

Cambridge University Press

0521844827 - Democracy from Above: Regional Organizations and Democratization

Jon C. Pevehouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

1 Democratization and international relations

Few events have captured the attention of policymakers and the public like the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of independent states in Central and Eastern Europe. In the aftermath of these events, there was tremendous optimism when confronted with the prospects of how to create and preserve democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, and the former Soviet Republics. In the United States, the Clinton administration announced that the foreign policy doctrine of containment would be replaced with a doctrine of “enlargement” (Bloomfield 1994; Lake 1993; Smith 1994; Wiarda 1997). A major part of the enlargement strategy involved international support for democracy, often through regional organizations (cf. Christopher 1995). For example, the idea of regional institutions promoting and protecting democracy became a major justification for NATO expansion (cf. Albright 1997; Asmus, Kugler, and Larrabee 1993; Yost 1998).

Academic attention to the issue of transitions to and the survivability of democracy, including identifying conditions propitious for success, predated the events of 1989. The “third wave” of democratization spurred a considerable body of research examining the origins and consequences of these transitions, many of which occurred nearly fifteen years prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall (Huntington 1991; Shin 1994).¹ Based on the lessons of Latin America, Southern Europe, and to a lesser extent Africa, the research provided the foundation from which to discuss the roadblocks to democratization in Eastern Europe as well as continued challenges to the future of democracy in other parts of the world.

Unfortunately for those interested in helping to secure democracy from abroad, the weight assigned to international factors in the democratization process was quite scant. The prevailing beliefs of the democratization literature in the late 1980s is best summarized by the findings of the

¹ Huntington argues that transitions to democracy occur in groups or “waves” over time. According to Huntington, the third wave of democracy began in 1974 in Portugal and continued through the transitions in Eastern Europe in 1989–90. Of course, interest in movements to and from democracy predate the third wave (cf. Linz 1978; Moore 1966).

Cambridge University Press

0521844827 - Democracy from Above: Regional Organizations and Democratization

Jon C. Pevehouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

2 Democracy from Above

Wilson Center's multi-volume project on democratization, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*:

one of the firmest conclusions that emerged from our Working Group was that transitions from authoritarian rule and immediate prospects for political democracy were largely to be explained in terms of national forces and calculations. External actors tended to play an indirect and usually marginal role . . . (Schmitter 1986: 5)

Given the absence of the study of international factors in the prospects for democracy, neither the scholar nor the practitioner could be confident in the role outside forces would play in the process of democratization. With little theoretical or empirical work on the issue, there would be no way to tell what types of strategies would succeed or fail. Indeed, many began to criticize the lack of a coherent effort to promote democracy from the US and Europe (Allison and Beschel 1992; Pinder 1994).

In light of the events of Eastern Europe, however, some scholars began to question the sweeping conclusion that external factors played only a minor role in the transition or consolidation process (Pridham 1991b; Whitehead 1996a). Unfortunately, this new literature has not developed core theories or cross-national empirical findings exploring the association of international factors with democratic transitions or democratic consolidation. Rather, it largely examines individual case studies to suggest what outside factors could influence particular nation-states. While these studies are valuable for understanding the causal processes related to democratization, from a policy and an academic perspective, such work does not allow generalizable policies or theories.

While one could turn to broader theories in international relations scholarship, theories of international institutions and organizations are also of little help. The vast majority of the international institutions literature has focused on their effect on international outcomes (war, cooperation between states, etc.) rather than their domestic ramifications (cf. Keohane 1984; Keohane and Martin 1995; Mearsheimer 1995). A small, but growing body of literature does examine the interactions between domestic and international institutions (Drezner 2003; Goldstein 1996; Milner 1997). Unfortunately, much of that research has largely focused on the developed, stable democratic systems of North America and Western Europe. In the end, neither academics nor policy-makers can turn to a body of theoretical or empirical research to address questions related to the emergence or continuance of democracy around the globe.

The purpose of this book is to fill this gap by contributing a coherent theoretical framework to evaluate the association between regional

Cambridge University Press

0521844827 - Democracy from Above: Regional Organizations and Democratization

Jon C. Pevehouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

organizations and democratization, while providing the first quantitative empirical results pertaining to this issue. The proposition developed and tested here is that regional organizations can facilitate transitions to democracy as well as the survival of democracy. I define regional organizations as formal institutions whose membership is limited by geography. I adopt Mainwaring's (1992: 297–8) three-part definition of democracy: (1) competitive elections; (2) broad adult suffrage; and (3) protection of minority rights and respect for civil liberties.²

The links between regional international organizations (IOs), transitions to and the survival of democracy arise from distinct causal processes. In the case of democratic transitions, regional institutions can pressure member states to democratize or redemocratize after reversions to authoritarian rule. In addition, IO membership can serve to reassure domestic elites that their interests will be protected in a democracy through locking in policies they value (e.g. protection of property rights or commitment to free trade). Regional IOs can be used by domestic elites to socialize other elite groups (often the military) not to intervene in the democratic process by changing their attitudes toward democracy.³ Finally, organizational membership may help to legitimize transitional regimes, making the completion of the democratic transition more likely.

With respect to democratic longevity, I argue that domestic elites can use membership or accession to regional organizations to further democratic consolidation. Positive and negative incentives to domestic groups can be generated by accession to regional organizations. These incentives convince societal groups (including the ruling elites) to abide by democratic "rules of the game." Joining regional organizations can raise the costs of anti-democratic behavior by those outside *or inside* the regime. These costs arise out of the conditional nature of membership in the organization as well as potential audience costs created through accession to the organization. These costs serve both as a deterrent to potential anti-regime forces and provide a device for new democrats to foster credible commitments to political reform. Finally, accession to regional organizations can confer legitimacy on young democratic regimes that increases the likelihood of long-term consolidation.

One conditioning factor in this regional IO-to-democracy link, however, is that not *all* regional institutions will be associated with democratization. I contend that the more homogeneously democratic a regional organization's membership, the more likely it will be to pressure

² I discuss these definitions further in Chapter 3.

³ Empirically, this mechanism has occurred with regard to the military. For example, through involvement in regional military organizations, military officers learn the "proper" role of the military in a democratic society.

Cambridge University Press

0521844827 - Democracy from Above: Regional Organizations and Democratization

Jon C. Pevehouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

4 Democracy from Above

autocratic governments to liberalize, provide credible guarantees to allay elite fears, stipulate conditions on membership, and, most importantly, enforce those conditions. In short, the more democratic a regional organization (in terms of its member states), the more likely it will be to supply the political will for supporting and protecting democracy *and* the more likely the regional IO will be used by domestic groups to encourage and cement democracy.

I build my theory on two bodies of literature in international relations – theories of international institutions and work on the second image reversed. Some of the causal mechanisms have been discussed in the broader context of how international institutions facilitate interstate cooperation, none of them have previously been applied to the question of democratization. In addition, while the second image reversed family of literature does discuss how international processes create outside-in linkages that can influence domestic political processes, these theories rarely discuss regional or international organizations.⁴ I first turn to this later family of theories to lay the foundation for my argument.

The second image reversed

The second image reversed literature provides an excellent starting point for thinking about the linkages between regional organizations and democratization. This framework encompasses theories that contend international factors influence domestic political outcomes. The international factors and the domestic political outcomes that fall under the second image reversed rubric span a broad number of variables and processes. Peter Gourevitch's initial survey of this literature dealt with causal factors such as military intervention, international economic trends, and the (anarchic) nature of the international system (Gourevitch 1978; see also Almond 1989). A variety of domestic political outcomes were also discussed within the framework, including electoral outcomes, trade policies, domestic coalitions, and regime change. Although a review of the corpus of second image reversed literature developed after Gourevitch's effort is beyond the scope of this work, I briefly mention a piece of this literature concerning regime change to give the overall flavor of the argument.

Gourevitch's two central discussions of regime change revolve around the influence of international economics and the nature of the international state system. In the latter realm, a litany of hypotheses concerning

⁴ This name arises out of Waltz's typology of levels of analysis: first image (individual-level causal factors), second image (state-level causal factors), and third image (system-level causal factors). See Waltz 1959.

Cambridge University Press

0521844827 - Democracy from Above: Regional Organizations and Democratization

Jon C. Pevehouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

global economic processes has played a key role in thinking about regime type and domestic political institutions. Ranging from Alexander Gerschenkron's (1962) work on the timing of industrialization and its relationship to the centralization to James Kurth's (1979) study of the product cycle and political authority, many scholars have used international economics to explain the structure and change of domestic political institutions. Recent strands of this literature would include work in comparative politics dealing with economic crises and regime change (Gasiorowski 1995). In these works, political regimes are structured or altered to achieve the best possible economic outcomes given the constraints and the dynamic nature of the international economic system.

The anarchic nature of the international system and the resulting drive for state security also provide a link from the international to domestic sphere. Dating from the late nineteenth century, the Seeley-Hintze Law holds that the greater the insulation of a nation-state from outside influence, the less political power would be centralized within the state (Almond 1989: 242–4). More recently, William Thompson has argued that the presence of external security threats to states can inhibit and erode moves towards democracy. Democracy can suffer setbacks during security crises since leaders will often consolidate their own power in order to mobilize resources to meet (or make) external threats (Thompson 1996).⁵

Despite these potentially powerful external factors affecting regime type, Gourevitch (1978: 911) emphasizes that “[external pressures] are unlikely to be fully determining . . . Some leeway of response to pressure is always possible, at least conceptually.” Thus, any theory that purports to explain how international factors influence fundamentally domestic decisions must contain references to the domestic political process. International forces create constraints and opportunities for democratization through both economic and military-security processes, yet this is only part of the picture. One must also define how the actors within the state cope with the presence of these outside influences. Unfortunately, the most developed literature on international institutions largely ignores domestic politics (Milner 1997).

Domestic actors and international institutions

With the rise of the functionalist literature over forty years ago and continuing with such works as *After Hegemony*, international relations scholars have debated the merits of international institutions (e.g. Grieco

⁵ For a contrary position, see Reiter 2001a.

Cambridge University Press

0521844827 - Democracy from Above: Regional Organizations and Democratization

Jon C. Pevehouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

6 Democracy from Above

1988; Keohane 1993; Mearsheimer 1995; Keohane and Martin 1995; Schweller and Priess 1997).⁶ Today, the institutionalist debate has moved from broad conceptual issues (e.g. do institutions matter at all?) to more focused inquiries (e.g. how and under what circumstances do institutions matter and for what outcomes?). Although little of the institutionalist debate has centered on domestic politics, the relevant literature is not an empty set.

In fact, much of the original literature on the interaction between internal and domestic forces arose out of either international political economy or comparative foreign policy. In this latter group, the work of scholars such as Jonathan Wilkenfeld (1973) and James Rosenau (1969) concerning “linkage politics” attempted to generate and test middle-range theories linking the international and national levels of analysis. Scholars such as Wilkenfeld and Dina Zinnes (1973) examined how internal and external conflict were linked, while Rosenau (1969) proposed a number of theories exploring how domestic political systems became “penetrated” by other political actors. While these scholars’ work was essential in laying the foundation (theoretically and empirically) for my theory, this literature’s applicability is somewhat limited due to its focus on foreign policy behavior as the dependent variable. In addition, where my theory diverges from this past work is in my emphasis that internal penetration is often a choice by elites. I argue that domestic actors allow outside influence for strategic reasons that have little to do with foreign policy cooperation.

With Robert Putnam’s (1988) work examining the two-level game metaphor, scholars moved to a more formalized view of the interaction between domestic politics and international forces. In Putnam’s framework, strategic actors can use international constraints at home to neutralize domestic opposition, or use domestic constraints to enhance their international bargaining strength. The implication is that domestic politics can be shaped by international forces, but can shape them as well (Evans, Jacobson, and Putnam 1993).⁷

Further work has extended this idea of strategic interaction among domestic actors and international forces, especially international institutions. Judith Goldstein (1996) shows how international trade agreements can be used by a domestic actor (e.g. the president) to constrain the behavior of other domestic actors (e.g. Congress). Specifically, she

⁶ Although not its main impetus, the early functionalist literature also demonstrated how the construction of international institutions influenced domestic politics as well. For example, Haas (1964) and Mitrany (1966).

⁷ It should be noted that some scholars have argued that while in theory these dynamics may occur, in practice they are rare (cf. Evans 1993). In addition, Reinhardt (2003) argues that the ability to tie the hands of domestic opponents can only occur under very limited circumstances.

Cambridge University Press

0521844827 - Democracy from Above: Regional Organizations and Democratization

Jon C. Pevehouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

shows how an international body with little to no enforcement capability can alter outcomes to favor one actor (the president) over another (Congress) in matters of international trade.⁸ Some literature in the study of economic regionalism also discusses this international/domestic interplay. Work by Helen Milner (1997) and Marc Busch and Milner (1994) argues that domestic firms demand regional trade organizations due to the export dependence of firms, firm multi-nationality, and levels of intra-industry trade (Busch and Milner 1994: 268–70). Thus, the bond of economic conditions in concordance with the preferences of firms gives rise to regional organizations that influence international cooperation.

A similar argument is made by Etel Solingen (1994) with regard to the security arena. She argues that membership in regional non-proliferation agreements is a function of domestic political coalitions. “Internationalist” coalitions which favor domestic economic liberalization will push to join these institutions to maximize the benefits received from all international institutions, which can “bank-roll” domestic coalitions (Solinigen 1994: 168). Joining regional security institutions, therefore, is driven by the domestic political concerns of liberalizing coalitions of elites. These works serve as an excellent starting point to make the broader economic and political argument I put forth. Namely, joining and creating international organizations often finds its impetus in domestic political calculations.

Most work in the international organizations field still adopts the assumption that states join IOs to pursue “common or converging national interests of the member states” (Feld and Jordan 1994: 10). International or regional organizations, for the vast majority of this literature, reflect concerns over issues in the international environment that cannot be dealt with domestically (Archer 1992: 48). Thus, institutions are demand-driven and these demands arise out of international coordination or cooperation problems (see Martin 1992).

This work speaks to the issue of when and how international institutions matter in two ways. First, it provides empirical evidence of how institutions shape state behavior. Recently, institutional theorists have called for more empirical research to outline “well-delineated causal mechanisms” to explain the impact of international institutions, especially in reference to domestic political processes (Keohane and Martin 1995; Martin and

⁸ One challenge of this research question that limits the applicability of some models developed in the new institutionalist tradition is the issue of information. For most models of international–domestic interaction, information at the domestic level concerning the preferences of societal actors is important (cf. Milner 1997). As Chapter 2 discusses more fully, uncertainty is abundant in the transitional and the immediate post-transitional period (Whitehead 1989). There is precious little information about not only the preferences of some of the major actors, but even identifying who the important actors are can be difficult (Przeworski 1991).

Cambridge University Press

0521844827 - Democracy from Above: Regional Organizations and Democratization

Jon C. Pevehouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

8 Democracy from Above

Simmons 1998: 749, 757). By exploring how regional IOs influence the democratization process, this work elucidates some of the possible ways in which regional institutions interact with domestic politics to influence outcomes. Moreover, it delineates circumstances under which domestic elites may turn to international institutions to substitute for (or bolster) domestic institutions. As I show throughout the book, both membership and accession to an IO can be used strategically in the domestic arena, especially by autocratic states and states which have recently undergone a transition to democracy.

Second, by assessing how differences in the membership of institutions create varied outcomes with respect to democratization, this study shows how variations in institutions (on at least one dimension) can influence outcomes. Again, institutional theorists have lamented a lack of empirical investigation on whether differences among institutions may lead to diverse outcomes (Martin and Simmons 1998). This study makes a contribution to this question by delineating along what dimension (level of democracy within the membership) this variation matters for specific outcomes (democratization and democratic survival).

In a similar vein, this book examines the broader claim by realists that major powers are the driving force behind international institutions. If the outcomes engendered by regional organizations are simply an artifact of the preferences of major power members to support democracy, the institution can take very little credit in the success of democracy. To the contrary, I show that this argument does not hold empirically. Because most of the causal mechanisms begin with domestic elites in authoritarian or nascent democracies, it is not the institution itself that is the prime mover of the process. In those instances where regional institutions are the important first mover (in the case of external pressure) or where enforcement by the organization is the important issue, I show that this realist-oriented position is largely devoid of explanatory power. Through statistical and case material I show that regional institutions have an independent influence on the probability of regime change and regime duration. This is important not only to dispel the critique that regional organizations are epiphenomenal, but also to show that it is not the policies of one actor (e.g. the United States) within an organization that is driving the process.

The forgotten nexus

Not only does most international relations literature fail to deal with the issue of international organizations and democratization, work in comparative politics on the determinants of democratic transitions largely

Cambridge University Press

0521844827 - Democracy from Above: Regional Organizations and Democratization

Jon C. Pevehouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

ignores influences external to the nation-state. This trend has begun to change, however, in response to the sweeping changes in Eastern Europe. For example, there have been at least three edited volumes discussing international factors in the politics of regime change during the past decade (Pridham 1991b; Pridham, Herring, and Sanford 1994; Whitehead 1996a). While this literature has been rich in detailed case studies, little theorizing about causal mechanisms applicable across multiple cases has taken place. Geoffrey Pridham's (1991a: 21) own frustration with the literature has centered on this shortcoming: "The main analytical problem, however, is not establishing the relevance of the international dimension of regime change . . . Rather, the main problem is one of causality, of analysing what Almond has called 'the complex dynamic process' of interaction between international factors and domestic processes." By generating and testing hypotheses about regional organizations' influence on democratization through both large-N and case studies, I hope to elucidate some of these processes linking "international factors and domestic processes."

There have, of course, been a host of causal variables posited by comparativists to explain regime change and endurance. In the following chapters, I discuss these variables in some depth, indicating how they may function in conjunction with regional IOs. In the statistical models, some variables from extant theories are found to work independently of regional IOs, while in other models, it appears that regional IOs may erode the explanatory power of variables previously championed by scholars of democratization.

Various works have also touched on the broader issue of international influences on democratization and three main groups of causal mechanisms emerge from this literature: diffusion and demonstration effects; epistemic communities and spill-over; and the use of force. Diffusion and demonstration-effect hypotheses hold that the movement towards democracy in one state will "infect" neighbors with similar motives and bring parallel moves to democracy. The rise of global trade and the ease of communications provide transmission belts for democratic ideas and movements, which can provide an impetus for democracy within states. Empirically, there have been clusters of democratization (in both space and time), which would suggest some empirical veracity to this mechanism (Huntington 1991: 100–6; Whitehead 1996c).

The epistemic communities and spillover arguments are often related to interest group activity. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as human rights organizations (Sikkink 1996) or political parties (Grabendorff 1993) are the interlocutors of democracy in many of these theories. Similar to the traditional neo-functional arguments

Cambridge University Press

0521844827 - Democracy from Above: Regional Organizations and Democratization

Jon C. Pevehouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

10 Democracy from Above

concerning organizations and conflict, these arguments hold that NGOs or other informal organizations transmit technical information (e.g. how to hold elections) and/or norms concerning democracy (Grugel 1999). This can lead to a move towards liberalization or can be used to solidify the norms of civil society within a new democracy.

Finally, many observers have pointed to the use of force by other nation-states as a way to begin or secure a transition to democracy (Owen 2002). Examples include the imposition of a democratic government in both Japan and Germany after World War II, or the repeated use of force by the US in Latin America to alter the regime type of governments in that region.⁹ “Force” may also entail means short of physical violence. Although this work will discuss pressure from regional organizations as a catalyst for democracy, a significant body of literature discusses *unilateral* efforts to pressure for democratization. Most of this work centers on Latin America, where US attempts to foster democracy (short of armed invasion) have received attention for several decades (Drake 1998; Pastor 1989).

In the past few years, some scholars have trumpeted the belief that globalization has become a factor advancing democracy. As connections between states increase and distances reduce with the rise of virtual connections, some posit an increase in the flow of democratic ideas, and therefore regimes, across borders (cf. Hill and Hughes 1999). Often, however, the argument for globalization and democracy draws its causal link from increasing trade and economic interdependence. Such factors are not new in the international system (Keohane and Nye 2001). Moreover, these factors fall in line with much of the existing literature linking global economic conditions to domestic conditions, then to regime change. Such arguments are common in the second image reversed literature and many can be subsumed under existing causal theories.

I have chosen to concentrate on the significance of regional organizations since this is the most under-researched issue relating to democratization. The IO–democracy link continues to be asserted by academics and policymakers with little interest in specifying formal hypotheses or testing them. For example, in their article discussing IOs, interdependence, and democracy, Bruce Russett, John Oneal, and David Davis (1998) find that more democratic dyads (measured by the level of democracy in the least democratic state of the pair) are more likely to be involved in a similar set of IOs. They do not discuss this finding and the variable itself is only a

⁹ Although in many cases it is debatable whether the end goal of the US was democratization, this was often the stated justification for intervention. In some cases, democracy did actually result (e.g. Grenada). See Pastor 1989.