

Affirmative Rebuttal

At: Diplomacy Empowers Authoritarians

1. False Dichotomy: Diplomacy ≠ Appeasement

Just because diplomacy engages with authoritarian states doesn't mean it legitimizes them. According to the Carnegie Council,

“Diplomatic engagement with rivals, far from being appeasement, is critical to rapprochement between adversaries, says Charles Kupchan, and diplomacy, not economic interdependence, creates the path to peace.”

Kupchan, Charles & Myers, Joanne. “How Enemies Become Friends: The Sources of Stable Peace.” The Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs. April 13, 2010. <https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/media/series/39/20100413-how-enemies-become-friends-the-sources-of-stable-peace> Accessed July 30, 2025.

Engagement and appeasement are two very different things. The U.S. has empirically used diplomacy to moderate authoritarian behavior for example, arms control with the USSR or negotiations with Saudi Arabia, not endorse it.

Impact: Turn: Sets Terms For Behavior

Rather than endorsing authoritarian behavior, diplomacy constrains authoritarianism by setting terms for interaction and limiting power.

2. Isolation Enables Authoritarian Control

Take North Korea for example. Total diplomatic isolation has made the regime more paranoid and aggressive, not less. When diplomacy is used, it reverses these impacts.

3. Enables Reform Over Time

Joseph Nye's concept of soft power emphasized that sustained diplomatic engagement promotes the diffusion of democratic norms. Vietnam bears witness to this as diplomatic engagement opened space for economic and societal change.

Nye, Joseph S., Jr. “Soft Power.” Foreign Policy (Autumn 1990). Washington Post. Newsweek Interactive. September 13, 2016. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/page/joseph_nye_soft_power_journal.pdf Accessed July 8, 2025.