

The GIC Typology of Strategic Interventions

A methodology note on how the Global Ideas Center frames and classifies its Strategic Intervention Papers (SIPs)

▪ About the Global Ideas Center

Strategic Intervention Papers (SIPs) are designed to identify a specific problem facing a nation or set of nations and to launch a broader, future-oriented public debate aimed at solving it. The goal is to encourage constructive resolution of political or economic stagnation.

▪ Our basic approach

In preparing its Strategic Intervention Papers, the Global Ideas Center identifies a strategic problem and the means available to address it. This is our contribution to what we call constructive globalism.

Strategic Intervention Papers are often based on a single analytical method: “The power of comparisons.”

Each SIP zeroes in on one country's conduct, policy choices or trajectory. It then weighs that conduct against another point of reference — usually another democracy, but also possibly an adversary or even its own past behavior.

The overall purpose of most of our SIPs is to strengthen the resilience of democratic governance. But we also regularly explore how democracies should interpret the conduct of a non-democratic actor.

▪ What counts as a Strategic Intervention Paper

Two essential features distinguish a Strategic Intervention Paper (SIP) from ordinary commentary:

- It rests on an explicit comparison — either between two countries in the same period, or between a contemporary country and an earlier version of itself.

- It identifies a specific lever of constructive action, usually a reform to adopt. Strategic interventions may also identify a solution to destructive actions designed to undermine Western democracies from without — and complicity with such attempts from within. Malevolent actors frequently seek to carry out such actions in the dark. We bring them to light.

Analysis or advocacy that lacks either feature does not fall under the SIP typology.

Democracy-strengthening policy is our base case, but we also use SIPs to examine non-democratic regimes

Most SIPs examine a democracy's own choices.

But we apply the same methods with equal rigor to non-democratic regimes whenever their internal contradictions, policy choices or trajectories shape the environment in which democracies must operate.

In such cases the regime itself is the analytic subject, and the SIP's value is of a forward-looking, diagnostic character. It is about understanding why an authoritarian system is likely to succeed, fracture or overreach, so that democracies can calibrate their own actions and policy choices accordingly.

4. Reform Transfer: the base case

The GIC regards Reform Transfer — i.e., cross-border learning between peer democracies — as the fundamental goal for its Strategic Intervention Papers.

In its most characteristic form, a SIP identifies a problem a specific democracy has not yet solved, finds a peer democracy that has solved it and examines the viability or advisability of transferring that solution.

▪ Seven different types of intervention

Our base case aside, there are seven other cases that call for a strategic intervention. Each addresses a different obstacle to securing the resilience of democratic governance.

The table below sets out seven types of intervention in a single view. It details what each type captures and shares at least one illustrative Strategic Intervention Paper for each case.

Type	What it captures	Governing question	Illustrative SIP(s)
1. Reform Transfer (= the base case)	A democracy might adopt a policy solution already adopted by a peer democracy.	What has a peer democracy already solved that the democracy being analyzed does not?	Ohler (white-collar crime); Turner, von Weizsäcker & Stuchtey (UK climate policy); v. Thadden (Polish tax system); Retex (Ahrtal/Arcachon)
2. Witting Complicity	An entire democracy, or some of its key political actors, knowingly aligns with an actor elsewhere to undermine democratic norms.	Who is knowingly colluding with whom, and with what intent?	Bindenagel (Germany's Culture of Remembrance)
3. Strategic Negligence	A democracy enables the damaging spread of an external power's agenda via the conscious or unconscious preservation of a blind spot.	What blind spot allows this outcome, absent any intent to collude?	"Germany Risks Selling Out Europe's Digital Future"
4. Cross-Border Coercion	An external power uses raw financial, trade or military leverage to severely narrow a democracy's room for maneuver.	What is being imposed on a country by force or threat, and how does that democracy resist it?	Paul London (U.S. 1920s war-debt diplomacy and Trump's tariff policies today)
5. Misplaced Belief / Self-imposed constraint	A democracy holds a conviction which the facts no longer support. It thus unnecessarily accepts a limit on its own agency.	What does a democracy assume to be true that is not?	Richter ("Die vielen Fehler des Westens"); Schmieding ("Deutschland — nicht Chinas Spielball"); Zürn (the blind spot in dealing with the AfD)
6. Adversary Diagnostics	A non-democratic regime's own trajectory	Why is this regime succeeding,	Bayer ("How Russia Screwed Up an Entire

Type	What it captures	Governing question	Illustrative SIP(s)
	is examined on its own terms.	fracturing or overreaching?	Century")
7. Historical Echo	A democracy's present conduct is measured against an earlier democratic collapse.	Does an earlier collapse foreshadow what is happening now?	Richter & Maxeiner ("John Roberts: Der Hindenburg der amerikanischen Demokratie?")

▪ Hybrid cases

Individual SIPs may combine more than one type of intervention. A SIP may, for example, diagnose a Self-Imposed Constraint domestically while recommending a Reform Transfer as the remedy.

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