quo by the end of the decade. When the various political upheavals that constituted the Arab Spring hit in 2011, the West's reaction was one of cautious support. As political openings occurred, the United States and Europe generally tried to encourage democratic progress. Their efforts in this direction, such as increased democracy-related aid and diplomatic backing of elections along with other pro-democratic steps, were notably modest and often outweighed by the elements of continuity, such as their close ties with opaque, repressive Arab security establishments. This halfhearted stance reflected their preoccupation with problems at home (such as the euro crisis) or in other parts of the world (such as the intended U.S. pivot to Asia), their ambivalence about the security implications of popular rule in Arab states, and their desire to maintain long-standing close ties with Arab military and intelligence establishments. The one major exception to this cautious approach was Libya, where the combination of a leader, Muammar Qaddafi, who was not a friend of the West and an armed conflict that looked like it might turn into a humanitarian disaster prompted Britain, France, the

United States, and a host of other European and Arab countries, including the UAE and Qatar, to intervene together militarily.

A second vector of influence has been Iran. Determined to ensure the emergence and survival of an Iraqi government friendly to its interests, Iran has worked tirelessly to assert influence in Iraq's ongoing transition after the ouster of Saddam Hussein, using multiple levers and significant resources. Over the past decade, Tehran has funded candidates and parties in elections; armed, trained, and funded selected militia groups; nurtured close ties with key Iraqi politicians; brokered agreements among competing Iraqi factions; and pushed for certain outcomes in the context of endless political deal making in the country. Especially when the United States began to substantially withdraw from Iraq in 2009 and 2010, Iran progressively established itself as the key external power broker.[4] Iran is now a major military actor in the country, helping the Iraqi government do battle with the self-proclaimed Islamic State.

Iran has also been a major player trying to shape the outcome of the Syrian conflict, providing massive military aid, economic support, and diplomatic backing to the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. In Lebanon, Iran has played a major role at key political junctures during the past decade throughits financial, military, and diplomatic support to Hezbollah.[5] Through its extensive military and financial support to Hamas over many years, Iran has had a major effect on the direction of Palestinian politics. In Yemen, Iran's support for the Houthis, a Shia minority group that took over the capital Sanaa in late 2014 after fighting against the authorities for years, has also had a sizeable impact on that country's political trajectory.

Third, since the outbreak of the Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have been major players in almost all of the countries in the region immersed in fundamental political change.[6] In Egypt, they have labored to thwart the political aspirations of the Muslim Brotherhood out of concern that a successful example of moderate, electorally based Islamist rule would hurt their own domestic political balances. To that end they greatly reduced aid to the country after Mohamed Morsi was elected president in 2012, and then they showered the government that emerged after Morsi's ouster in 2013. The two countries have committed more than $20 billion to the Egyptian government since mid-2013.[7] There is some evidence that the UAE contributed money to the protest movement that played a major role in Morsi's downfall.[8] In the past year, the UAE and Saudi Arabia have shifted some of their aid away from budget support to more targeted efforts to back fiscal restructuring and other economic reforms, in the hope of ensuring sustainability of the new political order in Egypt.

Their role in Bahrain has been equally significant. Riyadh became deeply involved when Bahrain experienced major protests in the first half of 2011, sending aid, advice, and then its own troops to help Bahrain's ruling family put down the uprising by the Shia-majority population. Saudi rulers acted out of concern that a successful revolt might trigger a comparable uprising in their

country and open a door to Iranian influence in the Gulf. The UAE was also involved, sending its own troops to join in the suppression of protests and taking other measures to support Bahrain's leaders.

Worried about possible state collapse in Yemen in the conflictual aftermath of Ali Abdullah Saleh's departure from the presidency in 2012, Saudi Arabia stepped up its longtime political engagement there as well. It increased aid to the government and the use of its significant ties with Yemeni power holders to engage in behind-the-scenes brokering efforts aimed at stabilizing the seemingly endless political crisis.[9] After the Houthi takeover of Yemen's capital in September 2014, Saudi Arabia cut off its aid to the government. And then in March 2015, Saudi Arabia, in a coalition that includes Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE, initiated significant aerial intervention in Yemen, aimed at limiting the advance of Houthi forces.

The UAE (in partnership with Egypt) has continued to be involved in Libya since 2011, stepping up its engagement as the country has descended into wider civil war. The UAE actively backs the counter-Islamist forces in Libya, providing them with military, financial, and diplomatic support. It has also tried to dissuade Qatar from helping Islamist forces in Libya.

A fourth vector has been support for Islamist actors on the part of both Qatar and Turkey, which back many of the same actors but do not generally coordinate their activities. Through its sponsorship and hosting of the media network Al Jazeera, Qatar played a critical role in fostering more open information flows and more active political debates in the Arab world in the years leading up to the Arab Spring. Since 2011, Qatar has become more directly involved in trying to shape political change in the region, for instance by backing the Muslim Brotherhood in multiple countries.[10] It has done so out of basic sympathy for the Brotherhood's views as well as to deflect criticism from religiously based opposition forces at home that the leadership lacks commitment to political Islam. This has included support for Brotherhood groups in Tunisia and Syria, but it has been especially substantial in Egypt. The Qatari government gave assistance to the Muslim Brotherhood to advance its role in the initial post-Mubarak period and then provided large-scale aid—by some accounts as much as $10 billion—to the Egyptian government after Mohamed Morsi came to power in 2012. That aid has substantially waned since Morsi's ouster.

Qatar has also been a significant player in Libya's transition. Doha aided the anti-Qaddafi rebels early in the uprising and then took part in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) mission in the country. Since Qaddafi's fall, Qatar has continued to be involved in various ways, including through links with some Islamist militia commanders and attempts to broker agreements among the conflicting political groups there.[11]

With the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) rise to power in 2002, Turkey's traditionally cautious, status quo–oriented foreign policy took on a different dimension: the projection of a new Turkish political model, which involved the democratic incorporation of moderate political Islam. That

projection largely remained a soft-power endeavor based on the idea of leading by example until political change hit the Arab world in 2011.

In the early years of the Arab upheavals, Turkey engaged more directly in support for political change in its region. For example, when protests erupted in Egypt in early 2011, the Turkish government sided with the protesters, emerging quickly as the leading external power favoring a change of government. After Mubarak's departure, the AKP cultivated increasingly warm ties with Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, hoping to facilitate its dominance in the new political landscape.[12] Similarly, in Tunisia, the AKP fostered a close relationship with the Islamist Ennahdha party following longtime president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali's downfall in the hope that its rise to power would represent a successful example of the Turkish model in practice.[13] Turkey has also provided material support to Syrian rebels, often through intermediaries in the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood; facilitated cooperation between opposition factions; and allowed the opposition Syrian National Council to convene on its territory—all actions intended to hasten the Assad regime's downfall.[14]

Fifth, in addition to state actors, forceful nonstate actors are engaged in transitional contexts across the region as well. The Islamic State is not only occupying large swaths of territory in Iraq and Syria and fighting ferociously against the governments of both those countries. It is also spreading its influence to other countries in the region, such as Libya, and beyond. Al-Qaeda continues to organize and operate in multiple countries and employ violence aimed at destabilizing governments. Hezbollah is fighting in Syria on the side of the Assad government.

The multiplicity of vectors and the extremely complex patterns of confluence and tension among them are striking. So too are the intensity of the many efforts by different states to shape political outcomes and the high levels of conflict and violence associated with political change in the region. Libya, Syria, and Yemen have all become sites of proxy wars among multiple outside actors. Iraq's civil war has been internationalized for over a decade. Furthermore, even this overview of cross-border actors is not exhaustive. Kuwait and Oman have been active in some countries, such as Egypt, providing assistance to help governments weather difficult political and economic junctures. Russia is playing a significant role in the Syrian conflict, including trying to serve as a broker for a possible negotiated resolution.

Sub-Saharan Africa

After the sweeping wave of authoritarian collapses and attempted democratic transitions in the 1990s, more than half of African states have settled into relatively stable political systems. Some of these are stable authoritarian or semi-authoritarian systems, widely varying in levels of repression and commitment to development. These include Angola, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. A number of them are at least somewhat democratic,

whether ruled by dominant parties or enjoying some alternation of power, such as Benin, Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, and South Africa. Roughly one-third of African countries have experienced significant flux in the past ten years, whether brought about by successful or attempted military coups (Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritania, and Niger), rebel-led ousters of governments (Central African Republic and Mali), electoral standoffs or popular revolts (Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire), violent civil strife (the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, and South Sudan), or general political precariousness as a result of weak institutions and multiple internal pressures (Liberia and Sierra Leone).

Many different states both outside and within Africa have been seeking to influence political outcomes in the African countries experiencing political flux. The United States and Europe are widely engaged through diplomatic work, economic and politically related aid, and military assistance. The diverse and frequently conflicting interests that animate U.S. and European policy toward sub-Saharan Africa generally—combating violent radical Islam, gaining access to major energy resources, contributing to poverty reduction, and advancing democracy—drive their engagement in African contexts of political change. For example, French and U.S. military aid to Mali to help it defeat the insurgency that toppled the government in 2012 was driven primarily by counterterrorism concerns, though it was also related to democracy support. The same is the case with U.S. efforts to combat the militant al-Shabab group in Somalia. Where counterterrorism concerns are less present, the softer Western interests in promoting democracy and supporting development come to the fore. This is the case, for example, with Western efforts to help Madagascar stabilize after its 2009 coup, the active U.S. and European diplomatic efforts to resolve the disputed election in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010, and Western aid to and diplomatic backing of Sierra Leone's government following the end of civil war in the country in 2002.

Numerous African states are also involved politically across borders in the region. It is notable, for example, that in most of Africa's civil wars, one or more additional African countries are significant players.

In the long-running war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda have all intervened at various times, sometimes very substantially in a direct military role. Rwanda's involvement in Congo is driven by multiple motivations, and it is not primarily about trying to shape the overall political direction of the country. Officially at least, Rwanda seeks to help protect the Congolese Tutsi people and to strike against Hutu militias it views as a security threat; more prosaic interests, such as the personal enrichment of some Rwandan commanders and troops operating in the country, are also a factor.[15] Yet in the mid-1990s, Rwandan support for the Congolese Tutsis helped them rise up and oust the regime of then Congolese president Mobutu Sese Seko in 1997, and Rwandan military engagement has affected the internal political balance of power in the country in the years since.

Ethiopia and Kenya have intervened militarily in Somalia, either on their own or under the framework of the African Union Mission in Somalia, with the aim of driving Islamist forces out of power. Nigeria helped end earlier civil conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. And in a surprising turnaround of the previous pattern of Nigeria reaching across its borders to help neighboring countries resolve their civil conflicts, some of its neighbors, such as Chad and Niger, have started intervening militarily in northern Nigeria to fight Boko Haram.

Cross-border political engagement among African states is not limited to countries embroiled in civil wars. It has become common when electoral crises, coups, and other serious political disruptions hit. South Africa worked closely with the United States and some European governments to help broker a diplomatic resolution to the electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda have been involved in efforts to resolve the fighting that erupted between government forces and rebels in South Sudan in late 2013. Similarly, South Africa tried to mediate among feuding parties in Lesotho in the lead-up to elections in February 2015.

Several non-Western countries outside the continent also exert some influence in African countries experiencing political change. China's growing economic and diplomatic presence in Africa has been attracting increasing attention in Western policy circles. Beijing's political engagement in the region has focused on the cultivation of friendly relations with governments of countries that possess significant natural resources or that promise to be useful trading partners. This approach has meant that China has not systematically engaged in transitional moments or contexts. China has not, for example, tried to involve itself extensively in resolving African civil wars or to insert itself diplomatically to resolve electoral crises or coup attempts. The case of Sudan is something of an exception, where China exerted influence on the government in Khartoum to end the conflict in Darfur.

Analysts of China's Africa policy differ on whether Beijing aims more generally to affect the political direction of Africa. Some argue that China gets validation or reassurance when African countries follow a nondemocratic path and often weighs in on the side of authoritarian regimes by backing them economically and favoring them diplomatically.[16] Others hold that China simply wants economically useful partners, no matter what their political stripes.[17] They note that while Beijing, for example, has nurtured supportive relations with some nondemocratic governments, such as those in Angola and Zimbabwe, it has at the same time worked hard to develop a close relationship with democratic governments it believes can be economically useful to it, such as South Africa's, with which it has signed various bilateral trade agreements.

Beijing does bring thousands of African officials and politicians to China to take part in training sessions on developmental methods with a strong emphasis on the Chinese model of top-down, authoritarian-led development.[18] These programs may be in part a long-term effort to affect the political thinking and behavior of African officials and thus, over time, the political course of African

states. Their main purpose, however, appears to be to build personal ties and contacts that can facilitate economically useful relations with governments of all different political characteristics on the continent.

Turkey and Brazil are two other non-Western countries that involve themselves in processes of African political change. Turkey has made Africa a priority in its growing foreign assistance efforts and uses its assistance both to advance a general goal of better governance on the continent and to cultivate friendships with some governments it seeks to support. Turkey has been engaged, for example, in the stabilization of Somalia through various initiatives to mobilize resources for reconstruction, becoming an important provider of aid to the country.[19] Ankara has sponsored successive Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summits starting in 2008 as part of its effort to broaden its reach in Africa generally.

Brazil has also been increasing its presence in Africa in recent years, both in search of productive economic ties as well as to serve various foreign policy interests, such as giving a broader base to its larger national ambition to be recognized widely as a global power.[20] Efforts to exert influence in transitional contexts are only a small part of what is primarily a trade, investment, and development effort, but Brazil has, for example, offered electoral assistance to some countries, such as Guinea-Bissau.

South and Southeast Asia

Considerable political flux exists in South and Southeast Asia, marked by a high degree of variability in direction. On the more democratic side, the outcome of Sri Lanka's January 2015 presidential election appears to bode well for a country that previously seemed to be slipping into authoritarianism. On the less democratic side, Thailand has lapsed from an elected, civilian government into repressive military rule—the most recent chapter in an ongoing political struggle between traditional Bangkok elites and supporters of former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

In between these examples are numerous cases in which the political directionality is highly unclear. Hopes for democratization in Burma have faded considerably since 2013, as ethnic conflict has persisted and the pace of political reforms has slowed. Nepal continues to grapple with political deadlock as it struggles to draft a new constitution—the latest phase in its now more than twenty-four-year process of attempted transition from monarchy to democracy. Afghanistan has a new president, Ashraf Ghani, promising badly needed governance reforms, but it remains embroiled in savage civil conflict more than thirteen years after the U.S.-led ouster of the Taliban. Elections in Bangladesh in January 2014 brought with them raucous street protests and unrest, signifying the precariousness of its current political configuration.

Many countries both within and outside Asia are trying to affect the outcomes of these and other South and Southeast Asian transitions. Competition is frequently intense among the different actors seeking such influence. This

competition takes place against the backdrop of the overarching geopolitical dynamic in Asia: China's growing challenge to the long-standing U.S.-led security framework. But with such a wide range of actors engaged in the marketplace, many more local security issues, as well as myriad economic interests, shape the specific constellation of externally driven actions, alliances, and interests at work in any one country. In many cases, explicit efforts to influence political outcomes or trajectories are less evident than in other regions. Many states try to maintain a web of useful relations with domestic political actors, hoping to achieve specific policy outcomes or economic privileges that remain consistent regardless of who is in power.

The United States and a number of European nations are active in at least some of the countries in South and Southeast Asia caught up in political flux. As in other regions, Western powers usually present their engagement as reflecting a general interest in democracy support. In some cases, such as Burma and Nepal, it is mostly about that (though economic and strategic interests play at least some role in the U.S. desire to see Burma turn successfully toward democracy and away from its close relationship with China). Elsewhere, most notably in Afghanistan, security concerns drive Western engagement, and the goal of stability has at times eclipsed that of democracy. In other countries, like Thailand, Western powers are only minimally engaged in trying to influence the direction of political change.

China is, of course, another major player. Active during the Cold War in supporting Communist and separatist movements throughout South and Southeast Asia, China has in the past two decades maintained a strong penchant for supporting incumbent regimes, fearing the possible contagious effect such movements could have on separatist elements within its borders.[21] In recent years, China's influence in the region has grown along with its increased power and greater assertiveness.

Focused on safeguarding productive economic relations with various countries and heading off any potential security threats that could emerge from political instability elsewhere, China continues to have little interest in political change in most parts of the region and tends to be on the side of preserving the status quo when change does hit.[22] But this stance sometimes requires modification when simply standing on the side of the status quo becomes an inadequate response in a situation of political change. In such cases, as with Burma, Beijing seeks to nudge states toward long-term political changes that will serve China's interests by diversifying its portfolio of domestic political linkages.

Regional democratic powers, principally India and Indonesia, have also begun to involve themselves more substantially in contexts of political change in their respective regions. India has played a significant role in some South Asian contexts in which political flux has occurred, including Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, though its impetus for involvement has often been to ward off instability rather than to push for democratic outcomes per se. Indonesia has established a broad umbrella of democracy support for its regional diplomacy,

embodied in the annual Bali Democracy Forum and its modest push for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to embrace human rights and democratic principles in its foundational documents.[23] This stance reflects the country's desire to take advantage of its status as a relatively successful example of a democratic transition and to distinguish its regional diplomatic position from that of China.

Other players in this crowded marketplace include Japan and South Korea, which have deepened their engagement in a variety of countries where political change has occurred, such as Burma, Nepal, and the Philippines. On the other side of the regional map, Iran and Pakistan have been significant players in Afghanistan's long period of political flux.

Three country examples—Burma, Nepal, and Afghanistan—highlight the complexity and variability of the array of external actors in contexts of political change in South and Southeast Asia. Burma stands out as an especially active marketplace of political change. The United States and numerous European countries, including Germany, Norway, and the United Kingdom, have been working hard to facilitate what they hope will be a successful democratic transition there. Particularly since Burma's April 2012 by-elections, in which Aung San Suu Kyi of the opposition National League for Democracy was elected to parliament, Western actors have invested significant amounts of diplomatic capital, including visits by heads of state and other top officials, and aid, including democracy assistance, to support change.

China and Japan are also deeply involved in Burma's transition. Fearing the loss of its special ties with Burmese rulers—ties that have been economically beneficial to Chinese investors—China has been forced to reassess its approach to its formerly isolated neighbor. Since 2011, Beijing has invested considerable resources in a public relations campaign to counter negative perceptions of its economic influence.[24] It has also begun to curry favor with the National League for Democracy—a political entity it refused to even recognize during Burma's prolonged period of direct military rule—as a means of hedging its bets in an increasingly uncertain political environment.[25] China has also moved away from its traditional policy of noninterference in domestic disputes by facilitating peace talks between the government and armed ethnic groups in the north of the country. This shift was driven by a desire to both resolve a violent conflict with increasing cross-border spillover effects and protect Chinese economic investments in war-torn regions of Burma.[26] China's efforts are more about preserving its profitable economic ties in Burma than affecting the direction of political events. Yet Beijing does play a behind-the-scenes role in counseling and cajoling the Burmese military and economic elite with regard to decisions they are making about how far and how fast to move on political reform.

Japan has attempted to spur Burma's political opening, largely through economic engagement. It was quick to resume foreign aid to Burma following the transition to nominal civilian rule in 2011, and since then, Tokyo has been

keen to strengthen its economic and humanitarian assistance. Tokyo has also prioritized personal connections with regime officials and technical assistance, particularly in the field of rule of law. While Japanese initiatives have generally nudged Burma in a democratic direction, Tokyo has been largely unwilling to stake out a firmer position in support of reform or to criticize the Burmese government for recent backsliding.[27]

Nepal is another particularly active example of the marketplace at work in Asia. The single most-influential outside actor is neighboring India, which has been deeply involved in Nepali politics for decades. New Delhi facilitated talks between Maoist rebels and political parties in 2005, which helped lay the groundwork for a transition back to an elected government, the eventual abolition of the monarchy, and the conclusion of a ten-year-long civil war.[28] India has tried to push Nepal toward democracy in other ways, including through diplomatic overtures and technical support for elections and election monitoring. But its interests lie primarily in warding off instability and maintaining political and economic linkages, rather than in explicit democracy promotion. More recently, concerns about China's growing influence in Nepal have also driven New Delhi's strategic engagement.[29]

China, which tended to support the Nepali monarchy until its abolition in 2008, has worked in the years since to cultivate ties with various political party leaders, including by extending invitations to political consultations in Beijing.[30] As in Burma, China's strategy seems to be informed by an overall approach aimed at hedging its bets in a political environment that has not settled for over two decades. But Beijing has also worked quietly to ensure that, regardless of its seemingly endless fluctuations, the Nepali government over time will remain amenable to Chinese economic and security interests. China has dramatically increased its economic engagement in Nepal, rising to be Nepal's largest source of foreign direct investment by 2014.[31] A desire to stem the perceived threat of Tibetan separatism also informs China's involvement, and Beijing's increased political and economic engagement has provided it with a degree of control over the Nepali government's policies vis-à-vis Tibetans in Nepal.[32]

Western powers have also continued their engagement in Nepal during the long years of unsettled transition. Through extensive socioeconomic and political aid programs and considerable diplomatic jawboning, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, and others have sought to reduce conflict and advance democratization in the country.

Afghanistan is an equally active marketplace. The United States and, to a lesser extent, some of its NATO allies are still deeply involved in trying to help stabilize the country. But with the United States on a path of withdrawal, the already considerable actions of other powers to influence the country's political destiny are intensifying. Pakistan maintains a complicated but still somewhat supportive relationship with Afghan Taliban factions that continue to fight the Afghan government.[33] India has stepped up economic engagement and aid in recent years, including training for Afghan security

forces and substantial assistance for governance and civil society initiatives. These efforts are aimed at promoting stability in the country and limiting archrival Pakistan's influence there.[34]

Iran shares with the United States and other Western actors a dislike of the Taliban's influence in Afghanistan and would like to see long-term stability for its neighbor. But strategic competition with the United States and discomfort with the presence of foreign troops so near to its soil has led Iran to provide some limited support to Taliban elements.[35] Iran's seemingly contradictory actions in this regard have also been informed by a strategy of diversifying its portfolio of relationships in Afghanistan to maintain its political and economic position in a post-NATO order there.

China, which had in the past been reluctant to involve itself too deeply in Afghanistan's political transition, signaled a willingness to facilitate peace talks in the country in 2015. Much like in Nepal, Beijing's emerging interest is driven by growing economic ties and a fear that instability in Afghanistan could provide a breeding ground and safe haven for Uighur separatists from China's Xinjiang region.[36]

Former Soviet Union

After the intense political flux surrounding and immediately following the breakup of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, most of the former Soviet republics ended up settling into relatively stable authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes. But several have remained at least somewhat politically open and have also gone through repeated phases of political flux over the intervening years—most notably Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and Ukraine.

Multiple states have been reaching across borders to try to shape the political paths of these four countries. The configuration of these outside actors is much simpler and more clearly dualistic than in the Middle East, Asia, or Africa: on one side are the United States and various European nations, especially the Northern and Eastern European countries; on the other side is Russia. Very generally speaking, the United States and Europe are trying to encourage democratic outcomes in these countries, both out of the belief that democratic governments make or would make better security and economic partners for the West and out of the general principled commitment to a democratic future for the European Union's broader Eastern neighborhood. Their methods in this regard are well-known—efforts to integrate these countries into overarching economic and military partnerships with the West, economic aid, democracy-related assistance, and pro-democratic diplomacy, especially at times of political crisis, such as during the Euromaidan uprising in Ukraine in 2014.

Of course, the depth and effectiveness of Western efforts to support democratic outcomes in these four countries vary greatly. For example, the United States has at times made significant contributions to democracy building in Ukraine, such as its aid to civic actors in the years before the 2004–2005

Orange Revolution.[37] Yet at other times, the United States has been much less involved in trying to support democracy in Ukraine, such as during the several years before the eruption of the Euromaidan protests. European governments talk in lofty, principled terms about support for democracy and human rights in the Eastern neighborhood. However, in an incisive study of European support for Ukraine's democratic transformation over the past twenty years, Rosa Balfour points out how greatly pro-democratic rhetoric has exceeded substantive pro-democracy actions.[38] She also notes the great variation between the policies of different European Union member states, with Poland, for example, demonstrating a much more serious commitment to democracy than France or Italy. Nevertheless, Europe has devoted substantial aid resources and at least some diplomatic capital to the overall cause of democracy in Ukraine and some of the other post-Soviet republics.

Numerous European governments have shied away from pushing hard on democracy issues for fear of offending Russia and thereby possibly jeopardizing their access to Russian gas supplies.

Although Western governments tend to believe that democratic outcomes in these states will be favorable to Western security interests, if any perceived conflict arises between those interests and a commitment to democracy, the latter sometimes wobbles. This was the case in Georgia under Mikheil Saakashvili (in power 2004–2013), when the United States at times played down the Georgian president's nondemocratic habits for the sake of cultivating a leader friendly to the U.S. security posture in the region. Numerous European governments have shied away from pushing hard on democracy issues for fear of offending Russia and thereby possibly jeopardizing their access to Russian gas supplies.

With regard to Russia's approach, the picture is clear: Moscow has acted with blunt determination to shape political outcomes in these four countries at various times in their recent histories as part of its broader policy of trying to ensure that all the countries around it have governments friendly to Russian security and economic interests. Russia has been especially deeply involved in Ukraine's internal political affairs for many years, trying to engineer the arrival to power of preferred leaders and guarantee their survival once there.[39] Moscow employs a host of levers for these purposes: threats of cutting off gas supplies or hiking gas prices, direct funding of favored politicians and parties, politically loaded television campaigns, and other diplomatic and economic carrots and sticks.

The Kremlin was deeply involved, for example, in the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election campaign, seeking to ensure the victory of the more pro-Russian contender, Viktor Yanukovych, over the more pro-Western one, Viktor Yushchenko. Russia did not just contribute what different analysts have estimated as tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars to Yanukovych's campaign. It also played a direct role in designing and implementing Yanukovych's electoral strategy.[40] Moscow scrambled to help bolster Yanukovych when his regime began to totter in late 2013, offering new injections of assistance and possibly helping the Ukrainian president crack down on protesters.[41] And

then, stunned by the collapse of the Yanukovych government in early 2014, Russia undertook a series of forceful measures to undermine the pro-Western government led by President Petro Poroshenko and Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk that had come to power after the 2014 presidential and parliamentary elections. Its efforts have included significantly assisting the pro-Russian armed uprising in eastern Ukraine.

The lengths to which Russia has been willing to go to try to prevent Ukraine from moving ahead on a pro-Western political path have startled many U.S. and European observers. But they are part of a consistent pattern in the region. Russia has been deeply involved in political events in Kyrgyzstan at various junctures of political flux. For example, after then president Kurmanbek Bakiyev had fallen out of favor with the Kremlin in the latter years of the 2000s, Russia helped stoke the uprising that led to his ouster in 2010. It did so primarily through measures to increase economic hardship in the country, including increasing fuel prices, shutting down some banking transactions, and broadcasting stories about corruption on the part of high-level Kyrgyz officials.[42]

Russia has exerted multiple forms of pressure on Georgia's long-unfolding political transition over the past two decades, trying to steer the country away from a pro-Western geopolitical orientation. For example, disturbed that the 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia meant the arrival to power of a president, Mikheil Saakashvili, with a decidedly pro-Western orientation, Moscow exerted various economic and diplomatic pressures aimed at weakening or undermining him.[43] Tensions between the two governments culminated in the Russo-Georgian war of 2008 and the Russian occupation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Russia has long sought to influence Moldova's internal political life in favor of those forces that support a pro-Russian external posture. Since the early 1990s, Russia has used the breakaway region of Transnistria—which depends upon a Russian military presence to allow it to maintain its de facto independence—as a lever to influence Moldovan domestic politics and foreign policy.[44] Russia stepped up its activity in 2014 when it tried pushing Moldova away from a decision to sign an association agreement with the European Union. The Kremlin used various means, including provocations on the Transnistrian border, efforts to make Moldovan wines more difficult to sell in Russia, attacks by insiders on Moldovan banks to redirect money to Russia, and threats regarding the status of Moldovan guest workers in Russia.[45]

Latin America

Latin America is more politically settled, as well as more politically homogeneous (in terms of regime type), than the other regions of the developing world. Most countries have managed to consolidate democratic systems in

recent decades, leaving behind the transitional phase that marked most of the region in the 1980s.

But political flux still exists there. Several states have experienced regime crises in recent years that have constituted political turning points, such as the 2009 coup in Honduras and the 2012 presidential crisis in Paraguay. During the last decade, some countries, including Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru, became more politically polarized, culminating in elections that presented voters with highly divergent political options representing not a routine choice along a limited political spectrum but a fundamental political fork in the road. These pivotal elections usually pitted a candidate from a traditional centrist or center-right party against a populist candidate of the left who promised fundamental changes in the basic political rules of the game and far-reaching economic redistribution.

The United States remains the country outside of Latin America that is most influential in the region, although the intensity of its engagement and force of its influence are markedly lower than they were in the 1980s and 1990s. The United States considers democracy one of its core regional objectives and employs diplomatic as well as economic carrots and sticks to reward democratic governments and punish nondemocratic ones. It does this while also providing democracy assistance to some countries it views as having not yet consolidated democratic transitions, primarily in Central America and the Andean region. Reflecting the long record of inconsistency and, at times, hypocrisy regarding U.S. respect for democratic norms in the region, U.S. bona fides as a pro-democratic actor remain disputed by many Latin Americans, who view the United States as an unprincipled interventionist power that tries to undermine democratic governments that follow a political line not to its liking.

In terms of direct involvement in political transitions in Latin America, the current U.S. role is relatively limited. It does engage diplomatically when major crises occur, trying to help find peaceful resolutions. The United States views such efforts as pro-democratic, although its role in finding a resolution to the Honduran coup of 2009 sparked no small controversy in the region as well as in the United States regarding the exact nature of Washington's political goals. The United States has generally not tried to influence the outcome of various pivotal elections in Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, and elsewhere, despite its obvious preference in such cases for leftist candidates not to win and occasional comments by U.S. diplomats on the ground signaling that preference. The United States continues to spar with the Venezuelan government, criticizing it for its anti-democratic actions and imposing some economic sanctions against the country's officials—a stance that the Venezuelan government regards as a policy of attempted regime change, but which the United States holds to be support for basic democratic principles.

Next to the United States, the most active and influential countries in Latin America during recent years have been two regional powers: Venezuela and Brazil.

As part of its broad policy of trying to spread its ideology of Bolivarianism and build a network of close diplomatic relationships with as many governments as possible, Venezuela under Hugo Chávez sought to shape outcomes in various transitional contexts. The Chávez government funneled money to preferred candidates or parties sympathetic to the president's political platform, *Chavismo*, in pivotal elections, including the Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement Toward Socialism) in Bolivia in 2005, Sandinista leader and President Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua in 2006 and 2011, and Ollanta Humala in Peru in 2006 (elected president in 2011).[46] Venezuela also engaged in diplomatic efforts in reaction to regime crises, working to advance outcomes favorable to leaders it liked. With Chávez's passing in 2013, his replacement by Nicolás Maduro (who has a much-reduced international profile), the outbreak of domestic political conflicts that have absorbed the country, and the sudden sharp reduction in oil revenues, Venezuela is now playing less of a regional role than it did under Chávez.

Brazil is less assertive than was Venezuela under Chávez, but it has been somewhat active in transitional contexts in the region. Under the umbrella of a stated Brazilian objective of supporting democratic stability, it has engaged in diplomatic efforts to head off potential coups, such as in Paraguay in 1999 and Venezuela in 2002, and to help broker resolutions to political crises in Bolivia in 2004 and 2005, Ecuador in 2005, and Paraguay in 2012.[47] After the 2004 coup in Haiti that drove Jean-Bertrand Aristide out of power, Brazil took on leadership of the United Nations mission charged with overseeing the reconstruction of a democratic system in the country. At the same time, Brazil's economic interests vis-à-vis some of its neighbors, both in assuring markets for Brazilian goods and access to energy and mineral resources, have combined with its general preference for maintaining cooperative diplomatic relations with all of its neighbors no matter what their political stripe to lead it to downplay its stated pro-democratic line at times. This has been most glaringly evident with regard to Venezuela, but it has also colored Brazilian policy toward other South American countries, disappointing those observers in both Washington's and Latin America's policy circles who hoped that a rising Brazil might become a strong pro-democratic actor in the region.

Europe and China are also important actors in Latin America, though generally not major players in efforts to shape transitional outcomes. The Northern European countries (especially Germany, the Netherlands, and the Nordic states) have a much-reduced engagement in the region, even though they were significantly engaged in earlier decades, such as in supporting the democratic opposition to then president Augusto Pinochet in Chile or mediating diplomatic solutions to the Central American civil wars of the 1980s. They do, however, still provide modest democracy aid to some Andean and Central American countries and are diplomatically supportive of democratic resolutions of national political crises. China has become an enormous economic player in the region, but its focus is largely on economic rather than political affairs.

Nature of the Marketplace

As this regional tour highlights, the contours and configurations of the new global marketplace of political change are remarkably varied. In the former Soviet Union, a basic dualism defines the lineup of relevant state actors—between Western democracies on the one hand and Russia on the other. But in other regions, a complex multiplicity of vectors is at work, with very different sets of states asserting themselves in different countries. Moreover, the relative weight that any one state has in shaping political directions or outcomes varies greatly from place to place and often shifts precipitously. In the first year of the Arab Spring, for example, Turkey played an influential role in various countries experiencing change. Just several years later, after the political winds shifted dramatically, its influence had shrunk enormously.

Analysis of the global marketplace with any scientific precision is elusive not just because of the sheer number and diversity of actors and actions but also because of other analytic complexities. Distinguishing with certainty, for example, between what constitutes fundamental political change versus merely bumps in the road in a basically stable political system is sometimes very difficult, if not impossible. Similarly, efforts to distinguish between the actions a state takes to shape the direction or outcome of another country's process of political change and the "normal" work of statecraft by which a state seeks to cultivate or maintain useful political friends that serve its economic or strategic interests are similarly fraught with analytic uncertainty. Sometimes a case is clear—Saudi Arabia's decisive measures to help Bahrain put down the uprising that was threatening to overturn the country's political life in 2011 were obviously actions aimed at shaping its neighbor's political trajectory. But often ambiguities are rife, such as in China's many engagements in Africa and Asia that appear predominantly aimed at building productive economic ties, yet at times have elements that seem to be quiet efforts to bend the overall direction of change in situations of political flux.

Adding still further to the complexity of the marketplace is the fact that many countries are simultaneously on both sides of the line. That is to say, many countries trying to shape political events outside their borders are at the same time countries whose politics are being shaped by others. Pakistan, for example, is a major player in Afghanistan's domestic politics, while at the same time the United States, the United Kingdom, and other Western powers are engaged in trying to affect the course of Pakistan's democratic development. Egypt is on the receiving end of powerful efforts by multiple countries to affect its political path, yet it is increasingly seeking to assert influence on the shape of Libya's transition. The old idea of a world divided between subjects and objects of international action—an idea still present in the minds of many policymakers and analysts—is entirely inaccurate in the new marketplace.

To take the measure of the marketplace, several elements merit closer focus: the motivations of the main actors involved, the methods they use, the relative

power they wield, and the reactions from governments to the growing interpenetration of their political life by outside actors.

Motivations

As nondemocratic states have become more actively engaged in trying to influence the direction or outcome of political change in other countries, some observers have labeled their actions "autocracy promotion."[48] In some accounts, the international political scene is viewed as a Manichaean global wrestling match between a West that is trying to advance democracy in the world and an informal league of nondemocratic countries trying to advance autocracy. But messy realities undercut such a reductive view.

The growing assertiveness of many authoritarian countries, especially China, the Gulf states, Iran, Russia, and (at least until recently) Venezuela, is certainly damaging to democracy's global fortunes. Such countries provide financial and diplomatic support to many smaller authoritarian states in their neighborhoods. They labor in multilateral forums to obstruct efforts to advance universal norms of democracy and human rights. They carry out widely copied practices of what Laurence Whitehead calls "antidemocracy promotion"—targeted attempts to check Western diplomatic and assistance efforts aimed at fostering more open, pluralistic systems.[49] Some attract interest in various parts of the world as examples of successful alternatives to liberal democracy that other countries should emulate. And when they work across borders to influence the direction of countries experiencing fundamental political change they often support autocratic outcomes, such as Saudi Arabia's actions in Bahrain and Iran's strenuous work to shore up Bashar al-Assad since 2011.

Yet neither the effects nor the motivations of their engagement in contexts of political change are necessarily anti-democratic. Russia's efforts in Kyrgyzstan aimed at weakening then president Bakiyev in 2010 were not about trying to get a democratic leader out and an autocratic one in. Kyrgyzstan, in fact, arguably became more democratic after Bakiyev left power.[50] Qatar's support for the Muslim Brotherhood in various Arab countries is not about trying to propagate autocratic regimes, but, arguably at least, it is about trying to increase political pluralism in the region and may have had some effects in that direction. Iran's efforts to shape post-Saddam politics in Iraq are not best understood as attempts to produce an autocratic outcome but rather to strengthen domestic political forces friendly to Iranian interests. Ethiopia's interventions in Somalia are aimed not at bolstering repressive political forces but in fact at combating the most repressive domestic actors on the scene.

Furthermore, assertive nondemocratic powers sometimes work with or in the same direction as the United States and Europe in their quest to shape the flow of political events in transitional contexts. For example, Qatar was a partner in the Western-led military intervention in Libya in 2011. Saudi Arabia's efforts to influence the outcome of the Syrian civil war align in some important

ways with those of the United States. In Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are shoring up a government that the United States is also assisting. Although Iran and the United States have not cooperated in post-Saddam Iraq, some of their efforts to influence political life there, such as their support for former prime minister Nouri al-Maliki's rise to power and their efforts to beat back the Islamic State, have pointed in a similar direction.

In short, autocracies do not necessarily promote autocracy when they try to influence political outcomes in other countries. A more accurate analytic umbrella for their efforts is a more functional and less ideological one: they engage in contexts of political change to support power holders or political challengers that they view as friendly to their security and economic interests, regardless of their particular domestic political ideology.[51] Often such political actors are nondemocratic, but sometimes they are not. A purely ideological interest in spreading autocracy per se is generally not on display. Moreover, even when it occasionally is and a country's actions appear determinedly ideological, such as Iran's support for Hezbollah and Hamas, that country often displays utterly realist inclinations in other situations, such as Tehran's steadfast backing of the Assad regime in Syria.

Autocracies do not necessarily promote autocracy when they try to influence political outcomes in other countries.

With regard to the motivations of the democratic actors in the global marketplace, the picture is different but still complex. The United States and Europe are genuine in their desire to advance democracy internationally, both because they view democracies as better security and economic partners than nondemocracies and because they believe in the universality of democratic principles. Many of their cross-border actions are sincerely aimed at fostering democratic outcomes and have important positive effects. In this way, their foreign policies have a greater ideological component overall than do those of the main nondemocratic powers. Yet it would be simplistic and naive not to take account of the fact that security and economic interests sometimes lead Western governments to go easy on favored nondemocratic friends or to be happy with strongman stability in some contexts. The entire U.S. and European reaction to the Arab Spring is a study in ambivalence and halfheartedness with regard to supporting democratic change in an interconnected set of transitional contexts.

Non-Western democracies proceed from a similar mix of self-interested and idealistic motivations when they reach across borders in search of political influence. Their engagements are only inconsistently about supporting democracy. They invoke a pro-democracy rationale almost reflexively, but like with Western powers, at times it is a cover for efforts to support political figures or governments that they believe will be helpful to them, whether they are democratic or not. India's heavy involvement in Afghanistan is one example in this regard. Indian officials would likely argue that their involvement there is much like that of the United States—they try to support the consolidation of a stable government, which ideally will be democratic but at the very least

will be politically preferable to any government formed by those challenging it. Brazil speaks in principled terms about its efforts to help preserve democracy in Venezuela, but its economic interests, particularly those related to energy resources, have led it to help keep in place a repressive government.

The motivational complexities and ambiguities at work in the new global marketplace of political change are vividly evident if one looks closely at any specific case. Take Egypt. Trying to sort the many countries that have been inserting themselves into Egypt's political life in recent years into two clear categories of "pro-democratic" and "anti-democratic" would be futile. Turkey's support for Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, for example, was seen by some observers as a realist effort to bolster a political ally, democratic or not. Others insisted that Turkey's policy was rooted in a belief that political incorporation of moderate Islamists like the Brotherhood into Egyptian politics was a way to facilitate Egyptian democratization. Some Egyptians view Saudi and Emirati financial support for the government of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi as support for renewed Egyptian autocracy. Other Egyptian observers, and more than a few Western policymakers, would argue that it helps the country achieve a new stability that might be the most likely road toward eventual political liberalization and reopening. With respect to the U.S. role, coming to a consensus among a diverse group of observers about whether the United States on the whole helped advance or retard Egypt's chances for democracy after Mubarak's ouster would not be easy.

Not just in Egypt, but in many countries where the global marketplace of political change is active, are clear motivational lines hard to discern. This is not to relativize the roles of different countries. Western democracies operate much more frequently in ways that advance democratic outcomes than do nondemocratic countries. But a simple two-color map of pro-democratic and anti-democratic is not a good guide to understanding the realities of the global marketplace, whether in Bolivia, Burma, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Somalia, Syria, Tunisia, or in many other places where it operates.

Methods

Another important feature of the global marketplace is the diversity of the methods of political influence that states are employing. The methods that the United States and Europe use are well-known: a mix of high policy tools, like military force, military aid, diplomatic pressure, and economic sanctions, and quieter low policy tools, which include, above all, democracy-related aid. What is less well-known is how the high policy and low policy sides often work surprisingly separately from, or even in some tension with, one another.

In the case of U.S. policy, for example, the democracy promotion organizations that receive U.S. government funds generally do not regard themselves as direct agents of U.S. foreign policy. They perceive their mission in

any given country as a pro-democratic one, even if overall U.S. policy toward a country has a different slant. Thus, for example, in the first half of the 2000s, U.S.-funded democracy groups like the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute were supporting democratic activists and free and fair elections in Azerbaijan while the U.S. government was taking a soft line toward the Azeri government's democratic shortcomings. Similarly, in Germany, state-funded political foundations that work to advance political pluralism and openness in scores of countries around the world do not interpret their role in any one country as advancing the specific foreign policy agenda of the German government.

The methods of nondemocratic countries exercising political influence across borders are strikingly assertive. They frequently rely on military tools—whether the direct application of military force, the supply of military provisions and training, or support for paramilitary actors. Examples include Russia in Ukraine, Saudi Arabia in Bahrain, Syria, and Yemen, Iran in Iraq and Syria, Ethiopia in Somalia, Rwanda in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Qatar in Libya and Syria. Although it is routine in many international circles to critically portray the United States and other major Western powers as the principal users of military force across borders, the regularity with which nondemocracies turn to the military toolbox is notable. Nondemocratic powers regularly engage in direct financial interference in other countries' domestic political campaigns, and they often use bribery to influence important domestic actors in contexts of political change. They also frequently attempt political brokering, such as Iran's extensive efforts to steer Iraqi politics in particular ways at crucial junctures over the past ten years through intensive arm-twisting and negotiating.

Nondemocracies do use less forceful methods as well, such as media campaigns, training programs for governmental or civic actors, and exchange visits. They also engage in some copycat activities modeled on Western democracy support, such as sending election observers to report on transitional elections or offering aid to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in other countries. But these are greatly secondary to their heavy reliance on the blunter tools of military force and political money.

Some nondemocratic powers also employ nonstate actors or state-controlled economic entities as part of their toolbox of political influence. The Kremlin, for example, wields state-owned Gazprom as a powerful lever of political influence in neighboring countries dependent on Russian gas supplies. Saudi Arabia's religious establishment has for decades been a source of attempted sociopolitical influence in many countries around the world.

With regard to the actions of non-Western democracies in the marketplace of political influence, military means are uncommon (although these countries do contribute to armed peacekeeping missions) as is the use of large amounts of political cash (although hard facts about such activities are always in short supply). They do undertake diplomatic efforts to help resolve crises and head off coups, but they usually prefer not to act on their own. Instead, they often

engage through multilateral institutions, such as Brazil working through the Union of South American Nations in its efforts to help resolve the 2014–2015 political conflict in Venezuela and Indonesia's efforts to align its pro-democracy diplomacy with ASEAN. Rising democracies are providing modest amounts of democracy assistance in some places, such as Brazil's electoral work in Africa and India's elections assistance in South Asia and elsewhere. Such aid tends to be politically soft and to avoid challenging sitting governments, opting instead for unobtrusive training programs, exchange visits, and the like.

Asymmetrical Power

In comparing the methods of the different categories of actors in the global marketplace of political change, it is worth noting the asymmetry between a country's overall power and its ability to have an impact on a particular political context.

Often, countries that are relatively weak in terms of global power are able to exert significant influence on transitions in their neighborhoods—influence that rivals or outweighs in some cases that of the United States and other major Western powers. Rwanda's role in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is one example. So too are Iran's role in Iraq and Russia's ongoing intervention in Ukraine. The nearby, or one might say local, power often cares much more about the outcome of a transition in a country right on its border than does the United States or other, more distant powers.

These stronger interests frequently translate into a much greater intensity of effort. While the West debates how much it really cares about Ukraine's political destiny, the Russian elite acts as though the matter is a turning point in modern Russian history.

Often, countries that are relatively weak in terms of global power are able to exert significant influence on transitions in their neighborhoods—influence that rivals or outweighs in some cases that of the United States and other major Western powers.

In addition, the local power is often able to draw upon greater knowledge of the scene in a neighboring state than is available to more distant powers. It is also better able to take advantage of informal networks and other personal connections between sociopolitical actors in the two countries (such as the links between Iran's political establishment and Iraq's Shia leaders). Such local knowledge and ties are precisely the ingredients that can make efforts to influence transitions effective, and they are the ingredients that are often weak in Western efforts.

Pushback and Sovereignty

As the global marketplace of cross-border political influence expands and intensifies, a growing number of countries are pushing back against different elements of it. In Western policy and aid circles, the issue of closing space for international democracy support now commands attention: dozens

of governments in the developing and post-Communist worlds from Russia, Uzbekistan, and Hungary to Bolivia, the United Arab Emirates, and Ethiopia are restricting, harassing, or blocking Western groups from carrying out aid programs that they deem as too politically intrusive.[52] The closing space trend has come as an unpleasant surprise to a Western democracy support community that got used to doors opening in many countries throughout the 1990s to politically related assistance as one part of democracy's global advance.

Much of this pushback targets civil society support, proceeding from the argument that Western powers are funding local nongovernmental groups as proxies for their own political designs. The pushback also affects political party aid, international election monitoring, and other types of Western democracy assistance, as well as some programs in the socioeconomic realm that involve activist local NGOs receiving outside support.

Many of the governments engaged in such pushback are nondemocratic ones for which such actions are part of a larger clamping down on civic and political space. But some are democratic or semi-democratic ones, like Bolivia, India, and Nicaragua, that do allow substantial space for independent civic activity but have developed a particular sensitivity to certain types of outside engagement with domestic civic and political actors.

Pushback is of course not only directed against Western actors. Other countries attempting to exert influence in contexts of fundamental political change also find themselves facing backlash. In Libya, for example, some domestic political actors have pushed hard against Qatar and Turkey to stop them from supporting certain parties in the current conflict there, while other Libyan actors are doing the same with regard to the involvement of Egypt and the UAE. Ukraine is fighting militarily and diplomatically against Russia's forceful efforts to disrupt its attempted political transition. Hugo Chávez's heavy-handed intervention in Peru's 2006 elections triggered a strong negative reaction in that country and hurt rather than helped the candidate he favored, Ollanta Humala. In 2006, remarks by the Chinese ambassador to Zambia were interpreted by some Zambians as an effort to influence the outcome of the country's presidential election and produced a minor firestorm of domestic criticism. In Egypt, anger at the Turkish government has spread among many Egyptians in recent years in reaction to Turkey's support for the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

The new global marketplace thus entails greater competition and conflict not just among different outside actors engaged in a country but between outside actors and domestic actors as well. Although many governments continue to talk about sovereignty as a bedrock norm of international political life, in reality sovereignty is becoming Swiss cheese given the realities of the new marketplace of global political change.

The new global marketplace is a rule-less domain in practice. The many different states reaching across borders to influence the political life of other countries do not conform to any shared set of norms, principles, or standards

regulating the permissible forms of action. Parts of the Western democracy promotion community have been trying to establish norms guiding at least some areas of cross-border activity, such as standards for international election observation. Useful though these efforts are, they are confined to only a subset of the overall set of state actors and a small corner of the wide range of areas making up the global marketplace.

Implications

Western policymakers and aid practitioners seem to be only just starting to come to grips with the realities of the new global marketplace of political change. It was notable, for example, how surprised some appeared to be when Russia acted with such decisiveness and preparedness to intervene in Ukraine on the heels of the Euromaidan uprising and the fall of Yanukovych. The recent actions by the UAE and Egypt to intervene in Libya's civil war also seem to have caught some Western actors by surprise. More broadly, the effort by Iran in the years following the ouster of Saddam Hussein to enter the bloodstream of Iraq's domestic political life and play a powerful role in steering it somehow seems not to have been adequately anticipated by Western policymakers.

It is well past time for being surprised by such developments. Western actors must assume that intense, often conflictual competition for influence among determined, skillful external actors of many different political persuasions will for the foreseeable future be a feature not just of a few geostrategic hot spots but of almost all countries where fundamental political change is starting to occur, or is under way.

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For the Western democracy support community, this means completing its movement away from the transition paradigm that informed much of its work in prior decades. In the early 2000s, this community faced the end of the domestic side of the transition paradigm: the assumption that the bulk of the many countries around the world exiting authoritarian rule were moving ahead on an at least somewhat consistent and predictable path toward democracy. Now the community must fully come to terms with the end of the international side of the original transition paradigm: the assumption that the established Western democracies are the dominant actors working across borders to affect the political direction or outcome in countries experiencing fundamental political change.

The new global marketplace is operating not just at the level of clashing military efforts or diplomatic interventions in transitional contexts. It is also making itself felt in the traditionally quieter arena of democracy aid:

- Aiding free and fair elections has become a domain of active international competition, with some nondemocratic countries, such as Russia, increasingly mounting election observer missions that compete for attention with Western groups and reach very different conclusions about specific elections.
- More frequently than before, Western assistance for political party development now butts up against other actors using much blunter methods to shape party behavior in sensitive political contexts and playing by very different rules about what kinds of assistance to offer parties or politicians.
- Western programs to foster better governance in developing and transitional countries can no longer proceed from the assumption that the Western model of governance commands wide respect. That model now faces serious competition from alternative, non-Western models in the eyes of power holders and publics in different parts of the world. Moreover, Western programs to strengthen governance are undercut in some places by the actions of non-Western states to influence other countries' governance processes through alternative means or to offer no-strings-attached assistance that empowers other governments to forsake conditioned Western aid.
- Civil society assistance is marked not just by harsh pushback from many governments but also by intensified debates over competing models of civil society and by increased assistance from non-Western actors for civil society groups very different from those the West usually supports.
- Western aid for independent media development in countries attempting democratic transitions now takes place in domestic contexts that are experiencing growing penetration of local media markets by new broadcasting services from China, Russia, and other nondemocratic powers.

The new global marketplace of political change thus entails much more competition for the West. Yet it also creates new opportunities for cooperation. Cooperation with rising non-Western democracies that are starting to play greater roles in supporting democracy and human rights outside their borders is one area. Such collaboration has been taking different forms, including diplomatic cooperation between the United States and South Africa in Côte d'Ivoire's 2010 electoral crisis, the U.S.-Indonesian partnership on some democracy support issues in Southeast Asia, and the Swiss government turning to a South African group rather than a Western intermediary to carry out electoral assistance in Egypt. For efforts like these to multiply and deepen, the cooperation has to be based on Western respect for different ideas that non-Western actors may have about democracy support and has to eschew the old-style Western notion of getting "them" to help advance "our agenda." Sometimes, cooperation can also be established with nondemocracies, such as the inclusion of Qatar in the coalition that intervened militarily in Libya in

2011 or the intelligence support that the United States has provided to Saudi Arabia in its 2015 military campaign in Yemen.

State actors are only one segment, albeit a crucial one, of the new global marketplace. The marketplace is also crowded with nonstate actors—international organizations, transnational NGOs, private foundations, media companies, and other organizations also engage in activities aimed at affecting the course of politics in countries experiencing change. Some of these organizations work directly in alliance with state actors; others are quite independent from them. The kinds of power and influence they bring to bear vary considerably but are sometimes substantial, with asymmetrical effects relevant here too, stemming from the ability of some nonstate actors to leverage nimbleness, effective use of technology, direct access to citizens, and public credibility in ways that state actors often fail to do.

The intensification and spread of the marketplace of political change comes at a time when Americans' and Europeans' belief in the capacity of the West to make a positive difference in the political trajectory of the world, and even in their interest in doing so, is faltering. This phenomenon is the result of various developments, including the profoundly chastening experiences of Western-led interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya; the growing pushback against Western efforts to provide civil society support and other types of democracy assistance in many countries; the negative outcomes of the once-hopeful Arab Spring; and the fact that the ongoing Western focus on counterterrorism continues to involve the downplaying of commitments to democracy and rights in many places. This changed outlook impacts policy in different ways, such as the roughly 30 percent spending decrease on U.S. democracy assistance during President Barack Obama's tenure and the hesitation in numerous Western capitals over how forthrightly to support Ukraine's attempted democratic transition.

Yet in the new, more crowded and competitive marketplace of political change, reductions in the role of Western democracies will be magnified by different actors filling the gaps left behind. This is especially true because of the asymmetrical pattern in which lesser powers that care greatly about a particular transition can have more impact than more powerful actors that are at a greater distance and are less concerned.

In Western capitals, debates over whether to support democracy abroad should not be framed as a choice that Western democracies somehow make in isolation from other forces impinging on the countries in question. Debates about what role the West should play in a particular country should not be framed as, "Should we support democracy?" as though the choice is between Western countries engaging or the country in question moving ahead politically on its own. The issue should be cast more accurately as always one about whether the West should engage or instead leave the field clear for other external actors aiming to influence events. In other words, the more appropriate question is, "Will Western democracies take seriously the challenge of

maintaining an important, effective place in an increasingly crowded, competitive landscape of actors that are pushing hard to affect the political direction of countries experiencing fundamental political change?"

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