

Exporting Autocrat's Playbook: Two Modes of Democratic Backsliding in the 2010s

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Abstract

This study explores how contemporary democratic backsliding is interlaced with the foreign policy of rising illiberal powers, China and Russia. Their foreign policy underwent major restructuring in 2014 and became more assertive in the international arena. Today, China and Russia increasingly export their own illiberal governance models through autocratic assistance, targeting different sets of states depending on the geopolitical resources at their disposal and foreign policy goals. Thus, there are two distinct modes of contemporary democratic backsliding. 1) States at the margin of the US-led order are drawn into the nascent China-led order and increasingly accept the Chinese governance model based on performance legitimacy and enhanced state capacity. 2) Former Soviet bloc states with continued affinity with Russia re-accept the Russian governance model based on value-driven legitimacy and neo-Soviet super-presidentialism. For large-N analysis, I employ diff-in-diff models to incorporate temporal heterogeneity and find that autocratic assistance by Russia and China indeed yielded significant success after 2014 in line with their foreign policy shifts. Extending the scope of foreign policy debates on the rise of China and Russia to domestic political contentions, this study shows that domestic political changes are, in part, grounded in great power politics.

Introduction

What causes democratic backsliding in various corners of the world today? Democratic backsliding has become a long-term trend, not an isolated incident. According to the Freedom House's report, 2021 was "the 15th consecutive year of decline in global freedom."¹ Today's democratic erosion is also a global one, compromising the freedom and civil liberties of nearly three-quarters of the world population.² While democratic backsliding encompasses a diverse set of political processes and endpoints, it is broadly understood as an *incremental* within-regime "deterioration of qualities associated with democratic governance" as opposed to a full-blown regime transition or coup d'état.³ Hence, democratic backsliding happens when governments retain the basic tenets of democratic rules but increase their illiberal practices, such as consolidation of executive power and media censorship.⁴ In other words, they gradually devolve into illiberal democracies that employ subtle and shrewd measures to constrain civil liberties.

In this paper, I argue that shifting power differentials between the US and its challengers reshuffle domestic political landscapes globally. Great powers provide power resources to certain local political actors, tilting the domestic balance of power in favor of the actors they sponsor. Contemporary democratic backsliding is driven by the rise of Russia and China, who present their governance models as alternatives to liberal democracy. They export their own illiberal models and target different sets of states depending on the geopolitical resources at their disposal. First, states at the margin of the US-led order are drawn into the nascent China-led order and increasingly accept the Chinese governance model. Second, former Soviet bloc states that still closely align with Russia increasingly re-accept the Russia-centric international order and the Russian governance model. Importantly, I also argue that their efforts to export political models garnered success after they embarked on more intrusive power projection as illiberal great powers. Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation, which began in 2013 under Xi Jinping, marked an inflection point in China's grand strategy. On the Russian side, the quest for hegemonic resurgence began in 2014 with the Crimean Annexation. For empirics, I test the diffusion of Chinese and Russian models before and after 2013 and 2014, respectively.

While the literature on democratic backsliding remains divided on the efficacy of illiberal great powers' autocratic assistance, I find positive results by disaggregating democratic backsliding into different types and parceling out principal targets of Russia and China. This research contributes to the literature on democratic backsliding by exploring external determinants of contemporary democratic breakdowns. It also disaggregates democratic backsliding into two types, modeled after the Chinese and Russian systems. Lastly, I conclude by highlighting future venues of research.

What Do We Know About Democratic Backsliding?

A growing body of literature debates whether the emergence of far-right, ethnopolitist movements cause contemporary democratic erosion. Far-right movements that undermine the foundations of a democratic society have gained strength in various corners of the world, from

¹ (*Democracy under Siege*, n.d.)

² (*Democracy under Siege*, n.d.)

³ (Waldner & Lust, 2018, p. 95)

⁴ (Levitsky & Way, 2010; Plattner, 2019; i.e. Zakaria, 2007)

the US and France to India.⁵ They radicalize and polarize society with undemocratic rhetoric and, at times, even violence. One common banner of these factions is an anti-immigrant posture; they target immigrants or refugees as scapegoats for long-accumulated economic and political disturbances.⁶ Whereas they are evident threats to democracy, a growing number of studies find that they may have been a catalyst but not the cause of democratic backsliding. For instance, autocratic entrepreneurs invoke identity politics against immigrants and refugees as a breakthrough in pre-existing political-economic crises. Underlying economic, political, and cultural grievances “creat[ed] a fertile breeding ground for xenophobic, populist reactions.”⁷

Scholars thus point to domestic institutional arrangements as a source of democratic backsliding. For instance, economic structures, including income inequality, can also determine the stability of democracy.⁸ Even in advanced democracies, increasing income inequality has polarizing effects that undermine a shared political consensus that undergirds democracy. The accelerated pace of globalization in the 21st Century has increased inequality and sowed a sense of relative deprivation among industries negatively impacted by global economic integration.⁹ Political and economic grievances have accumulated due to increasing income inequality and uneven development under globalization. Political scientists and economists, such as Daryna Grechyna and Nolan McCarty, Keith Poole, and Howard Rosenthal, argue that growing economic inequality has led to political polarization, undermining a society’s democratic consensus.¹⁰

The consensus in the democratic backsliding literature, albeit a loose one, is that domestic factors are principal drivers of democratic breakdown. After reviewing the current scholarship on democratic backsliding, Waldner and Lust conclude: “while international intervention may be highly influential at times, our best prospects for developing our theoretical institutions about the sources of backsliding should focus on domestic-level determinants.”¹¹ However, domestic-level and international-level factors are intertwined in that a change in one level tends to be accompanied by a corresponding change in the other. Foremost, the timing and temporal clustering of regime changes suggest that domestic factors alone are insufficient to account for a regime transition. In explaining the temporal clustering of a wave of regime changes, Seva Gunitsky argues that global power transition -a ‘hegemonic shock’- triggers an institutional wave, such as a wave of democratization.¹² For instance, the waves of democratization in the 20th century were initiated by hegemonic transitions. The so-called ‘second’ wave was a product of WWII and decolonization;¹³ the third wave was incited by the final disintegration of imperial-colonial powers and the fall of the Soviet Union.¹⁴ In the following section, I explain how international factors cause domestic political changes, focusing on the rise and fall of great powers.

⁵ (McDonnell & Cabrera, 2019)

⁶ (Castelli Gattinara, 2017; Haggard & Kaufman, 2021, p. 37)

⁷ (Castelli Gattinara, 2017, p. 1)

⁸ (Gilley, 2020; Winkler, 2019)

⁹ (Antràs et al., 2017; i.e. Burgoon, 2013)

¹⁰ (Grechyna, 2016; McCarty et al., 2016)

¹¹ (Waldner & Lust, 2018, p. 106)

¹² (Gunitsky, 2017, pp. 195–196)

¹³ (Huntington, 1993)

¹⁴ (Diamond, 1996)

Great Powers and Regime Diffusion

The ascendancy of great powers launches a wave of regime changes because they seek to reaffirm and institutionalize the preponderance of power by exporting their regime types. By sponsoring like-minded political factions in foreign countries, great powers hope to ensure security and long-term compliance at lower costs. For instance, a hegemon empowers local elites whose preferences align with its own by installing specific political institutions.¹⁵ It can provide political and financial aid to empower like-minded foreign elites or even resort to brute force, such as military occupation, to install a new regime. The increased affinity with foreign states then facilitates alliance formation that deters security threats, for instance.¹⁶ A hegemon projects its regime type abroad, even when substantial costs ensue, not just for the quest for ideological or political supremacy but also for these pragmatic reasons.

In parallel, foreign elites face incentives to emulate the political institutions of great power. States may adopt hegemon's institutions expecting rewards in return or to enter a hegemon's club. For instance, the EU, WTO, or IMF accession procedures mandate specific political and economic liberalization programs for prospective member states.¹⁷ A growing number of states adjust their domestic policies to join the institutions primarily backed by the Euro-Atlantic community because the benefits of membership and the costs of being outside are rising as the US hegemony deepens. Furthermore, a hegemon's power and prosperity render its regime type attractive, acceptable, and legitimate in the eyes of foreign audiences. Foreign elites thus emulate a hegemon's success model, hoping to enhance their own regime security.¹⁸ The combination of practical benefits and legitimization explains why states replicate domestic political systems of great powers. The convergence of strategic interests of great powers and states under their influence creates a positive loophole for regime diffusion.

Importantly, regime diffusion after a hegemonic transition is not limited to democracies. Illiberal scripts, too, diffuse.¹⁹ For instance, Soviet bloc states, at the height of the Cold War, conferred hegemonic authority on the Soviet Union in response to its military and economic prowess. Over time, they internalized the ideological tenets of communism and emulated the Soviet model of Marxism-Leninism, believing that it would deliver prosperity and modernity.²⁰ The diffusion of communism in the Soviet sphere illustrates that foreign elites can accept and replicate an illiberal governance model as long as it has proven successful.

Exporting Autocrat's Playbook: China vs. Russia

Despite the increasing number of studies on external causes of domestic political changes, the

¹⁵ John M. Owen, *The Clash of Ideas in World Politics: Transnational Networks, States, and Regime Change, 1510-2010, The Clash of Ideas in World Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2010), 4; Ole Nørgaard et al., *The Baltic States after Independence, Second Edition, Books* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 1999).

¹⁶ (Owen, 2010, p. 50)

¹⁷ (Asai, 2015; i.e. Charnovitz, 2013; Konstantinidis & Karagiannis, 2020)

¹⁸ (Gunitsky, 2017, pp. 23–25)

¹⁹ Marlies Glasius, Jelmer Schalk, and Meta De Lange, "Illiberal Norm Diffusion: How Do Governments Learn to Restrict Nongovernmental Organizations?," *International Studies Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (June 1, 2020): 453–68.

²⁰ "Staikov Explains Bulgarian-Soviet Ties" in Sofia, Bulgarian Home Service on March 3, 1953, translated in FBIS-FRB-53-044, March 6, 1953, p. kk10.

role of illiberal great power is downplayed in the literature on democratic backsliding. Today, illiberal great powers seek to project their political scripts globally, capitalizing on the decline of US hegemony.²¹ The unipolar moment has passed, and the appeal and efficacy of liberal democracy undergirded by the US hegemony subsequently wane. Notably, Russia and China are capitalizing on this fortuitous moment to consolidate their spheres of influence and export political systems.²² Then, is contemporary democratic backsliding attributable to the ascendancy of these illiberal great powers in the global political arena? If so, to what extent?

Scholars have increasingly paid attention to Russia and China's autocracy promotion since the mid-2010s.²³ However, their success is still being contested. Although Russia and China pour in political and financial aid to autocratic entrepreneurs in foreign countries, recent studies find that their external assistance has garnered limited success, if not backfired, in terms of boosting soft power, diffusing illiberal norms, and offsetting democracy promotion.²⁴ While acknowledging the recent wave of democratic backsliding in places like the post-Communist space, these studies suggest that contemporary democratic backsliding is more likely attributed to confounding variables than Russia and China's autocracy promotion. Other studies find a more direct link between autocracy promotion and democratic backsliding. They tend to focus on the bilateral autocratic linkage between illiberal great powers and partner countries and apply a regional scope for Russia in Central/Eastern Europe and China in Southeast Asia.²⁵

Reconciling these two views, I introduce three factors that can clarify which illiberal models diffuse, when, and where. First, I shift an analytical scope from the aggregate level of democratic or autocratic governance to specific political models that China and Russia export. Although both great powers export illiberal regimes, their political scripts are as different as the two states' domestic governing structures. In the following section, I disaggregate democratic backsliding into two types and identify each type's specific policy scripts.

Next, I introduce temporal heterogeneity. As hegemonic shock theory argues, a wave of regime diffusion is temporally clustered. As illiberal great power patrons, Russia and China also had different geopolitical aims and grand strategies at different time periods. The intensity and efficacy of their autocracy promotion have varied over time accordingly. I argue that the resurgence of Russia and its hegemonic ambitions became overtly assertive after the 2014 Crimean annexation and China after 2013 when Xi Jinping was sworn in as the president and global initiatives, such as the BRI and AIIB, began to hatch.²⁶ As Russia and China stormed back into the center of a geopolitical tussle in 2014 and 2013, respectively, the assertiveness of their autocracy promotion increased in proportion to their hegemonic ambitions. Incorporating the temporal variations, I argue that Russia and China's autocracy promotion began to garner success after inflection points in their grand strategy.

Lastly, autocracy promotion yields heterogeneous effects conditional on the type of recipient

²¹ (Cooley, 2015; Krickovic, 2014)

²² (Weiss, 2019)

²³ (Weiss, 2019; i.e. Yakouchyk, 2019)

²⁴ (Blair et al., 2022; Casier, 2022; Way, 2015)

²⁵ (Loughlin, 2021; Obydenkova & Libman, 2014)

²⁶ (i.e. Fallon, 2015; Svarin, 2016)

countries. China and Russia deliberately choose principal targets to concentrate autocratic assistance based on pre-existing relations or geopolitical resources at their disposal.²⁷ When lumping Chinese aid recipients or former Soviet bloc states together as a single category, we neglect the heterogeneity between primary targets of autocratic assistance and others. Thus, identifying the exact targets of autocracy promotion and the target-vs-non-target incongruity is integral to developing an accurate account of democratic backsliding sponsored by China and Russia. In the following sections, I identify the targets of China and Russia’s autocracy promotion and explain their target selection based on geopolitical blueprints.

Autocrat’s Playbook		
	The Beijing Model	The Moscow Model
Governance Model	Enhanced State Capacity Performance and Delivery Digital Leviathan Extensive State Control over Society	Super-Presidentialism Revival of Soviet Power Vertical Cadre Politics/Oligarchization Power Condensation
Grand Strategy	China as a Hub of <i>Global</i> Network: Global Connectivity and Expansion Model for the Developing World	Russia as a Hegemon of the <i>Soviet</i> Bloc: Eurasia against the Euro-Atlantic Regional Re-Integration Dependence on Moscow
Organizations	AIIB, BRI	CIS, EAEU, CSTO
Targets	Periphery of the US Order i.e. Myanmar, Ethiopia	Former Soviet Bloc i.e. Ukraine, Hungary

Table 1. The Beijing Model vs. Moscow Model: An Autocrat’s Playbook

China’s Illiberal Script: State Capacity and Technology

The most prominent feature of China’s governance model is that it heavily hinges on the state’s performance.²⁸ Ideology can be compromised in the pursuit of progress and development. China’s startling economic growth bestowed the CCP with popular mandates to govern and offered the party leadership a powerful legitimation tool to appease many would-be anti-regime forces. Accordingly, rapid economic growth and improved living standards overshadowed democracy deficits, including media censorship and violent crackdowns on the Muslim minority.²⁹

The second and related feature of the Chinese governance model is an extensive bureaucracy that upholds the regime’s performance. Enhanced state capacity allows the Chinese government to penetrate various layers of Chinese society, shifting state-society relations in favor of the state.³⁰ Foremost, vast state-party apparatuses spawn a large pool of loyalists whose careers depend on the prompt execution of the center’s precepts. With ample administrative resources and personnel, the Chinese government can heighten regulation and surveillance across economic, political, and social spheres.³¹ For instance, the Chinese government uses its vast and intrusive administrative capacity to regulate “critical information infrastructure,” including data collection and storage by tech firms.³² The efforts are headed by the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC), a colossal

²⁷ (Noesselt, 2021)

²⁸ (Halper, 2010; Zhao, 2009; Zhu, 2011)

²⁹ (Wang, 2005)

³⁰ (Gore, 2019; Jiang, 2018; Lieberthal & Lampton, 2018)

³¹ (*China’s Internet Censorship Goes Far beyond the Great Firewall*, 2020; i.e. Mozur & Krolik, 2019; Tai, 2014)

³² (Horwitz, 2021; Wei, 2021)

agency that encompasses all internet-related bureaus within the government and actively collaborates with other party organizations, such as the Communist Youth League of China.³³ As China spends over 7 billion dollars on cybersecurity annually, the CAC, with a complex web of local branches, is well-equipped to tighten its grip on internet surveillance and censorship.³⁴ The CAC has become the most formidable agency to domestic and foreign firms alike due to its stringent regulations and ability to enforce them. Exploiting the enhanced state capacity, the Chinese government can tighten its stranglehold on nearly all layers of China's public sphere, crushing dissidents and pre-empting organized oppositions.

Lastly, its mass surveillance rests not only on vast administrative resources but also on advanced technology. While the Chinese government has built an intricate web of administrative branches, many bureaus are still understaffed compared to the country's size and total population.³⁵ Data and information technology compensate for the loophole in administration and enforcement. Kenneth Roth and Maya Wang at Human Rights Watch dubbed Chinese authoritarianism the “data leviathan” because its ever-tighter mass surveillance regime is increasingly driven by technology as a tool of political and social regulation.³⁶ Rapidly developing surveillance technology has become the hallmark of the Chinese governance system, elevating the government's ability to monitor and regulate citizens to an unprecedented level. As People's Daily claims, China's facial recognition program can scan 1.4 billion people in *one* second.³⁷ The government can then process the data and trace people's activities to detect potential harm to the regime. The scope and speed of surveillance technology at the Chinese government's immediate disposal “reintroduce repression on a scale that we haven't seen since Mao Zedong.”³⁸ Especially since Xi Jinping came to power, the CCP has increasingly reappropriated state-of-the-art technologies to enhance its mass surveillance regime.

Russia's Illiberal Script: Super-Presidentialism

In contrast to China's performance-based governance, value-driven legitimacy constitutes a major pillar of the Russian regime. Anti-West, anti-liberal propaganda lies at the heart of Russia's value-driven legitimation. By antagonizing the West, Russia seeks to revive a wedge between Western democracies and Russians. The ultimate goal of these anti-West campaigns is to discredit the universality of liberal democracy and claim a moral upper hand of “traditional values” as opposed to West-imposed values.³⁹ Putin often equates Russian values and Western liberalism, such as LGBT rights, with the good and the evil. While falling short of ideological contestation of the Cold War, the Kremlin legitimizes illiberal governance by portraying itself as a defender of traditional values, reinstating a political and ideological wedge against Western democracy. When the Kremlin interlaces illiberalism with Russia's traditional values, it aims to radicalize the society and thus boost popular support for the regime. As a result, while far-right groups emerged in Russia, they tilted the overall domestic political terrain toward the extreme right instead of

³³ (Miao & Lei, 2016, p. 339)

³⁴ (NPR, 2021; Qiang, 2019; Xinhua, 2019)

³⁵ (Ang, 2012)

³⁶ (“Data Leviathan,” 2019)

³⁷ (NPR, 2021)

³⁸ (NPR, 2021)

³⁹ (Kurtanidze, 2021)

increasing political polarization, unlike their counterparts in Western democracies.

Second, the most discernible feature of the Russian governance model is super-presidentialism, a neo-patrimonial system headed by the president.⁴⁰ Putin's authoritarianism rests on a power vertical, a "chain of administrative dependence" through the centralization of power hierarchy and top-down management of local administrations.⁴¹ Because the president nearly monopolizes power resources, other political institutions remain underdeveloped. Whereas Putin's entourage and *siloviki* -top officials of power ministries- grow ever more powerful, the overall state capacity has not improved much from the Yeltsin era.⁴² Even the ruling party, United Russia, has devolved into a party of power, which lacks internal democracy and autonomous bureaucratic capacity but depends on the center's command.⁴³

The power vertical, modeled after the Soviet structure, significantly weakens horizontal accountability or checks and balances. The Presidential Personnel Commission and the Presidential Executive Office that execute the president's orders have an unrivaled power to prescribe the actions of other agencies.⁴⁴ For instance, capturing 'referees' is one of the most visible symptoms of growing illiberalism in Russia. As the Freedom House assesses, "the judiciary lacks independence from the executive branch, and career advancement is effectively tied to compliance with Kremlin preferences."⁴⁵ As such, government branches are working at the behest of the president, and structural checks and balances have gone defunct. Contrary to the CCP, whose rule hinges on enhanced state capacity, the Kremlin governs through a tight stranglehold on a narrow ruling class, whose survival depends on the president's clientelistic patronage. In short, while the Chinese government expands, Russia's regime condenses.

Target Selection

China and Russia not only export different illiberal scripts but also target different states. Conditional on their geopolitical resources and foreign policy goals, China and Russia have pursued different strategies for regime promotion after 2014. After a long hiatus in the Sino-centric regional order, China is a newly emerging great power that pursues global hegemony. In contrast, Russia is a resurgent power that seeks to resurrect the old Cold War alliance structure. In the following section, I delineate how China and Russia's post-2014 geopolitical resources and orientations determined the targets of their autocratic assistance, respectively.

China after 2014: Encroaching into the Periphery of the US Order

In the 2000s, China sought to make inroads into the global market and struggled to establish its place in the existing international order. China's foreign policy objectives underwent a major change after 2013 when Xi Jinping was sworn in as the president and promoted new foreign policy agendas.⁴⁶ 2014 was a year of "big strokes for Chinese foreign policy," which became increasingly

⁴⁰ (Wilson, 2001); (Fish, 2001; Whitmore, 2010)

⁴¹ (see also GEL'MAN & RYZHENKOV, 2011; Korosteleva et al., 2003, p. 62)

⁴² (Taylor, 2011)

⁴³ (Isaacs & Whitmore, 2014; Makarenko, 2012)

⁴⁴ (*The Political Elite Under Putin*, n.d.)

⁴⁵ (*Russia*, n.d.)

⁴⁶ (Fallon, 2015)

assertive (Tao, 2014; See also Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 2014). Global initiatives that began hatching under the banner ‘Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation’ came to have more concrete structures and gained international traction.⁴⁷ Notably, China contributed \$50 billion to launch the AIIB and another \$40 billion to the Silk Road Fund in 2014 (Tao, 2014). In addition, it launched the World Internet Conference (WIC) hosted by the CAC to promote its ‘cyber sovereignty norm to foreign audiences (Reporters Without Borders, 2019). With these budding global projects, China, as a rising power, pursues China-centric global integration, envisioning China as the hub of global connectivity replacing the US.

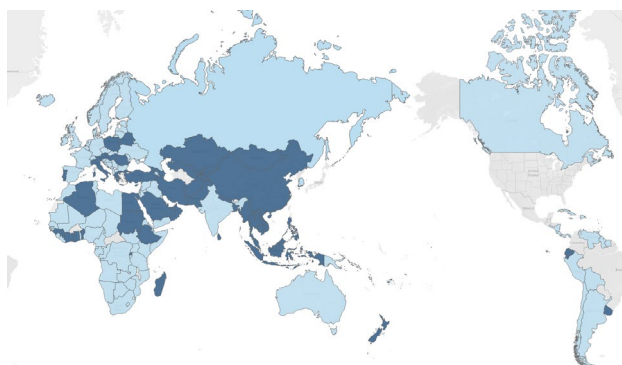


Figure 1. China’s Geopolitical Reach: BRI and AIIB Membership Bases

The quest for global connectivity shaped the destinations of China’s autocratic assistance. As China is a newly emerging power that needs to build a China-centric order from scratch, it finds states at the periphery of the US-led order or the margin of the dominant international order the most accessible.⁴⁸ Xi Jinping has openly reached out to states less integrated into the global economy and/or politics. They included many African countries, which account for just 3 percent of global trade (IISD, 2021). He underscores their shared past, grievances, and underdevelopment under the West’s domination and promises to construct new world order based on “political equality and mutual trust.”⁴⁹ For instance, in his speech during the African tour in 2013, Xi addressed that “the Chinese and African people, in their anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle for national independence and liberation... have supported and cooperated with each other and forged a brotherly bond sharing a common fate.”⁵⁰ He juxtaposes China-Africa relations, which are marked by “mutual respect, equality, mutual benefit and common development,” with the shared struggles under the West’s domination.⁵¹ As such, China, under Xi Jinping’s leadership, taps into the political and economic grievances of states sidelined in the dominant global order and positions itself as an alternative international pivot more suitable for their needs.

Foremost, China offers autocratic assistance for enhancing state capacity and service delivery through infrastructure-building and bureaucracy enlargement.⁵² In 2017, for instance, China

⁴⁷ (Fallon, 2015)

⁴⁸ Sautman, Barry, and Yan Hairong. “Friends and Interests: China’s Distinctive Links with Africa.” *African Studies Review* 50, no. 3 (December 2007): 75–114.

⁴⁹ (Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Republic of Ghana, 2013)

⁵⁰ Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United Republic of Tanzania, 2013

⁵¹ Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United Republic of Tanzania, 2013

⁵² (i.e. Cho et al., 2019)

offered over \$10 billion loans to African infrastructure projects.⁵³ Establishing infrastructure, from roads, and schools to internet networks, is the prerequisite of a state's power projection throughout its territory.⁵⁴ Visible, high-profile infrastructure projects, such as dams and road construction, tend to increase the popularity of incumbent leaders, who are then widely perceived as benevolent public good providers.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Chinese aids flow into bureaucracies and party apparatuses to facilitate the recipient governments' collaboration with Chinese donors, swelling the size and capacity of the state bureaucracy.⁵⁶

In addition to physical infrastructure, China also exports surveillance technology and shares best practices of digital authoritarianism. In 2019, 18 countries used surveillance systems designed by China, and three dozen countries received training on centralized digital censorship modeled after China's.⁵⁷ The Chinese government and firms, such as Huawei, lavishly fund digital surveillance programs abroad and provide equipment, ranging from cameras to AI systems. Recipient governments use the advanced software and hardware designed and funded by China to tighten their grip on society. For instance, with Chinese aid, the Myanmar government built a cyber firewall, emulating the Great Firewall of China. Under a new cyber censorship bill passed in February 2021, the Myanmar government can now detect and punish online activities compromising its "sovereignty and territorial integrity."⁵⁸ Given that many developing countries lack the know-how and equipment to regulate a rapidly expanding digital sphere, Chinese financial and technical assistance has been integral to digital surveillance systems in places like Ethiopia, Angola, and Myanmar.⁵⁹ China is actively exporting an autocrat's playbook from physical to digital infrastructure, and states marginalized in the dominant international order are most reactive to China's offer.

Russia after 2014: Resurrecting the Soviet Order

Unlike China, Russia has remnants of the Cold War order at its disposal. The Soviet alliance structure did not disappear but only fragmented into looser regional groupings like the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union. However, in the 1990s and 2000s, Russia spent most of its resources on domestic restructuring after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and was relatively compliant with the US-led order in the international realm. Things changed after 2014, when Russia, emboldened by the Crimean annexation, became unabashed in displaying its renewed hegemonic ambitions. For instance, it strengthened ties with leaders of Hungary and the Czech Republic and funded separatist movements in Donbas, eastern Ukraine.⁶⁰ This series of moves culminated in the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

⁵³ (*Africa*, 2021)

⁵⁴ (Bersch & Koivumaeki, 2019; Muralidharan et al., 2016)

⁵⁵ (Bader, 2015, p. 660; Marx, 2018)

⁵⁶ (Kurlantzick, 2006; Sun, 1 C.E.)

⁵⁷ (Mozur et al., 2019)

⁵⁸ (VOA Mandarin, VOA Burmese Service, 2021)

⁵⁹ (N. Bailey, 2017)

⁶⁰ (Dewan, 2017)



Figure 2. Russia's Geopolitical Reach: CSTO, EAEU, CIS Membership Bases

An alternative order centered around Eurasia against the Euro-Atlantic community is the cornerstone of Russia's renewed hegemonic ambition. The Eurasia-centric blueprint, called the "Greater Eurasia" project or "the pivot to the East," aims at reclaiming Russia's geopolitical space and patronage-client relations that resemble the Soviet order.⁶¹ To that end, Russia seeks to keep its vassal states fragmented, isolated, and reliant on Moscow's leadership. Consequently, Russia's grand strategy has a narrow geopolitical scope limited to the former Soviet bloc, whereas China envisions global connectivity.

Nevertheless, the post-Soviet space is not monolithic. Russia's invitation for renewed partnership strongly resonates with states with lingering attachment to Russia's leadership but less with others. For instance, in a 2013 Gallup poll, two-thirds of Armenian respondents stated that the collapse of the Soviet Union "did more harm than good."⁶² This rate was highest among the former Soviet republics. This growing nostalgia for the Soviet system also features prominently in Eastern regions of Ukraine. Especially after the Crimean annexation, pro-Russian separatist groups in the Donbas region have increasingly mobilized.⁶³ Especially when faced with economic downturns or internal instability, some former Soviet bloc states grow reminiscent of the order and prestige of the Soviet regime. They then increasingly turned to their former patron and restored old ties.⁶⁴

The needs of post-Communist states and Russia's willingness to once again serve as a superpower patron concur. As the optimism of Euro-Atlantic integration in the mid-2000s subsided over time, a growing number of incumbents of former Soviet bloc states found their international surroundings a growing liability to their political survival. In return, Russia offers a timely safe harbor to its former vassals in dire strait through financial relief amid international sanctions, gas supplies below market price, and external legitimation.⁶⁵ In this geopolitical climate, democratic backsliding in the post-Communist space is inseparable from Russia's ambition to resurrect the Soviet order, both in domestic and international arenas.

⁶¹ (Lewis, 2019)

⁶² (Commonspace EU, 2013)

⁶³ (Peshkov, 2016)

⁶⁴ (Bayer, 2017)

⁶⁵ eszter Zalan, "Hungary's Orban Defends Close Ties with Russia," *EUobserver*, October 31, 2019; Péter Krekó and Zsolt Enyedi, "Explaining Eastern Europe: Orbán's Laboratory of Illiberalism," *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 3 (July 12, 2018): 39–51; Mary Ilyushina and Isabelle Khurshudyan, "With Belarus Isolated by the West, Russia's Putin Stands by Ally Lukashenko," *Washington Post*, May 29, 2021.

Foremost, the Kremlin funds and empowers pro-Russian factions by providing anti-West rhetoric and legislation templates.⁶⁶ The recipients, in turn, echo the Kremlin's anti-liberal rhetoric. For instance, they sponsor bills that restrict the activities of foreign NGOs and violate civil liberties, following Russia's "traditional values leadership."⁶⁷ According to the Human Rights First's report, "Russia's brand of homophobic legislation has become a major export," with nine post-Communist countries introducing bills that resemble Russia's 2013 propaganda law.⁶⁸ When these governments emulate Russia's anti-liberal legislation and rhetoric, they seek value-driven legitimation to compensate for democratic deficits. The battle for traditional values thus diverts people's immediate attention from growing illiberal practices, fends off international opprobrium, and consolidates domestic support bases.

Russia also diffuses super-presidentialism throughout the post-Communist space. Soviet legacies in political, economic, and social realms, such as low participation in civil society and the state's regulatory interventions in markets, facilitate a neo-Soviet turn.⁶⁹ For instance, red directors and Soviet cadres have retained a stranglehold on military-industrial facilities and local networks in Ukraine and the Czech Republic.⁷⁰ Russia is key to their long-term survival as it provides natural gas below market price and financial relief packages to counteract international sanctions. Orbán's oligarchs in Hungary are an example of post-Soviet oligarchization. Incumbents' ties with Putin are behind the authoritarian trend; Hungary's Orbán, as well as Czech's Zeman, have repeatedly shown admiration for Putin's governance which "has made his country great again and ... [Russia] once again a player on the world stage."⁷¹ In return, the Orbán administration secured a joint venture with Russian companies heavily subsidized by the Russian government.⁷² When Russia reclaims its grip on the former sphere of influence and old allies reminiscent of the Soviet era join the geopolitical venture, democratic backsliding ensues.

Democratic Backsliding Hypothesis 1. Erosion From the Margin: After 2014, states at the periphery of the US-led order are drawn into the nascent China-centric order and accept the Chinese governance model.

Democratic Backsliding Hypothesis 2. Revival of the Old Order: After 2014, former Soviet bloc states with lingering affinity with Russia revive the Soviet order and accept the Russian governance model.

Methods

For empirical analysis, I use random effects, time-series OLS regression models. Because one of the variables (Soviet Bloc) is time-invariant and fixed effects are thus inapplicable, random effects

⁶⁶ (Dwoskin, 2021)

⁶⁷ ("Russia's 'Traditional Values' Leadership," 2016)

⁶⁸ (Human Rights First, 2015, p. 4)

⁶⁹ i.e. Ken Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction*, New World Disorder (University of California Press, 1992), 284; Marc Morje Howard, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2003)

⁷⁰ Tomila Lankina and Alexander Libman, "Soviet Legacies of Economic Development, Oligarchic Rule, and Electoral Quality in Eastern Europe's Partial Democracies: The Case of Ukraine," *Comparative Politics* 52, no. 1 (October 1, 2019): 127–76; Orysia Kulick, "Global Arms Production and Ukraine's Unpredictable Soviet Inheritance," *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte / Economic History Yearbook* 60, no. 2 (November 1, 2019): 409–32.

⁷¹ Darko Jenjevic, "Vladimir Putin and Viktor Orbán's Special Relationship," *DW.COM*, September 18, 2018; See also Madeline Roache, "Is Hungary Mimicking Putin's Authoritarianism?," *New Internationalist*, April 16, 2018.; Jakub Janda, "How Czech President Miloš Zeman Became Putin's Man," *Observer*, January 26, 2018.

⁷² (Racz, 2021)

offer the best correction for within- and between-effects. All the other variables introduce a one-year lag to parcel out potential endogeneity effects and clarify the causality of time-series data. The empirical analysis unfolds in two parts. First, I examine the pattern of democratic backsliding of former Soviet bloc states. Second, I assess the mode of democratic erosion at the margin of the US-led order and whether we observe two distinct types of democratic backsliding at different time periods. As elaborated in the previous section, I posit 2013 and 2014 as cut-off points when China and Russia became more ambitious in forging new international orders to cripple the US-led order. Thus, I analyze the years between 2010 and 2020 to include roughly the same number of years before and after the cut-off points.

[Independent Variable I: Peripherality] To identify states' positions in the US-led order, I count the sum of bilateral (direct) and multilateral (indirect) ties a state had with the US for years from 2009 to 2020. The sum of bilateral and multilateral ties is often used as an indicator capturing states' *centrality* in an international order.⁷³ I operationalize states' *peripherality* in the US-led order by multiplying the sum of bilateral and multilateral ties by -1. Thus, states with low (high) centrality score high (low) on peripherality.

Bilateral ties here refer to the number of bilateral treaties with the US in force for each year between 2009 and 2020. The list of bilateral treaties is retrieved from the annual *Kavass's Guide to the United States Treaties in Force* books published between 2009 and 2020.⁷⁴ Multilateral ties refer to the shared membership in intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) between a state and the US. I used the latest version of IGO membership data from the Correlates of War Project.⁷⁵ Since the latest year available in the data is 2014, I extended it to 2020 using the CIA world factbook. Out of six new international organizations or groups established after 2014, the US joined one (USMCA) in 2020. Also, I updated the US withdrawal from UNESCO in 2019. Peripherality in this paper refers to the sum of bilateral treaties and shared IGO membership with the US.

In 2013, the peripherality measure ranged from -344 to -25, with a standard deviation of 52.54 and a mean of -83.61. States with the lowest peripherality, or highest centrality, scores in 2013 are Canada, the UK, Mexico, Japan, and Germany, in descending order. States with the highest peripherality, or lowest centrality, scores are Bhutan, Vanuatu, Sao Tome and Principe, Equatorial Guinea, and Eritrea, in ascending order. See Appendix 1 for a scatter plot of peripherality. To test temporal heterogeneity, I employ two sets of model specifications, one for pre-2013 and the other for post-2013 observations.

[Independent Variable II: Soviet Bloc X IPDs with Russia] To test the diffusion of Russia's illiberal governance, I use an interaction term of the Soviet bloc dummy variable and ideal point distances (IPD) from Russia to differentiate states' positions in the former Soviet bloc. First, a dummy variable -Soviet Bloc- indicates whether a state was part of the Soviet bloc during the Cold War. It includes 32 Communist regimes during the Cold War but excludes China, North Korea, and the successors of Yugoslavia due to their split with the Soviet Union.⁷⁶

⁷³ (Henke, 2017; i.e. Kinne, 2013)

⁷⁴ (Kavass et al., 1982)

⁷⁵ (Pevehouse et al., 2020)

⁷⁶ The 32 countries are: Afghanistan, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Benin, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cuba,

Next, I differentiate former Soviet bloc states with lingering attachment to Russia's leadership by interacting the Soviet bloc dummy with Ideal Point Distance (IPD) data. IPD data reflect how *distant* states' political preferences are, as shown in their UN General Assembly voting patterns.⁷⁷ Thus, I divide the IPD data by 1 to indicate how *proximate* states' preferences are. The inverted IPDs with Russia then capture their continued political affinity with Russia: when an inverted IPD score is higher, states' preferences on international order converge with Russia to a greater extent. Former Soviet bloc states most closely aligned with Russia in 2014 are Armenia, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, and Kazakhstan. Cuba, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Vietnam, and Estonia were the least aligned. Among non-Soviet bloc states, Paraguay, Cameroon, Panama, and Vanuatu were most aligned with Russia in 2014, and the US, Israel, and Canada were least aligned.

By interacting the Soviet bloc dummy and inverted IPD variables, I examine whether and how the effects of IPDs with Russia on democratic backsliding are conditional on states' Soviet bloc status: I hypothesize that political affinity with Russia today increases the likelihood of former Soviet bloc states after 2014 but has no significant effects on others. To test temporal heterogeneity, I employ two sets of model specifications, one for pre-2014 and the other for post-2014 observations.⁷⁸

Dependent Variables

With these independent variables, I assess the overall change in the level of liberal democracy using the V-dem's liberal democracy index.⁷⁹ In subsequent models, I test different modes of democratic backsliding by focusing on specific modalities of democratic breakdowns, such as internet censorship and super-presidentialism.

[Dependent Variables I: The Chinese Model] I categorize variables into three categories based on the discussion of the Beijing governance model in the previous section. First, I use the performance legitimacy score from the V-dem data to test whether peripheral states relied on performance-based legitimacy to compensate for deepening democratic deficits. Performance legitimacy scores quantify the extent to which "the government refers to performance (such as providing economic growth, poverty reduction, effective and non-corrupt governance, and/or providing security) ... to justify the regime in place."⁸⁰ A higher score indicates that a regime almost exclusively relies on performance legitimacy. While legitimacy is hard to quantify, the V-dem data offers the best available experts' assessment of each component of democratic governance of countries around the world and has been widely used in regime studies. Thus, while inherent difficulties in quantifying political legitimacy remain, I use the V-dem data as the best analytical resource available.

Second, enhanced state capacity and performance are integral to the Chinese model of illiberal governance. First, I adopt infant mortality rates (per 1000 live births) that reflect state capacity and the reach of state apparatuses throughout a state's territory. The infant mortality rate is widely used

Czech Republic, Estonia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Mongolia, Mozambique, Republic of the Congo, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

⁷⁷ (M. A. Bailey et al., 2017)

⁷⁸ (World Bank, 2020)

⁷⁹ (Lindberg et al., 2014)

⁸⁰ (V-dem Institute, 2022, p. 225)

in political science as an indicator of state capacity and service delivery.⁸¹ The data is retrieved from the World Bank DataBank.

Lastly, I examine whether digital leviathan practices have diffused. I use the data on states' internet censorship policies retrieved from the V-dem dataset. It captures whether “the government attempt[s] to censor information... on the Internet ...[through] filtering, denial-of-service attacks, and partial or total internet shutdowns.”⁸² The variable ranges from -4.12 to 2.1, with a higher score referring to unrestricted, free internet access. Then, I contrast the internet and social media censorship efforts with print or broadcast media censorship. This variable ranges from -2.90 to 3.51, with a higher score indicating a freer media environment.⁸³ By juxtaposing print/ broadcast media and internet censorship practices, we can identify whether a distinct model of digital leviathan diffuses.

[Dependent Variables II: The Russian Model] For analyses of the diffusion of Russia's illiberal script, I classify variables into three categories based on the discussion of the Moscow model in the earlier section. First, I use a level of political polarization from the V-dem data to assess whether value-driven legitimation for illiberal policies taps into average constituencies and swings the pendulum to the extreme right rather than fueling political polarization. The variable ranges from -3.81 (less polarization) to 4.09 (greater polarization).

Second, I examine whether different facets of super-presidentialism have diffused in the post-Soviet space. First, I adopt V-dem's Presidentialism score, ranging from 0 (low) to 1 (high). Here, presidentialism refers to “the systemic concentration of political power in the hands of one individual who resists delegating all but the most trivial decision-making tasks.”⁸⁴ Next, I employ a variable that quantifies the weakness of other government branches vis-à-vis the president. V-dem's Horizontal Accountability score captures the extent to which checks and balances among government branches are observed. It ranges from 0 (weak) to 1 (strong). See Table 2 for descriptive statistics of all dependent variables. It includes expected directions of change or signs of coefficients based on the hypothesis.

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	STD	Expected Coefficient Sign
Performance Legitimacy	-3.58	3.26	0.68	0.99	+
Infant Mortality	1.6	176.5	35.27	32.33	-
Internet Censorship	-4.13	2.1	0.53	1.38	-
Other Media Censorship	-2.90	3.51	0.65	1.54	insignificant
Political Polarization	-3.82	4.09	-0.21	1.36	-
Presidentialism	0.01	0.99	0.41	0.31	+
Horizontal Accountability	-1.89	2.35	0.89	0.96	-

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Dependent Variables

[Covariates] I select control variables based on alternative hypotheses that may also account for democratic backsliding. First, I use two indicators of domestic economic structures that can lead to political polarization and democratic breakdown. I address the effects of economic

⁸¹ (Hanson & Sigman, 2021; i.e. Lee & Zhang, 2017)

⁸² (V-Dem Institute, 2021, p. 199)

⁸³ (V-Dem Institute, 2021, p. 199)

⁸⁴ (V-Dem Institute, 2021, p. 291)

development using the World Bank's GDP per capita data. I use the logged value of GDP per capita for each country-year observation. Second, I control for the level of economic inequality that led to political polarization and the rise of far-right populism in the late 2010s. The data is retrieved from the Fragile States Index. Its economic inequality index ranges from 0 to 10, with 10 representing greater economic inequality. This index measures structural inequality as well as *perceptions* of economic inequality that “can fuel grievance as much as real inequality and can reinforce communal tensions or nationalist rhetoric.”⁸⁵

I also include two additional variables that can address social structures that can cause political polarization and democratic breakdown. I include the refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) indicator as a control variable. This index quantifies a country's social pressures caused by the inflow of refugees and IDPs. In the late-2010s, in particular, the rise of far-right nationalism and populism increasingly resorted to xenophobic rhetoric and scapegoated refugees and migrants. Hence, I used a related measure -the refugees and IDPs index- to account for “additional pressures on public services ...[and] broader humanitarian security challenges.”⁸⁶ This index ranges from 0 to 10, with 10 referring to the highest pressure upon states caused by refugee inflows and IDPs. In addition, I use the V-dem's social class equality indicator. It measures whether “poor people enjoy the same level of civil liberties as rich people do.”⁸⁷ It focuses on the difference between socioeconomic groups rather than economic inequality alone. This measure ranges from 0 to 4, with 4 indicating greater social inequality among different socioeconomic classes.

I control for regime-type heterogeneity that can condition the likelihood of a democratic breakdown. Democratic breakdown may be more likely in states with weak democratic commitment and practices in the first place. Thus, I use a state's level of liberal democracy in the previous year to control for pre-existing domestic political structures.

For the analyses of the spread of China's illiberal governance (Table 4), I include IPDs with China as a control variable. I hypothesize that peripheral states emulate the Chinese illiberal script because they are discontented with the status quo where the US exports liberal democracy. The hypothesis does not indicate that bilateral political affinity with China drives political emulation. Thus, I parcel out the effect of political affinity with China from that of peripherality in the US-led order. In contrast, I hypothesize that the adoption of the Russian model directly hinges on former Soviet bloc states' lingering affinity with Russia up to this date. Hence, I employ the interaction term of the Soviet bloc dummy and IPDs with Russia as the main independent variable for the analyses of the Russian model diffusion (Table 5). Appendix 2 shows a correlation matrix of covariates.

Analysis

Table 3 shows that democracy is in retreat in the periphery of the US order and the former Soviet bloc.⁸⁸ However, the results are inconsistent. Models 3-4 show that Soviet bloc states' liberal democracy decreased after 2014 but not before 2014. However, peripheral states suffered from democratic deficits before 2013 as well as after 2013. Here, we find mixed results for democratic

⁸⁵ (Fund for Peace, 2022a)

⁸⁶ (Fund for Peace, 2022b)

⁸⁷ (V-Dem Institute, 2021, p. 177)

⁸⁸ Because the dependent variable of Models 1-4 in Table 2 is liberal democracy, I use categorical regime types instead of the lagged liberal democracy variable as a covariate.

backsliding in the periphery of the US-led order and the former Soviet bloc. The main problem with the analyses is that, when examining the aggregate level of liberal democracy, it is hard to pinpoint which components of democracy have deteriorated. To examine the diffusion of specific illiberal scripts Russia and China export, I turn to specific components of democratic governance and test if there are significant differences before and after 2013 for the diffusion of the Chinese model and 2014 for the Russian model. Subsequent models in Tables 4 and 5 aim to unearth specificities of democratic backsliding at different time periods that can be easily overlooked when we examine the aggregate level of liberal democracy.

	(1) China, 2013		(3) Russia, 2014	
	Before	After	Before	After
Peripherality, t-1	-0.0008*** (0.0002)	-0.0008*** (0.0002)	-0.0009*** (0.0002)	-0.0003*** (0.0001)
Soviet Bloc X Russia IPD, t-1	0.0003** (0.0001)	0.0003** (0.0001)	0.0002 (0.0001)	-0.0018*** (0.0001)
Soviet Bloc	-0.0349 (0.0241)	-0.0349 (0.0241)	-0.0361 (0.0253)	-0.0470* (0.0244)
Russia IPD, t-1	0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0000 (0.0000)	-0.0001 (0.0001)
IPD China, t-1	-0.0047 (0.0121)	-0.0047 (0.0121)		
Logged GDPpc, t-1	0.0048 (0.0074)	0.0048 (0.0074)	0.0108 (0.0078)	0.0189** (0.0086)
Econ Inequality, t-1	0.0038 (0.0066)	0.0038 (0.0066)	0.0002 (0.0053)	-0.0079* (0.0041)
Refugees, t-1	-0.0108** (0.0047)	-0.0108** (0.0047)	-0.0087** (0.0043)	-0.0095*** (0.0029)
Social Equality, t-1	0.0819*** (0.0122)	0.0819*** (0.0122)	0.0680*** (0.0101)	0.0618*** (0.0101)
Regime Type				
Electoral Autocracy	0.0501** (0.0245)	0.0501** (0.0245)	0.0551*** (0.0163)	0.0959*** (0.0341)
Electoral Democracy	0.1807*** (0.0274)	0.1807*** (0.0274)	0.1762*** (0.0181)	0.2058*** (0.0346)
Liberal Democracy	0.3328*** (0.0526)	0.3328*** (0.0526)	0.2865*** (0.0290)	0.2943*** (0.0377)
Constant	0.1132 (0.0791)	0.1132 (0.0791)	0.0938 (0.0807)	0.1091 (0.0941)
N	639	639	804	942

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 3. Aggregate Level of Liberal Democracy

Table 4 shows analyses using dependent variables reflecting three core characteristics of the Chinese governance model: performance legitimacy, enhanced state capacity, and internet censorship. In addition, Figure 3 presents simplified coefficient plots for the four dependent variables and main independent variables. I crop out the main independent variables: peripherality, the interaction term of the Soviet bloc and IPDs with Russia. Dotted lines refer to pre-2013 effects with a 95% confidence interval, and solid lines represent post-2013 ones. These simplified plots contrast pre- and post-2013 effects as well as the difference between two main explanatory variables, making it easier to detect that the Chinese governance model diffused after 2013 at the periphery of the US-led order but not in other places.

Models 1-2 show that peripheral states' performance legitimacy increased after 2013 despite the overall decay of democratic governance. Soviet bloc states exhibit no significant difference either before or after 2013. Models 3-4 indicate that state capacity has increased at the same time: infant mortality in peripheral states decreased after 2013 while life expectancy increased. The trend was the opposite before 2013. Taken together, Models 1-4 demonstrate that peripheral states sought

to legitimize their governance through enhanced state capacity and service delivery against the backdrop of democratic erosion. While enhanced state capacity enables better public goods provision, it also allows illiberal regimes to tighten their grip on society.

	(1)	(2)	(3)		(4)		(5)		(6)		(7)		(8)	
			State Capacity				Censorship							
	Performance Before	Legitimacy After	Infant Mortality Before	Mortality After	Internet Before	After	Internet Before	After	Other Media Before	After	Other Media Before	After	Other Media Before	After
Peripherality, t-1	0.0006 (0.0013)	0.0009* (0.0005)	0.0553*** (0.0213)	-0.0114*** (0.0039)	-0.0010 (0.0015)	-0.0011* (0.0006)	-0.0026** (0.0012)	-0.0010 (0.0007)						
Soviet Bloc X Russia IPD, t-1	-0.0005 (0.0022)	-0.0020 (0.0023)	0.0159 (0.0340)	0.0030 (0.0192)	0.0016 (0.0059)	0.0034 (0.0033)	0.0001 (0.0060)	-0.0030 (0.0039)						
Soviet Bloc	0.1952 (0.1807)	0.2493 (0.1789)	-6.9090** (3.0654)	-3.8646 (2.7146)	-0.0006 (0.1692)	-0.0537 (0.1455)	-0.2602* (0.1366)	-0.1915 (0.1254)						
Russia IPD, t-1	0.0000 (0.0001)	0.0007 (0.0010)	-0.0016 (0.0014)	0.0029 (0.0084)	0.0000 (0.0003)	0.0008 (0.0014)	-0.0001 (0.0003)	0.0009 (0.0017)						
China IPD, t-1	0.0772** (0.0315)	0.0516 (0.0371)	-1.7876*** (0.4867)	-0.8282** (0.3275)	-0.1638** (0.0751)	-0.0521 (0.0508)	-0.0864 (0.0718)	-0.0846 (0.0572)						
Logged GDPpc, t-1	0.0594* (0.0339)	0.0052 (0.0447)	-7.2100*** (0.5344)	-2.3237*** (0.4706)	-0.1388** (0.0577)	-0.0458 (0.0503)	-0.1843*** (0.0500)	-0.1183** (0.0499)						
Econ Inequality, t-1	-0.0188 (0.0176)	-0.0414** (0.0162)	1.0115*** (0.2732)	1.3697*** (0.1671)	0.0222 (0.0384)	0.0061 (0.0217)	0.0168 (0.0353)	0.0273 (0.0240)						
Refugees, t-1	-0.0265** (0.0134)	-0.0251* (0.0133)	-0.9108*** (0.2086)	0.5086*** (0.1233)	0.0011 (0.0282)	-0.0037 (0.0177)	-0.0299 (0.0258)	0.0171 (0.0192)						
Social Equality, t-1	-0.0262 (0.0489)	0.0745** (0.0339)	-1.8452** (0.7729)	-0.0531 (0.3424)	0.2019*** (0.0765)	0.0849* (0.0438)	0.1920*** (0.0654)	0.1696*** (0.0466)						
Liberal Democracy, t-1	-0.1952 (0.1474)	-0.1986 (0.1746)	-0.0143 (2.2880)	-2.6281 (1.7917)	3.7182*** (0.2889)	2.9840*** (0.2149)	4.4261*** (0.2567)	4.7234*** (0.2203)						
Constant	0.6245* (0.3627)	1.1308** (0.4488)	95.1713*** (5.7439)	33.9280*** (4.6962)	-0.1956 (0.6590)	-0.5376 (0.5317)	0.2412 (0.5837)	-0.6603 (0.5498)						
N	639	1098	635	935	639	1098	639	1098						

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 4. Chinese Model: Erosion from the Margin, Before and After 2013

Models 5-6 demonstrate that internet censorship and social media monitoring became more stringent in peripheral states after 2013, whereas other states, such as Soviet bloc states, did not exhibit a significant difference. Before 2013, peripheral states' internet censorship did not significantly differ from other states. In contrast, while peripheral states implemented more restrictive censorship on traditional media before 2013, their post-2013 media censorship did not exhibit a significant difference (Models 7-8). In sum, the digital leviathan became a distinguishable feature of peripheral states' democratic breakdown after 2013.

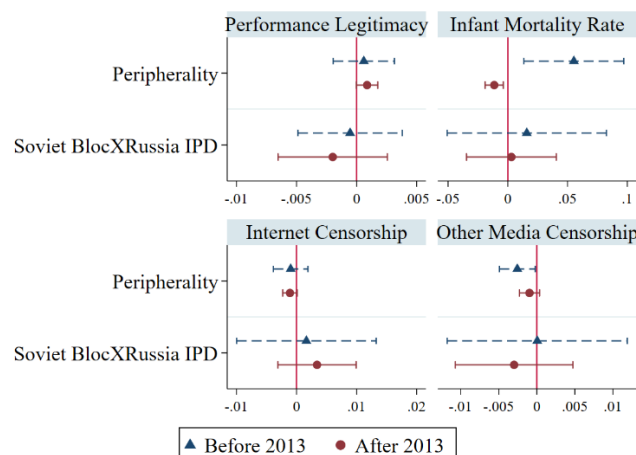


Figure 3. Chinese Model: Coefficient Plots

I find mixed results for covariates that are often associated with democratic erosion. GDP per capita had positive effects on performance legitimacy and state capacity, whereas economic inequality had negative effects. Nevertheless, these economic structural factors did not have consistent effects on media censorship. On the other hand, the level of liberal democracy in t-1 has consistent and robust effects on all three types of media censorship: a higher level of liberal democracy in the previous year was consistently associated with a freer media environment. When controlled for these covariates, peripherality in the US-led order is the most consistent indicator of the diffusion of Chinese illiberal governance. Its effect became significant after 2013, supporting the temporal heterogeneity element of the hypotheses.

Next, I test if the Russian model has diffused in the former Soviet bloc after 2014. Table 5 presents full regression models. Figure 4 shows simplified coefficient plots for three dependent variables. It visually contrasts the pre-and post-2014 effects of the Soviet bloc and peripherality on the diffusion of Russia’s illiberal governance. Models 1-2 in Table 5 test whether political polarization changed in the former Soviet bloc. Political polarization increased in former Soviet bloc states that continued to be closely aligned with Russia before 2014. In contrast, their political polarization decreased after 2014, and the effect was significant at the .01 level. This finding aligns with the hypothesis that the populist radical right invokes ‘traditional values’ to divert people’s immediate attention from growing illiberal practices, fend off domestic/international opprobrium, and consolidate domestic support bases.

	(1) Pol. Polarization Before	(2) Polarization After	(3) Presidentialism Before	(4) After	(5) Horizontal Account. Before	(6) After
Soviet Bloc X Russia IPD, t-1	0.0121** (0.0057)	-0.0116*** (0.0033)	0.0001 (0.0008)	0.0020*** (0.0005)	0.0008 (0.0029)	-0.0036* (0.0019)
Soviet Bloc	-0.3058 (0.2333)	-0.2818 (0.2378)	0.0648** (0.0255)	0.0562** (0.0241)	-0.1877** (0.0923)	-0.1419* (0.0818)
Russia IPD, t-1	-0.0003 (0.0002)	0.0007 (0.0014)	0.0000 (0.0000)	-0.0001 (0.0002)	0.0000 (0.0001)	-0.0004 (0.0008)
Peripherality, t-1	-0.0017 (0.0019)	0.0005 (0.0006)	0.0003 (0.0002)	0.0000 (0.0001)	-0.0011 (0.0008)	-0.0007** (0.0003)
Logged GDPpc, t-1	-0.0672 (0.0604)	-0.1034 (0.0687)	0.0108 (0.0076)	0.0135 (0.0084)	-0.0375 (0.0276)	-0.0824*** (0.0310)
Econ Inequality, t-1	-0.0540* (0.0314)	-0.0783*** (0.0284)	-0.0047 (0.0043)	0.0065* (0.0039)	0.0027 (0.0155)	-0.0443*** (0.0149)
Refugees, t-1	0.0810*** (0.0251)	0.0132 (0.0206)	0.0004 (0.0034)	-0.0012 (0.0028)	0.0159 (0.0123)	0.0162 (0.0109)
Social Equality, t-1	-0.1158* (0.0684)	-0.1285** (0.0501)	-0.0216** (0.0089)	-0.0074 (0.0068)	0.0829** (0.0323)	0.0353 (0.0261)
Liberal Democracy, t-1	-0.9851*** (0.2691)	-1.6098*** (0.2718)	-0.8407*** (0.0356)	-0.9473*** (0.0352)	2.5565*** (0.1292)	2.9093*** (0.1318)
Constant	0.8180 (0.6387)	2.2182*** (0.7166)	0.7069*** (0.0828)	0.6243*** (0.0911)	-0.5301* (0.3003)	0.0930 (0.3413)
N	804	942	804	942	804	942

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 5. Russian Model: Revival of the Old Order, Before and After 2014

Second, I examine the diffusion of super-presidentialism in the former Soviet bloc. Before 2014,

former Soviet bloc states closely aligned with Russia did not substantially consolidate power in the hands of the executive leader. However, after 2014, presidentialism increased. Soviet bloc states and IPDs with Russia separately had inconsistent effects. Yet, their interaction exhibited a clear pre-and post-2014 difference: preference convergences with Russia had negative consequences for democratic governance in the former Soviet bloc after 2014 but not in other times and places. Although democratic backsliding unfolded in peripheral states in the same period as well, it was not accompanied by increased presidentialism.

Lastly, I examine the corrosion of checks and balance systems. Former Soviet bloc states that continued to align with Russia underwent a decay in horizontal accountability after 2014, but not before it. Taken together, Models 3-6 demonstrate that Russia’s efforts to export its autocratic playbook targeting former Soviet bloc states who continued to align with Russia bore fruition. In contrast, the erosion of horizontal accountability was also observed at the periphery of the US-led order but was not accompanied by a substantial development of super-presidentialism. In short, a distinct model of super-presidentialism began to diffuse in the former Soviet bloc after 2014. Consequently, former Soviet bloc states, especially ones with lingering attachment to Russia’s leadership, underwent a specific mode of democratic backsliding distinct from the one unfolding at the periphery of the US-led order.

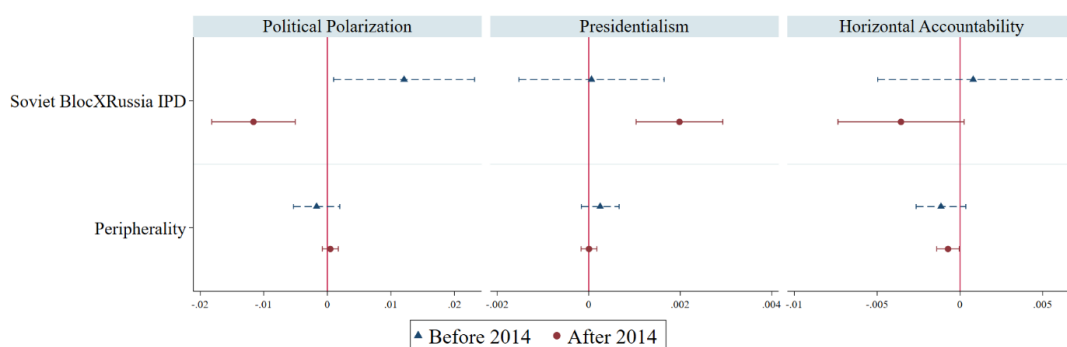


Figure 4. Russian Model: Coefficient Plots

Lastly, Figure 5 presents the margins plots of the interaction effects of the Soviet bloc dummy and political affinity with Russia. The plots show the changes in marginal effects of the interaction term as IPDs with Russia, holding other variables at their mean values. The four points on the x-axis represent one standard deviation below the mean, the mean value, one and two standard deviations above the mean. We observe stark pre-and post-2014 differences in the interaction effect: after 2014, presidentialism in the former Soviet bloc was exacerbated as states’ political affinity with Russia increased. Before 2014, it remained relatively consistent regardless of their political affinity with Russia. Furthermore, the difference between former Soviet bloc states and others was insignificant before 2014.

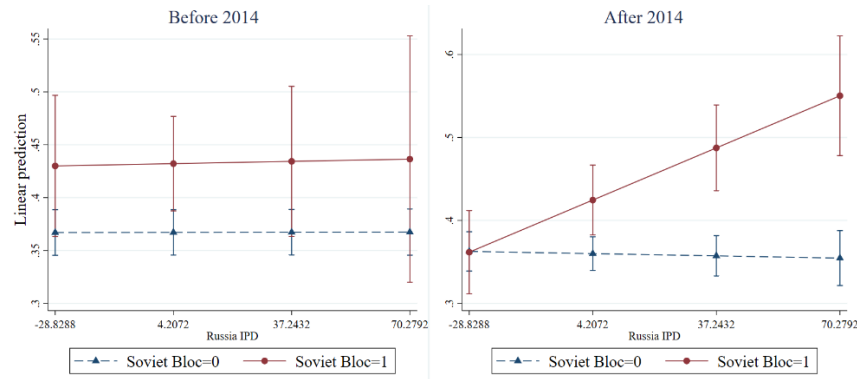


Figure 5. Adjusted Predictions with 95% Confidence Intervals (Models 3 & 4, Table 5)

Robustness Checks

Robustness checks in Tables 6 and 7 examine whether the results do not fluctuate when alternative operationalization of key dependent variables is adopted. New dependent variables measure different aspects of the same characteristics of the Chinese and Russian models analyzed in Tables 4 and 5. Appendix 2 presents descriptive statistics of alternative dependent variables along with expected coefficient signs according to the hypothesis.

	(1) State Capacity		(3) Censorship			
			(4)		(5)	
	Life Expectancy Before	After	Social Media Before	After	Media Journalist Before	After
Peripherality, t-1	-0.0277*** (0.0083)	0.0029* (0.0016)	-0.0016 (0.0014)	-0.0010** (0.0005)	-0.0015 (0.0012)	-0.0009 (0.0006)
Soviet Bloc X	-0.0006	-0.0009	-0.0008	0.0005	-0.0020	-0.0003
Russia IPD, t-1	(0.0250)	(0.0080)	(0.0052)	(0.0026)	(0.0043)	(0.0033)
Soviet Bloc	0.4946 (0.9909)	-1.0242 (0.8149)	0.3527** (0.1660)	0.1779 (0.1571)	-0.1559 (0.1352)	-0.0097 (0.1149)
Russia IPD, t-1	0.0009 (0.0011)	0.0003 (0.0034)	-0.0001 (0.0002)	0.0005 (0.0011)	-0.0000 (0.0002)	0.0018 (0.0014)
China IPD, t-1	0.6966** (0.3364)	0.3482*** (0.1302)	-0.0558 (0.0670)	0.0258 (0.0410)	-0.0291 (0.0559)	-0.1020** (0.0489)
Logged GDPpc, t-1	3.1965*** (0.2958)	1.4372*** (0.1694)	-0.2050*** (0.0541)	0.0182 (0.0456)	-0.0580 (0.0446)	-0.0817* (0.0441)
Econ Inequality, t-1	-0.4121** (0.1807)	-0.3488*** (0.0573)	0.0290 (0.0349)	0.0350** (0.0178)	0.0349 (0.0290)	0.0363* (0.0206)
Refugees, t-1	0.4043*** (0.1333)	-0.2074*** (0.0468)	-0.0434* (0.0257)	0.0083 (0.0145)	-0.0181 (0.0214)	-0.0432*** (0.0166)
Social Equality, t-1	0.5669 (0.4020)	0.0523 (0.1207)	0.1997*** (0.0723)	0.0941** (0.0367)	0.3658*** (0.0595)	0.1731*** (0.0405)
Liberal Democracy, t-1	0.4428 (1.4094)	0.6046 (0.6303)	3.6285*** (0.2669)	2.6934*** (0.1858)	2.9478*** (0.2208)	3.9638*** (0.1934)
Constant	40.8685*** (3.2806)	63.0985*** (1.6811)	0.1317 (0.6104)	-1.6608*** (0.4661)	-0.5845 (0.5045)	-0.4477 (0.4806)
N	635	1092	639	1098	639	1098

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 6. Robustness Checks: The Chinese Model, Before and After 2013

Table 6 presents robustness checks for the diffusion of the Chinese governance model. First, in addition to infant mortality rate, life expectancy is widely used in studies of state capacity as it reflects how the quality and reach of public service delivery have improved. Thus, I use life

expectancy data, “the average number of years a newborn child would live if current mortality patterns were to stay the same,” compiled by the V-dem institute.⁸⁹ In addition, I employ an alternative variable that captures states’ online censorship practice: social media monitoring efforts. Social media is increasingly becoming a tool for mass mobilization against authoritarian regimes, and China’s countermeasures have become more stringent in response. The variable ranges from -3.69 (comprehensive monitoring) to 2.9 (limited monitoring). Then I contrast it with the government’s censorship of media journalists. The results presented in Table 6 are consistent with Table 4. State capacity increased after 2013 at the periphery of the US-led order, and social media monitoring became more stringent. On the other hand, censorship of traditional media journalists did not show a significant difference before and after 2013.

I also conduct a robustness check for the Russian model (Table 7). First, I use a variable measuring engagement in state-administered mass organizations, such as trade unions and youth leagues. It shows whether governments became more capable of mobilizing citizens and gained acceptance regardless of growing democratic deficits. It is retrieved from the V-dem data, which assesses which portion of the population attended state-led organizations’ meetings or events at least twice a year.

	(1) State-led Orgs.		(3) Clientelism		(5) Judicial Constraint	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Soviet Bloc X Russia IPD, t-1	0.0009 (0.0026)	0.0061*** (0.0019)	-0.0013* (0.0008)	0.0015*** (0.0004)	0.0002 (0.0007)	-0.0019*** (0.0005)
Soviet Bloc	-0.0814 (0.2276)	-0.0336 (0.2123)	-0.0387 (0.0310)	-0.0288 (0.0288)	-0.0662** (0.0300)	-0.0528* (0.0277)
Russia IPD, t-1	0.0000 (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0008)	0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0003* (0.0002)	-0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0002 (0.0002)
Peripherality, t-1	0.0035** (0.0015)	0.0005 (0.0004)	0.0005** (0.0002)	0.0001 (0.0001)	-0.0003 (0.0002)	-0.0000 (0.0001)
Logged GDPpc, t-1	-0.0350 (0.0349)	-0.1407*** (0.0463)	-0.0158* (0.0081)	-0.0147* (0.0080)	-0.0075 (0.0077)	-0.0128 (0.0096)
Econ Inequality, t-1	0.0230 (0.0156)	0.0154 (0.0169)	0.0132*** (0.0042)	0.0144*** (0.0033)	0.0020 (0.0040)	-0.0077* (0.0044)
Refugees, t-1	0.0158 (0.0128)	0.0272** (0.0122)	0.0018 (0.0034)	0.0092*** (0.0024)	-0.0053* (0.0032)	-0.0013 (0.0032)
Social Equality, t-1	-0.0900** (0.0367)	0.0276 (0.0302)	-0.0375*** (0.0091)	-0.0224*** (0.0058)	0.0307*** (0.0088)	0.0066 (0.0077)
Liberal Democracy, t-1	-1.1060*** (0.1391)	-0.9799*** (0.1689)	-0.3864*** (0.0360)	-0.3938*** (0.0315)	0.6980*** (0.0344)	0.9104*** (0.0401)
Constant	0.5613 (0.3659)	0.9911** (0.4694)	0.7644*** (0.0854)	0.6541*** (0.0834)	0.3319*** (0.0818)	0.3786*** (0.1037)
<i>N</i>	799	938	804	942	804	942

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 7. Robustness Checks: The Russian Model, Before and After 2014

I also use a variable on judicial constraints on the executive using the V-dem data because capturing the ‘referees’ often marks the beginning of democratic backsliding (Models 3-4).⁹⁰ It serves as an alternative variable measuring a decay in horizontal accountability. It measures the extent to which

⁸⁹ (V-dem Institute, 2022, p. 364)

⁹⁰ (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018)

“the executive respect[s] the constitution and compl[ies] with court rulings.”⁹¹ This variable ranges from 0 (weak) to 1 (strong). In addition, I assess whether clientelism, a characteristic of Russia’s super-presidentialism, is spreading in the post-Soviet space. The clientelism indicator measures the extent to which “politics [are] based on clientelistic relationships... [including] the targeted, contingent distribution of resources.”⁹² The distribution of resources often relies on personal connections bypassing formal channels and the rule of law. The indicator ranges from 0 (low) to 1 (high).

The results of the robustness check are consistent with Table 5. In post-Soviet states with continued affinity with Russia, a growing proportion of the population regularly participated in state-administered groups, events, and meetings. The finding indicates that those states could garner greater domestic support and mobilize citizens. Models 3-4 indicate that clientelism declined before 2014 in those states but increased after 2014. In contrast, peripheral states, whose state-administered organizations and clientelism were increasing before 2014, exhibited no significant difference after 2014. Lastly, judicial constraints on the executive office substantially decreased after 2014 in former Soviet states with lingering attachment to Russia (Models 5-6). As the findings in Tables 6 and 7 are consistent with the main models, we can conclude that the evidence in support of the hypothesis is robust to the alternative operationalization of key variables.

In addition, I conducted an additional set of analyses using the main model specifications in Tables 3 and 4 but with country-level fixed effects. See Appendix 4. While the soviet bloc dummy variable was omitted due to collinearity, the results were consistent. Lastly, I add the amount of Chinese aid a country received (in million USD) as a covariate in the main models testing the diffusion of the Chinese model as presented in Table 4. See Appendix 5 for the details. The inflow of Chinese aid can undermine democratic governance by fueling ethnic or patronage politics and elite capture.⁹³ Even when the effects of Chinese aid are factored into account, the effects of peripherality in the US order remain significant. The results indicate that peripheral states that emulate the Chinese governance model are not primarily supply-driven by Chinese aid, although China’s help may ease their emulation. Instead, they wish to emulate the Chinese government’s success, and Chinese aid is one of many ways through which they can achieve the goal. While more scrutiny on the relationship between Chinese aid and the diffusion of the Chinese model is warranted, states who wish to emulate the Chinese model may request Chinese aid, the allocation of which has been largely demand-driven.⁹⁴ Such dynamics may explain why Chinese aid does not have independent causal effects on democratic backsliding in peripheral states.

Conclusion

The rise of China and the resurgence of Russia as geopolitical axes stoke a heated debate on the rise and fall of great powers and their ramifications. Scholars and practitioners tend to disproportionately focus on the conflictual nature of great power transitions, such as hegemonic wars. While a war between great powers yields dire political and economic consequences on a

⁹¹ (V-dem Institute, 2022, p. 342)

⁹² (V-dem Institute, 2022, p. 295)

⁹³ (i.e. Isaksson, 2020)

⁹⁴ Isaksson, 2020

global scale, it is not the sole outcome of power rivalries. The discussion of the decline of US hegemony and rising challengers should take a step away from its focus on a dyadic relationship between great powers but place it in a broader context of contesting international *orders* the US and its challengers have forged. International order privileges certain types of political actors and institutions and provides power resources, tilting the domestic balance of power in favor of the actors privileged by the international order.⁹⁵ Thus, shifting power differentials between the US and its challengers reshuffle domestic political landscapes globally. Indeed, the process of a wave of democratic backsliding is a mirror image of the third wave of democratization; the appeal and legitimacy of democracy as a successful governance model are intricately tied to the fate of US hegemony.

This research contributes to the literature on democratic backsliding and foreign policy debates on the decline of US hegemony. In contrast to the dominant narrative in the literature, I put forth shifting international power structures as a core driver of democratic backsliding; understanding the nature of different international orders led by China and Russia is essential to explore why different types of states are susceptible to Russia-led or China-led democratic backsliding. In addition, this study offers a fine-grained understanding of democratic backsliding and explores which types of states are more vulnerable to each mode of democratic backsliding. Focusing on different modes and sources of democratic backsliding can advance our understanding of the implications of hegemonic transition. Illiberal great powers with different geopolitical resources target and mobilize different sets of states. Thus, the US faces two geopolitical fronts against democratic backsliding and needs to tailor strategies to fend off risks emanating from two distinct sources.

⁹⁵ Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*; Gunitsky, *Aftershocks*.

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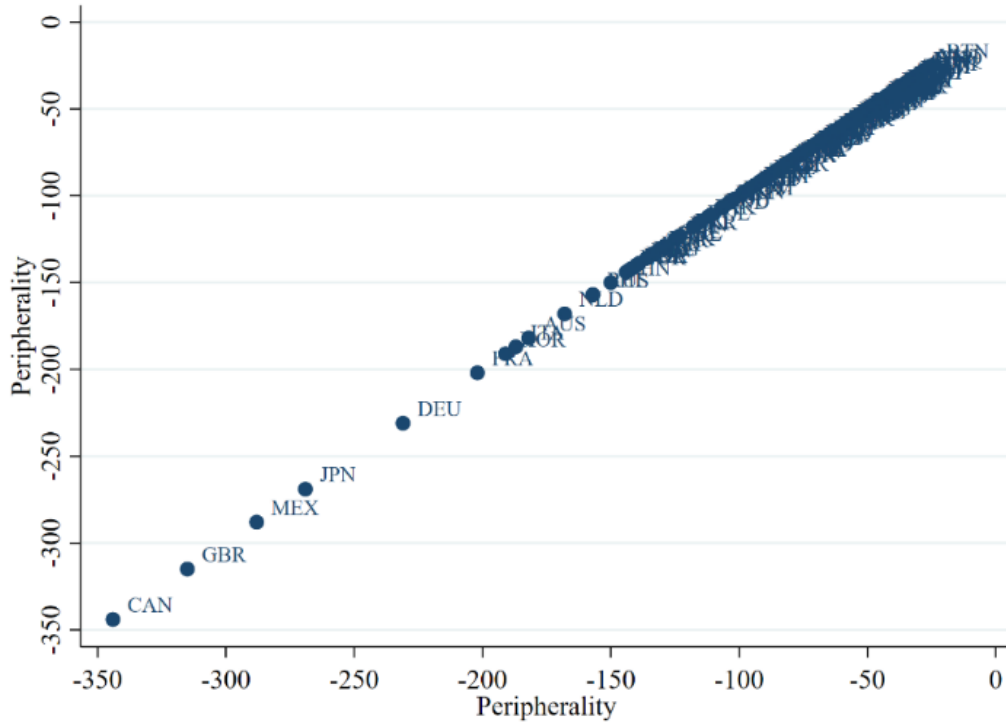
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Appendix



Appendix 1. Peripheral and Central States in the US-led International Order, 2013

Russia IPD						
-0.025	China IPD					
-0.026	0.578	Logged GDPpc				
0.042	-0.555	-0.754	Econ Inequality			
-0.009	-0.367	-0.685	0.639	Refugees		
-0.023	0.512	0.539	-0.614	-0.480	Social Equality	
-0.000	0.558	0.595	-0.565	-0.557	0.707	Liberal Democracy

Appendix 2. Correlation of Covariates

Robustness Checks

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	STD	Expected Coefficient Sign
Life Expectancy	-1.89	2.35	0.39	0.96	+
Social Media Monitoring	-3.69	2.90	0.27	1.41	-
Journalist Censorship	-3.23	4.08	0.63	1.40	insignificant
State-administered Mass Organizations	-3.16	3.48	-0.40	1.42	+
Clientelism	0.02	0.97	0.48	0.26	+
Judicial Constraint	0.003	0.99	0.58	0.31	-

Appendix 3. Descriptive Statistics

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
			State Capacity		Censorship			
	Performance Before	Legitimacy After	Infant Before	Mortality After	Internet Before	After	Other Media Before	After
Peripheratliy, t-1	0.0006 (0.0024)	0.0009* (0.0005)	0.0296 (0.0362)	-0.0147*** (0.0036)	0.0007 (0.0063)	-0.0011* (0.0007)	-0.0102 (0.0065)	-0.0009 (0.0008)
Soviet Bloc X Russia IPD, t-1	-0.0005 (0.0022)	-0.0021 (0.0023)	0.0105 (0.0332)	0.0085 (0.0176)	0.0008 (0.0057)	0.0014 (0.0033)	0.0005 (0.0060)	-0.0032 (0.0040)
Russia IPD, t-1	0.0000 (0.0001)	0.0007 (0.0010)	-0.0011 (0.0014)	-0.0002 (0.0077)	-0.0001 (0.0002)	0.0006 (0.0014)	-0.0001 (0.0003)	0.0002 (0.0017)
China IPD, t-1	0.0887*** (0.0320)	0.0714* (0.0381)	-1.5278*** (0.4852)	-0.4995 (0.3041)	-0.2963*** (0.0839)	-0.0989* (0.0540)	-0.1723** (0.0875)	-0.1080 (0.0666)
Logged GDPpc, t-1	0.0371 (0.0387)	-0.0832 (0.0603)	-5.6559*** (0.5890)	0.9393* (0.5018)	-0.2806*** (0.1013)	-0.0864 (0.0853)	-0.1708 (0.1056)	0.1269 (0.1052)
Econ Inequality, t-1	-0.0186 (0.0183)	-0.0373** (0.0171)	1.1308*** (0.2775)	0.8978*** (0.1591)	-0.0666 (0.0479)	0.0165 (0.0242)	-0.0122 (0.0500)	0.0358 (0.0298)
Refugees, t-1	-0.0109 (0.0144)	-0.0069 (0.0138)	-1.3493*** (0.2177)	0.3002*** (0.1156)	0.0483 (0.0377)	-0.0067 (0.0196)	-0.0175 (0.0393)	-0.0000 (0.0242)
Social Equality, t-1	-0.1036* (0.0601)	0.0516 (0.0362)	-0.9719 (0.9080)	0.4144 (0.3251)	0.9056*** (0.1574)	0.1068** (0.0512)	0.8551*** (0.1642)	0.2672*** (0.0632)
Liberal Democracy, t-1	-0.2622* (0.1574)	-0.2698 (0.1939)	1.8553 (2.3779)	0.2286 (1.7376)	2.2658*** (0.4123)	1.5181*** (0.2744)	2.6067*** (0.4301)	4.2980*** (0.3385)
Constant	0.8827** (0.4253)	1.8767*** (0.5591)	77.9347*** (6.4775)	6.6326 (4.6504)	1.4305 (1.1143)	0.3889 (0.7914)	-0.3188 (1.1624)	-2.6723*** (0.9764)
<i>N</i>	639	1098	635	935	639	1098	639	1098
<i>R</i> ²	0.0413	0.0202	0.3350	0.0840	0.1797	0.0572	0.1596	0.2129

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Appendix 4-1. The Diffusion of the Chinese Model, Fixed Effects

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Pol. Polarization	Pol. Polarization	Presidentialism	Presidentialism	Horizontal Account.	Horizontal Account.
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Soviet Bloc X	0.0113**	-0.0116***	-0.0002	0.0021***	0.0013	-0.0040**
Russia IPD, t-1	(0.0056)	(0.0033)	(0.0008)	(0.0005)	(0.0029)	(0.0020)
Russia IPD, t-1	-0.0003	0.0006	0.0000	-0.0001	0.0000	-0.0005
	(0.0002)	(0.0013)	(0.0000)	(0.0002)	(0.0001)	(0.0008)
Peripherality, t-1	-0.0107**	0.0008	0.0002	0.0000	-0.0027	-0.0009**
	(0.0050)	(0.0007)	(0.0007)	(0.0001)	(0.0026)	(0.0004)
Logged GDPpc, t-1	0.0754	0.1070	0.0235**	-0.0008	-0.0381	-0.0235
	(0.0833)	(0.1004)	(0.0117)	(0.0147)	(0.0434)	(0.0597)
Econ Inequality, t-1	-0.0572*	-0.0917***	-0.0013	0.0091**	0.0206	-0.0516***
	(0.0347)	(0.0304)	(0.0049)	(0.0045)	(0.0181)	(0.0181)
Refugees, t-1	0.0189	-0.0219	-0.0038	0.0009	0.0184	0.0008
	(0.0288)	(0.0217)	(0.0041)	(0.0032)	(0.0150)	(0.0129)
Social Equality, t-1	-0.0601	-0.1119**	-0.0310***	-0.0162**	0.0698	0.0425
	(0.0829)	(0.0540)	(0.0117)	(0.0079)	(0.0432)	(0.0321)
Liberal Democracy, t-1	-0.4811	-1.4214***	-0.6227***	-0.8244***	1.9894***	2.5085***
	(0.3114)	(0.3166)	(0.0439)	(0.0464)	(0.1624)	(0.1883)
Constant	-1.1479	0.5313	0.5218***	0.6894***	-0.5668	-0.1758
	(0.8765)	(0.9523)	(0.1235)	(0.1396)	(0.4572)	(0.5663)
<i>N</i>	804	942	804	942	804	942
<i>R</i> ²	0.0367	0.0787	0.2823	0.3561	0.2231	0.2363

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Appendix 4-2. The Diffusion of the Russian Model, Fixed Effects

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
			State Capacity		Censorship			
	Performance Before	Legitimacy After	Infant Before	Mortality After	Internet		Other Media	
					Before	After	Before	After
Peripheralality, t-1	0.0006 (0.0013)	0.0009** (0.0005)	0.0557*** (0.0213)	-0.0112*** (0.0039)	-0.0009 (0.0015)	-0.0011* (0.0006)	-0.0025** (0.0012)	-0.0009 (0.0007)
Soviet Bloc X Rusisa IPD, t-1	-0.0005 (0.0022)	-0.0020 (0.0023)	0.0155 (0.0341)	0.0029 (0.0192)	0.0016 (0.0059)	0.0034 (0.0033)	0.0000 (0.0060)	-0.0030 (0.0039)
Soviet Bloc	0.1939 (0.1806)	0.2477 (0.1795)	-6.8860** (3.0533)	-3.8839 (2.6965)	0.0009 (0.1690)	-0.0559 (0.1446)	-0.2599* (0.1367)	-0.1942 (0.1254)
Russia IPD, t-1	0.0000 (0.0001)	0.0007 (0.0010)	-0.0015 (0.0015)	0.0030 (0.0084)	0.0000 (0.0003)	0.0008 (0.0014)	-0.0001 (0.0003)	0.0009 (0.0017)
China IPD, t-1	0.0780** (0.0316)	0.0509 (0.0371)	-1.8057*** (0.4878)	-0.8353** (0.3285)	-0.1644** (0.0753)	-0.0536 (0.0509)	-0.0866 (0.0719)	-0.0857 (0.0572)
Logged GDPpc, t-1	0.0588* (0.0339)	0.0073 (0.0448)	-7.2101*** (0.5349)	-2.3564*** (0.4711)	-0.1380** (0.0577)	-0.0428 (0.0502)	-0.1843*** (0.0500)	-0.1154** (0.0500)
Econ Inequality, t-1	-0.0201 (0.0177)	-0.0411** (0.0162)	1.0374*** (0.2754)	1.3747*** (0.1674)	0.0238 (0.0386)	0.0055 (0.0217)	0.0171 (0.0354)	0.0266 (0.0240)
Refugees, t-1	-0.0267** (0.0135)	-0.0244* (0.0133)	-0.9048*** (0.2089)	0.5133*** (0.1238)	0.0011 (0.0283)	-0.0028 (0.0177)	-0.0298 (0.0259)	0.0178 (0.0193)
Social Equality, t-1	-0.0266 (0.0489)	0.0747** (0.0339)	-1.8368** (0.7731)	-0.0555 (0.3432)	0.2015*** (0.0765)	0.0843* (0.0438)	0.1920*** (0.0655)	0.1695*** (0.0466)
Liberal Democracy, t-1	-0.2012 (0.1478)	-0.2006 (0.1746)	0.0997 (2.2952)	-2.6642 (1.7952)	3.7292** (0.2893)	2.9959*** (0.2144)	4.4283*** (0.2571)	4.7255*** (0.2204)
Chinese Aid, t-1	-0.0000 (0.0000)	-0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0001 (0.0001)	-0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0000 (0.0000)	-0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0000 (0.0000)	-0.0000 (0.0000)
Constant	0.6404* (0.3637)	1.1136** (0.4496)	94.9365*** (5.7588)	34.1988*** (4.7001)	-0.2140 (0.6597)	-0.5595 (0.5314)	0.2386 (0.5845)	-0.6785 (0.5505)
<i>N</i>	639	1098	635	935	639	1098	639	1098

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Appendix 5. Main Models of the Diffusion of the Chinese Model (Table 4) with Chinese Aid as a Covariate