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INTERNATIONAL SOURCES OF DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING

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Introduction

The fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War were heralded as the "end of history" (Fukuyama 1989), marked by the triumph of western liberal democracy. One artifact of this perceived ideological victory was a sharp increase in international democracy promotion beginning in the 1980s and continuing into the present. International and especially regional organizations are often at the forefront of democracy promotion. What is more, scholars overwhelmingly find international organizations (IOs) are positive forces for democracy writ large, as well as democratic consolidation and long-term democratic survival (Pevehouse 2005; Mansfield and Pevehouse 2008; Donno 2013a; Nygard 2017; Poast and Urpelainen 2018). However, this increased emphasis on democracy promotion has more recently been accompanied by a sharp rise in cases of democratic backsliding and rampant illiberalism in new democracies whose transitions to democracy were heavily influenced and supported by the international community. Indeed, in the post-Cold War era total democratic collapse has become an increasingly rare regime outcome (Geddes et al. 2014). Instead, it is more common for democracies to experience democratic backsliding.

For example, in 2004 Hungary and Poland became members of the European Union (EU), an IO strongly associated with democracy promotion. However, beginning in 2010, Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán eliminated significant constitutional checks on executive power, diminished the independence of the judiciary, limited media pluralism, and modified the electoral system – all by legal means – to facilitate the continued dominance of his party. Poland embarked on a comparable trajectory when the Law and Justice Party (PiS) came to power in 2015 and began a campaign of concerted attacks against the media and the independence of the judiciary, with a particular focus on the Constitutional Tribunal. These trends are not unique to Europe but rather have emerged in a number of other new democracies around the world, including Bolivia, India, Mexico, Malawi, and the Philippines, despite their membership in IOs associated with democracy promotion, such as the Organization of American States, the African Union, the Council of Europe, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Although domestic factors are undoubtedly important sources of backsliding, the heavily domestic focus of nascent theories of backsliding is insufficient, particularly in the case of new,

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third wave democracies.[1] In these countries transitions to democracy and the accompanying formation and institutionalization of domestic democratic institutions were heavily influenced by international actors. What explains democratic backsliding in an age of unparalleled international support for democracy? In what ways has the international environment contributed to the recent surge in democratic backsliding and illiberalism around the world?

Theories of democracy contain important implications for the relationship between globalization and backsliding. Successful democracies require strong institutions that can organize mass participation in politics, aggregate and represent societal interests, and enable the state to both govern effectively and, critically, limit itself (Schumpeter 1950; Huntington 1968). These democracy-sustaining institutions include developed political parties and party systems, strong legislatures, independent judiciaries, and general state capacity. While several authors have argued that international factors – such as democracy assistance and autocratic regional powers – may have deleterious effects on democracy (Wedel 2001; Henderson 2003; Bush 2015; Diamond et al. 2016; Savage 2017), and others treat the recent rise of illiberal populism as a backlash against globalization (Rodrik 2011; Mounk 2018; Przeworski 2019), few studies have explicitly theorized or empirically tested the specific mechanisms linking globalization to democratic backsliding.

Drawing on institutional theories of democracy, this chapter argues that – along with other, related features of globalization – IOs associated with democracy promotion have unintentionally contributed to democratic backsliding by both failing to support and even stunting domestic democratic institutions. Indirectly, these IOs sow the seeds for future backsliding by neglecting a number of representative democratic institutions, focusing primarily on support for elections and elites and devoting significant resources to promoting rule of law, anti-corruption, civil society capacity, and gender equality. They also more directly contribute to backsliding by increasing relative executive power and shrinking the domestic policy space, which stunts critical representative democratic institutions and makes it difficult for elected leaders to govern effectively and provide public goods to citizens.[2]

After providing an overview of existing research on both democratic backsliding, with an emphasis on its illiberal components, and of recent work on international factors and regime outcomes, this chapter will outline the ways in which IOs that engage in democracy promotion unintentionally undermine the development and functioning of critical democratic institutions, especially representative ones. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications for both new and also more established democracies, and the areas this suggests for future research.

The Current State of Democracy: Democracy Promotion and Democratic Backsliding on the Rise

Following the end of the Cold War democracy promotion became a prominent foreign policy objective for mature western democracies in North America and western Europe. Often acting through international institutions they created and controlled, the goal of these efforts was effectively to promote a western form of democracy, namely, liberal democracy. Liberal democracy is comprised of both inherently democratic institutions, such as free and fair elections, legislatures, and political parties, but also more liberal components, such as guaranteed protection of human and minority rights (Mill 1859; Rawls 1993).

Over the last few decades democracy promotion, multilateral conditionality, democracy assistance, and transnational advocacy networks were all used to encourage democratization in the developing world (Levitsky and Way 2010). IOs are prominent in studies of international democracy promotion, with research finding they can support democratic transitions and

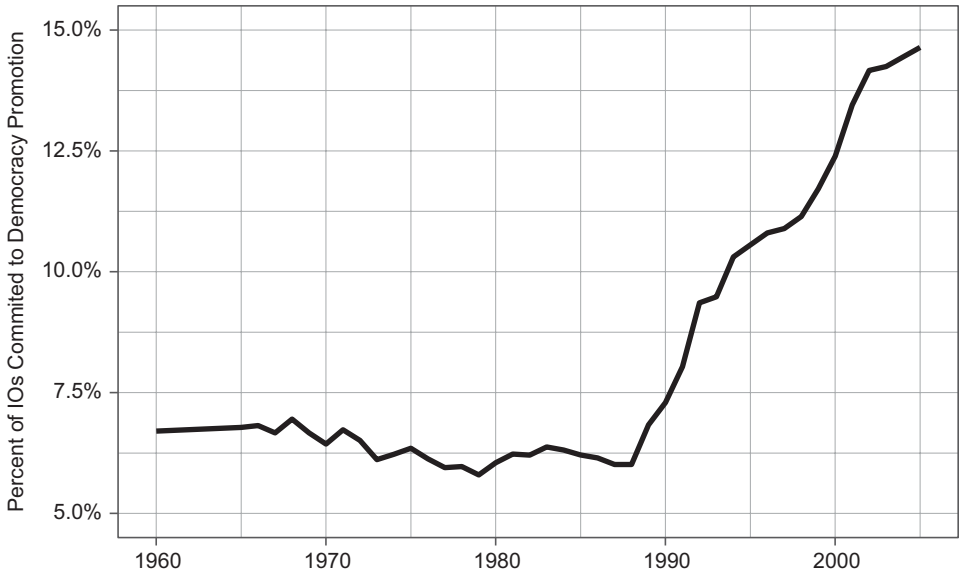

Figure 56.1 Percent of IOs committed to democracy promotion

consolidation among their member states. They are argued to do this primarily by focusing on domestic executives' behaviour and incentives, and also by providing election-related assistance (Pevehouse 2005; Donno 2013a; Poast and Urpelainen 2018). As Figure 56.1 illustrates, the percent of IOs that reference support for either democracy, human rights, and/or rule of law in their founding charters or other official documents has risen significantly over time (von Borzyskowski and Vabulas 2019). This dramatic increase in democratically committed IOs is the result of two related trends. First, rising globalization in the post-Cold War era was accompanied by a proliferation of all types of IOs, including democratically committed ones. At the same time, the collapse of communism and accompanying perceived ideological triumph of western liberal democracy drove international support for democracy to unprecedent levels. This, in turn, prompted a number of existing IOs to expand their mandates to reference support for democracy. For example, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), an IO today widely associated with democratic values, was founded in 1973, but did not include its commitment to democracy in its official documents until 1990.

This growing emphasis on democracy promotion by IOs has more recently been followed by an increase in cases of democratic backsliding around the world. Democratic backsliding occurs when elected officials weaken or erode (often liberal) democratic institutions and results in an illiberal or diminished form of democracy, rather than autocracy. Although research has identified case-specific and predominantly domestic causes of backsliding (Berman 2016; Hanley and Sikk 2016; Hernandez and Kriesi 2016; Krastev 2016; Rupnik 2016), few systemic theories of this phenomenon exist (Waldner and Lust 2018; Karolewski 2020). While research on regime outcomes is extensive, it is dominated by theories of democratization and democratic collapse and cases where democracies fail and are replaced by autocracies.

During their transitions to democracy states fall somewhere along the continuum between autocracy and consolidated democracy. Over time, as democratic bodies are institutionalized, a state progresses toward consolidation as a constitutional democracy. When setbacks undermine

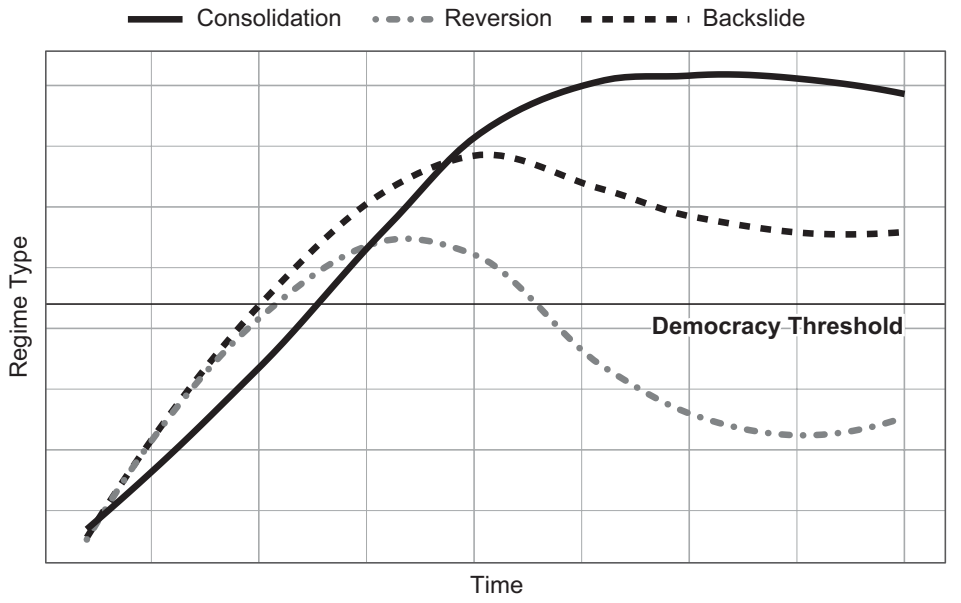

Figure 56.2 Democratic backsliding over time

democratic consolidation but do not result in autocracy states undergo a process of democratic deconsolidation (Foa and Mounk 2016) or democratic backsliding. Figure 56.2 illustrates a theoretical case of democratic backsliding showing how it is distinct from democratic consolidation and autocratic reversion.

Backsliding is a within-regime process (Waldner and Lust 2018) distinct from autocratic reversion: the outcome is an illiberal, diminished, or minimalist form of democracy, not autocracy. In other words, in cases of backsliding the minimal aspects of democracy – free and fair elections and mass participation in politics (Schumpeter 1950) – are maintained while other, often liberal institutions, are altered, weakened, or even completely dismantled. More specifically, democratic backsliding occurs when elected officials weaken or erode institutional checks on government power (Bermeo 2016), including the constitution, rule of law, civil and minority rights, the independence of the judiciary and media, and governmental separation of powers (Maeda 2010). Many of these institutions can be categorized as components of constitutional liberalism (Zakaria 1997), or what is often identified as the liberal aspect of western liberal democracy. As suggested by the range of institutions that can be targeted by elected officials, the outcomes of democratic backsliding can look different from one case to the next.

Using the Liberal Democracy Index from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) dataset, Figure 56.3 traces the annual percentage of democracies on each continent that have experienced democratic backsliding.[3] The Liberal Democracy Index measures the extent to which a country protects individual and minority rights, rule of law, judicial independence, and institutional checks on executive power (Coppedge et al. 2018). As such, it can capture subtle differences in levels of democracy that emerge due to backsliding.

These trends reflect a wider phenomenon that Luhrmann and Lindberg (2019) term the "third wave of autocratization," characterized by moves away from democracy in both democracies and autocracies beginning around 1993. Regime changes in this current wave tend to be more gradual than in previous waves of autocratization and have occurred in an unprecedented

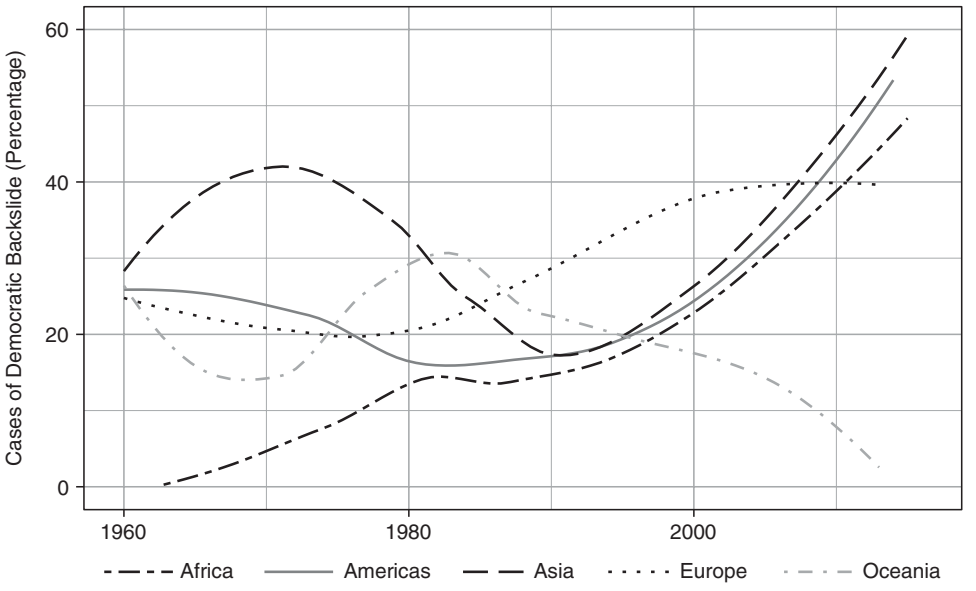

Figure 56.3 Cases of democratic backsliding (percentage)

number of democracies (Lührmann and Lindberg 2019). Nevertheless, they are increasingly common: 2020 is the first year since 2001 when there are more autocracies than democracies around the world (Lührmann et al. 2020). Ultimately, additional research is needed to determine if these democratic regressions are long-term trends or more temporary illiberal "swerves" that will ultimately result in a turn back toward liberal democracy (Bustikova and Guasti 2017). However, contemporary cases suggest the outcome of ongoing erosions, at least in the medium term, is a sort of illiberal democracy rather than authoritarianism (Lührmann and Lindberg 2019).

As noted above, backsliding has occurred within the European Union (EU), most notably in Hungary and then Poland. However, these illiberal trends are not unique to Europe but rather have also emerged in a number of other new democracies around the world. For example, consider the former Bolivian President Evo Morales, first elected in 2005, whose power increased significantly over time. After coming to power, Morales re-wrote the Bolivian Constitution to expedite his reforms and was accused of attacking the news media and packing national courts with his supporters. In 2016, the Bolivian government held a referendum to allow citizens to determine if Morales should be allowed to run for a fourth term in 2019. Although voters rejected the referendum Bolivia's highest court subsequently eliminated presidential term limits, allowing Morales to run for president in 2019 (Human Rights Watch 2019). Following Morales' post-2019 election resignation, however, the court reversed its decision regarding term limits (see Landau 2021).

Constitutional democracy has also been challenged in India since 2014 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi was elected and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won a strong majority in the national parliament (Thiruvengadam 2021). During its first term in office (2014–2019), Modi's government worked to gradually yet systematically undermine mechanisms of executive accountability by manipulating the electoral process, weakening the opposition, sidelining rivals

within the BJP, and limiting judicial independence. For example, in 2018, a former Modi aide and Governor of the Indian state of Karnataka, Vajubhai Vala, violated constitutional mandates by refusing to invite a non-BJP party alliance to form a government after the coalition won the election. At the national level, ahead of the 2019 elections, the BJP took steps to block the opposition in parliament from calling a vote of no confidence against Modi (although the BJP clearly had the votes to defeat the motion). Furthermore, in an unusual public press conference senior justices within the Supreme Court maintained that the then-chief justice, facing blackmail from the ruling BJP party, had relegated politically sensitive cases to carefully selected groups of justices, thereby undermining judicial independence. Furthermore, prominent news outlets have increasingly supported the ruling party while the Indian Election Commission has been accused of modifying election dates to favour Modi. These and other steps the Modi government took during its first term significantly eroded liberal constitutional democracy in India, and set the stage for Modi to consolidate his control of the state during his second term (Bal 2018; Khaitan 2020). These and other prominent cases of democratic backsliding are illustrated in Figure 56.4.

Despite becoming an increasingly common phenomenon over time, studies of democratic backsliding – particularly of its causes – "remain inchoate" (Waldner and Lust 2018). The few studies of democratic backsliding that do exist tend to focus predominantly on domestic-level causes of this regime outcome. Highlighting the central role that executives play in triggering backsliding, scholars find that power-seeking presidents are better able to initiate backsliding in cases where their power is unconstrained by institutional safeguards or oppositional political forces (Fish 2001; van de Walle 2003). These findings are reinforced by studies that suggest the collapse of social-democratic and centre-left parties (Berman 2016; Fomina and Kucharczyk 2016; Innes 2014; Krastev 2016), coupled with the rise of more extreme parties (Lochocki 2016), has also contributed to recent democratic erosions. Similarly, Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2013) find that actors (presidents, parties, militaries), not structures, determine regime outcomes. In particular, political actors' normative preferences about democracy and dictatorship, their modernization or radicalization policy preferences, and international political influences – both direct and indirect, exercised through external actors – all influence regime outcomes.

In addition to explanations based on political actors and institutions, others have attributed backsliding to structural and cultural factors at the domestic level. Economic factors are one prominent explanation. Scholars have focused on economic sources of democratic erosion, such as recession in general (Svolik 2008) and the Eurozone crisis in Europe specifically (Sánchez-Cuenca 2017). Authors have also highlighted the rise of populist parties, which have been particularly successful at exploiting anti-immigrant and, in Europe specifically, Eurosceptic sentiments among voters to gain power and challenge existing democratic structures in their respective countries (Krastev 2016; Reynié 2016; Rupnik 2016; Przeworski 2019; Bertoncini and Reynié 2021).

Although individual actors and institutional and structural domestic factors are all undoubtedly important sources of backsliding, this heavily domestic focus of nascent theories of backsliding is insufficient, particularly in the case of new democracies. In these countries transitions to democracy and the accompanying formation and institutionalization of domestic democratic organizations were heavily influenced by international actors. Indeed, this international influence is often cited as one of the defining characteristics of the third wave of democracy (Huntington 1991). The next section, therefore, turns to theories regarding international factors and national democracy.

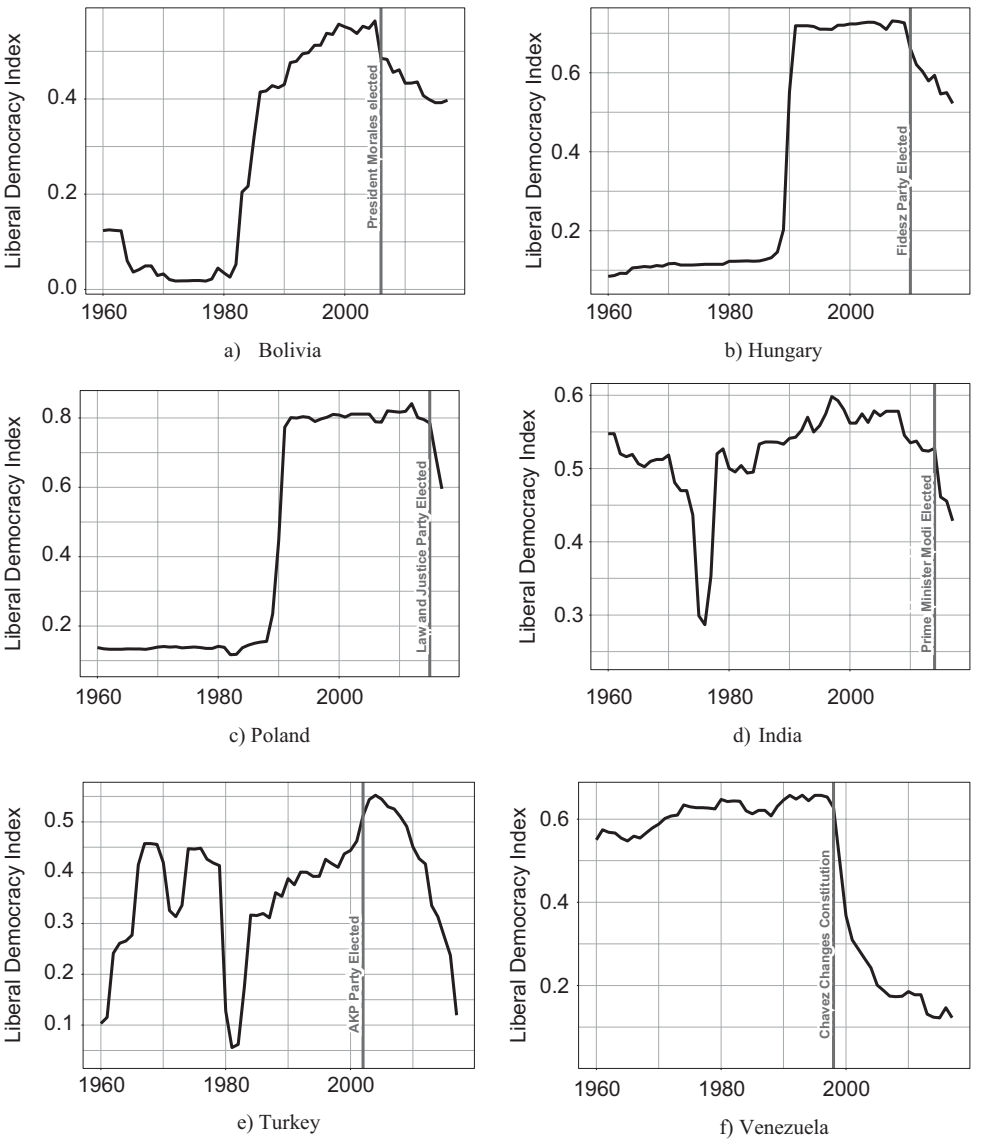

Figure 56.4 Prominent cases of democratic backsliding

International Factors and Regime Outcomes

Scholars have proposed a range of mechanisms linking international actors to domestic-level regime outcomes, considering both structural and more proximate, regionally based influences. For example, at the system-level, Gunitsky (2014) finds evidence of "hegemonic shocks" whereby changes in the relative distribution of power among leading states in the international system can create opportunities for regime imposition that lead to waves of domestic political and institutional shifts. The nature of the domestic reforms is conditioned on the political

identity of the emerging hegemon. Boix (2011), too, finds that systemic changes condition the extent to which development leads to democracy.

In addition to these system-level drivers of regime change, others have focused on more proximate international sources of democracy. One group of scholars emphasizes diffusion mechanisms, often at the regional level, to explain the regional and temporal clustering of events such as democratic transitions (Gleditsch and Ward 2006) and democratic revolutions (Beissinger 2007). Similar to diffusion, Levitsky and Way (2010) theorize that new democracies' levels of linkage to and leverage from western international actors influence their prospects of democratizing. Along related lines, Morlino (2011) proposes "external anchoring" as a means of conceptualizing this international-domestic interaction, arguing that negative and positive conditionality and socialization within IOs are the most promising mechanisms for understanding this external-internal relationship. EU conditionality is perhaps the most salient example of external anchoring. According to the External Incentives Model (EIM), EU accession and membership conditionality promote Europeanization – i.e. the domestic adoption of EU (liberal democratic) values and rules – among new and candidate member states throughout eastern Europe. According to this model, the EU leverages a combination of sanctions and rewards to alter the cost-benefit calculations of governments in these new democracies. Stronger and more credible incentives correspond with a higher likelihood that target states will adopt and sustain the EU's liberal democratic values and institutions (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2019).

Indeed, the EU and other IOs are often at the forefront of studies on the international sources of democracy and democracy promotion. Research on these organizations is largely positive, finding they can support democratic transitions and consolidation among their member states. IOs achieve these objectives primarily by focusing on domestic executives' behaviour and incentives as well as by providing election-related assistance (Pevehouse 2005; Donno 2013a; Genna and Hiroi 2015; Poast and Urpelainen 2018). Although it takes a number of forms, the main tools of international democracy promotion include election monitoring, financial assistance, and conditionality (Donno 2013b).

While most of the literature on international factors and democracy is positive, several scholars are more apprehensive. With respect to IOs specifically, Ulfelder (2008), for example, finds that state participation in major IOs has little effect on whether or not a state attempts or sustains democracy. Reiter (2001) argues that NATO has not and cannot advance democracy in southern and eastern Europe. Another body of work highlights the fact that, although they theoretically support liberal democracy, IOs are either reluctant, unwilling, or unable to sanction their member states for the violation of criteria on which membership in the organization is conditioned.

Consider the EU. To date, the EU's response to increasing illiberalism in Hungary and Poland has been fragmented, in part because the EU has a limited toolkit at its disposal for punishing member states for non-compliance with EU democratic standards. Prior to granting membership, the EU is able to use the carrot of membership to incentivize states to uphold democratic conditions. However, after accession the EU's leverage diminishes in large part due to the fact that there are no mechanisms by which membership can be revoked and also because the existing sanctions are relatively weak (Jenne and Mudde 2012).[4] Failures to sanction democratic violations have similarly been noted with regards to the Organization of American States (OAS). In 2001, the OAS adopted the Inter-American Democratic Charter to protect representative democracy in its member states. However, the organization's commitment to absolute sovereignty and nonintervention have led to an uneven track record when responding

to democratic crises in the region (Levitt 2006; Arceneaux and Pion-Berlin 2007). The African Union (AU) adopted a similar charter in 2007, the implementation of which has also been limited (Wiebusch et al. 2019).

Similarly, international courts like the European Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights were designed in part to protect democracy at the national level. However, as has often been the case with the EU, OAS, and AU, most of these courts lack the mechanisms to enforce democratic norms and institutions at the domestic level or rely heavily on national processes that allow domestic governments more leeway to make institutional changes that threaten democracy (Ginsburg 2019).

IOs' limitations with respect to promoting democracy or containing backsliding among their member states are considered to be relatively indirect international factors that contribute to democratic backsliding. However, in hesitating to sanction democratic violations in its member states these IOs may be creating an "authoritarian equilibrium" that not only fails to dismantle, but also inadvertently contributes to the survival of autocratic regimes within the organization. Indeed, according to Kelemen (2020), the EU's response to backsliding in Hungary and Poland has done precisely that. Through a combination of European-level party politics that shield emerging autocrats from EU intervention, EU funds that sustain these autocrats, and the relative ease with which disaffected citizens can emigrate, Kelemen argues the EU helps sustain semi-autocratic states such as Hungary.

Scholars have also identified instances where liberal democracy is being directly challenged at the international level (Tansey 2016; Götz 2021). Recently, powerful authoritarian states – including China, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela – have engaged in "authoritarian activism," undertaking coordinated efforts to contain democracy at the global level. They have used a range of tactics to achieve these ends, including providing diplomatic and economic support to other authoritarian regimes, undermining cooperation among western democracies, and working to establish robust international media presences. In addition, these powerful authoritarian states are often working to reshape existing international institutions that were originally intended to promote human rights and democracy into organizations that are more favourable toward autocratic regimes. They have done so, for example, by challenging the rules these groups have in place regarding internet governance (Diamond et al. 2016). In addition to attempting to influence traditionally democratic international and regional organizations, these autocratic powers have created new international institutions, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, that seek to "erode liberal-democratic norms, replacing them with counter-norms that emphasize 'state security, civilizational diversity, and traditional values'" (Cooley 2016, 11). While these countries are collaborating to challenge the international liberal political order the West has scaled back efforts to promote, protect, or even support democracy abroad; and increasingly also at home.

The International Side of Backsliding: The Role of IOs

While scholars have identified the limits IOs face in promoting democracy beyond accession, few have considered the extent to which these organizations may more actively impede domestic institutional development. In this section, I draw on institutional theories of democracy to show how IOs may unintentionally contribute to backsliding in new democracies. First, I discuss how IOs most commonly associated with democracy and democracy promotion, which heavily emphasize elites and elections, fail to support other critical democratic institutions in emerging democracies. This creates conditions for future backsliding. IOs also more directly contribute to backsliding by simultaneously increasing executive power and constraining the

domestic policy space, which further impedes institutional development. I argue the resulting combination of factors – a strong executive surrounded by weak institutions – makes backsliding more likely.

Democracy Promotion

Because executives serve as the main intermediaries between states and IOs (Moravcsik 1994) democracy promotion by these organizations heavily relies on interactions with the executive branch. These IOs create incentives for incumbents to undertake institutional reforms (Donno 2013a), use economic sanctions to deter anti-democratic (or at least illegal) behaviour (Genna and Hiroi 2015), influence their international reputation for democracy (Poast and Urpelainen 2018), and help democratic leaders gain the support of other domestic elites (Pevehouse 2005). When they engage in democracy promotion IOs also focus extensively on elections, viewing these as a critical pre-requisite for long-term democratic success (Schedler 2002; Howard and Roessler 2006; Hadenius and Teorell 2007). While these IOs provide extensive support for executives, elections, and civil society organizations, they focus far fewer resources on developing other important democratic institutions that promote political accountability and representation in a constitutional democracy, such as political parties (Carothers 2002), or ones that serve as checks on the democratically elected government after the election, such as legislatures and opposition parties.

Although elections and executive compliance with democratic institutions are important for democracy (Dahl 1971; Huntington 1991; Przeworski et al. 2000) they are insufficient to guarantee democratic quality and survival. The limits of election monitoring have been identified (Hyde 2011; Simpser and Donno 2012) and elections alone are insufficient to promote ongoing democratic progress (Flores and Nooruddin 2016), or at least democratic governance. IOs devote much less attention (or at least fewer resources) to promoting and developing other constitutional institutions critical to sustaining a new constitutional democracy.

Institutionalist theories of democracy argue organizations for managing mass participation in politics and performing key representative functions are equally if not more important than other functions (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Almond and Verba [1963] 1989; Mainwaring 1999; Grzymala-Busse 2007; Herman 2015). Such institutions include political parties, which aggregate mass interests and serve as intermediaries between citizens and the state (Huntington 1968; Carothers 2006), and civil society organizations. Horizontal checks on government power are also critical, as are those that constrain the power of political winners (Graham et al. 2017). This includes independent judiciaries, which can block executives seeking to increase their power (Gibler and Randazzo 2011), and intra-governmental checks and balances such as legislatures that house opposition parties (Graham et al. 2017).

In short, IOs promoting democracy unintentionally make democratic backsliding more likely by focusing predominantly on elites and elections at the expense of other institutions that act as checks on governmental powers and serve critical representative functions in a constitutional democracy.

Executive Power

Executives tend to be viewed as the critical intermediaries, or gatekeepers, between international actors and their countries (Moravcsik 1994; Yilmaz 2002; Tolstrup 2013). As such, IOs engaging in democracy promotion work extensively with national-level executives and, in the process, often increase their relative power at the domestic level in several ways.

First, IOs provide democracy-related financial assistance to states. This financial assistance, which is often received, controlled, and allocated by executives, increases government power over economic activity, which is found to be problematic for democracy (Friedman 1958). Foreign aid also weakens governmental accountability and stunts civil society development. Democracy first developed when elites demanded increased rights and government accountability in return for taxes (North 1990; Tilly 1990). However, aid from international sources undermines this accountability mechanism, making rulers more responsive to international donors than to citizens (Brautigam 1992; Karl 1997; Moore 1998).

Second, IO membership redistributes power between domestic governmental institutions, often to the executive's advantage. As IO members, executives either represent their state within the organization or they have the power to directly appoint representatives to make decisions on their behalf. As a result, international cooperation increases executive power over domestic policy and allows them to influence or even ratify international decisions. This is often done "with relatively little ministerial, legislative, judicial, or public oversight" (Moravcsik 1994, 7). The financial aid states receive from IOs further contributes to this power asymmetry. Foreign aid provides resources outside the national budget, allowing executives to pursue projects without legislative approval and further shifting the balance of power away from the legislature toward the executive (Brautigam 2000).

Finally, in certain IOs membership conditionality requires countries to develop an extensive bureaucracy to facilitate preparations for membership. To this end, IOs offer technical assistance to states for constructing regulatory, economic, and other bureaucratic offices. A strong bureaucracy and state capable of providing public goods is important for democracy (Grzymala-Busse 2007; Fortin 2012). However, bureaucracies are unaccountable to voters and often closely linked to, and thus serve as, an additional resource for executives.

Although on their own strong executives are not necessarily incompatible with democracy, they are problematic when institutional checks are underdeveloped (see also Landau 2021; Uitz 2021).

Domestic Policy Space

The domestic policy space consists of the universe of policy alternatives political actors can debate, adopt varying positions on, and implement. A meaningful policy space is critical for institutional development, conditions whether leaders can govern effectively, and influences the strategies politicians adopt to appeal to voters. In states with expansive and varied policy spaces, institutions that aggregate mass interests and check executive power develop more fully, governments are better able to provide public goods, and, therefore, elections are contested along ideological lines. However, when the policy space is limited, institutions remain underdeveloped and elections occur in an ideological void.

Research finds that economic interdependence due to globalization has led to policy convergence both across countries (Andrews 1994; Cerny 1994; Pierson 1995; Rodrik 1997; Mosley 2000; Ross 2000; Simmons and Elkins 2004) and even across political parties within the same country (Mishra 1999), especially with respect to economic policy outcomes. Like international markets, IOs also often specify policy requirements for prospective and current member states. The upper limit the EU imposes on members' budget deficits as a tool of market integration and monetary policy coordination is a salient example (Mosley 2000).

A limited domestic policy space creates challenges for several critical democratic institutions, including political parties and party systems. Institutionalized parties compete in elections by situating themselves along salient, politicized societal cleavages linked to policy outcomes

(Lipset and Rokkan 1967). However, IO policy requirements often leave states with fewer policy alternatives to consider and voters tend to know that the policy options available to their governments are limited, especially when it comes to economic policies (Hellwig 2014). Therefore, it is difficult for parties to differentiate themselves from one another based on economic appeals. Instead, they emphasize non-economic valence issues, or uncontroversial issues "on which all parties declare the same objective but dispute each other's competence in achieving the desired policy" (Kitschelt et al. 1999, 137), such as corruption or nationalism. This apolitical competition, in turn, hollows out domestic party competition. This is particularly problematic for new democracies and impedes their continued democratic progress, which depends in part on the extent to which parties structure political conflict (Dix 1992; Mainwaring 1998; also McCoy and Somer 2021).

External policy requirements also impede legislative development in new democracies by limiting the extent to which these institutions can perform their primary functions of proposing, drafting, and implementing legislation. This marginalization of the legislature has several consequences. First, legislatures create an impetus for party system development; however, when legislatures are weak, parties lack a forum in which to develop and mature. Another consequence is that the legislature, which plays a critical role in providing horizontal accountability through opposition parties, is unable to check executive power. Indeed, in addition to the judiciary and opposition parties, legislatures are the primary institutional check on the executive (Diamond et al. 1999; O'Donnell 1999; Fish 2006).

Finally, a diminished domestic policy space limits the extent to which politicians can compete for office based on ideological differences and evidence of effective governance. In addition to limiting the policy options available to elected officials, economic policy requirements imposed by IOs restrict governments' fiscal resources for providing public goods by setting limits on tariffs, public spending, and government deficits. Without these sources of revenue governments have fewer resources at their disposal to provide public goods for voters. Unable to credibly propose future changes to policies imposed by IO membership requirements, or to campaign for office based on evidence of effective public goods provision, incumbents instead turn to populism or clientelism to win over voters. This style of politics impedes democratic progress in young democracies (Flores and Nooruddin 2016).

The Impact of Globalization Revisited

IOs contribute to backsliding in new democracies via three interrelated mechanisms. These organizations neglect important democratic institutions other than executives and elections when they engage in democracy promotion; they increase relative executive power at the domestic level; and they limit states' domestic policy options via requirements for membership. However, IOs are just one of the many ways in which globalization has shifted core policymaking powers away from representative institutions toward bureaucrats and technical experts.

Like IO membership requirements, free trade agreements, international treaties, and other aspects of globalization also place limits on states' domestic policy space. This creates inherent tensions between national democracy and "hyper-globalization,"[5] which requires "shrinking domestic politics and insulating technocrats from the demands of popular groups" (Rodrik 2011, 189–190). Although perhaps particularly problematic in new democracies, where representative institutions are still forming, this shift away from policymaking via elected representatives likely has implications for mature democracies as well.

Schumpeter's minimalist definition of democracy (1950), which defines democracies as systems in which representatives are elected via competitive elections, highlights another often

underemphasized yet critical characteristic of democracy: in a democracy, *governments must be able to govern*. However, hyper-globalization and international economic integration are making governance increasingly difficult for democratically elected officials. International agreements and requirements serve to limit the domestic policy options available to elected officials both at the executive and legislative levels. Furthermore, as the policy issues that confront states – such as climate change, monetary policy, international economic processes, and countless bilateral and multilateral trade agreements – have grown in their complexity and become inherently transnational, power is again shifting away from representative institutions, falling instead under the purview of bureaucracies and highly specialized technocrats at either the domestic or international levels. Indeed, one side effect of globalization has been that a rising number of policy decisions are subject to international agreements and requirements or simply delegated to international bodies altogether. This has led to a trend in western democracies that Mounk (2018) terms "undemocratic liberalism:" liberal aspects of a state, such as freedom of speech and protection of human and minority rights, are upheld. But policy decisions are increasingly made by courts, technocrats, and bureaucrats that are not subject to democratic accountability or oversight. This has created a sort of post-politics environment in which traditional policy issues – such as economic policies – are no longer debated, citizens feel unrepresented by their democratically elected officials, and governments are forced to seek out alternative ways to win over voters and maintain their power.

Conclusion and Areas for Future Research

Democratic backsliding, which involves attacks against democratic and liberal institutions by elected officials, has quickly become a widespread phenomenon. In light of this trend, within just the last few years – especially since the election of Donald Trump as US president in 2016 – work on democratic backsliding has proliferated and can broadly be grouped into two categories. On the one hand, there are a significant number of publications focused on specifying precisely what contemporary democratic backsliding is, discussions of how it can be avoided, the extent to which American democracy is in danger, and, relatedly, attempts to more explicitly define populism and link it to backsliding (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018; Mounk 2018; Pappas 2019; Przeworski 2019). A related body of work focuses on identifying sources of ongoing democratic decline and rising illiberalism around the world, highlighting a range of potential sources, predominantly at the domestic level, including citizens' authoritarian personalities (Feldman, Mérola, and Dollman 2021; Gronfeldt et al. 2021), and the role of intellectuals (Applebaum 2020), as well as structural factors such as economic stagnation and rising inequality (Scheiring 2021), increased polarization, changes to traditional parties and party systems (McCoy and Somer 2021), the role of social media, immigration (Hadj-Abdou 2021), and rising nationalism (Mounk 2018; Przeworski 2019; Berezin 2021).

Although most of this work focuses predominantly on domestic-level sources of backsliding aspects of globalization are inherent in many of these arguments, albeit more explicit in some than in others. The emphasis on increased nationalism, opposition to immigration, and the role of growing economic inequality underscores grievances related to globalization; in particular, observers have attributed populists' increased electoral success and related citizen support to these societal pressures induced by globalization. However, while globalization is frequently identified as one culprit of recent democratic erosion and rising illiberalism, the specific mechanisms linking globalization to backsliding are rarely outlined theoretically or tested empirically. As elected officials around the world continue to manipulate the liberal democratic institutions around them to maintain and increase their power it is imperative for future research

to more precisely identify the different ways in which the current international environment precipitates these domestic-level shifts. This chapter takes one step in this direction by theoretically outlining how international organizations can contribute to democratic backsliding in new democracies by primarily supporting elections and elites during the democratization process but neglecting other democratic institutions, increasing relative executive power, and limiting the domestic policy space.

Core representative institutions in both new and mature democracies are facing unprecedented challenges as the role of the international environment in domestic politics has expanded. Additional research is needed to fully understand how the erosion of the traditional domestic policy space around which democratic politics are contested has created challenges for government accountability, representation, and ultimately liberal democracy in the contemporary world. A theoretical framework that specifies the different ways in which domestic representative institutions are impacted by international-level processes will make a critical contribution to emerging theories of democratic backsliding in general, as well as the ways it is linked to globalization and the rise of populism.

Notes

1 This set of third wave democracies broadly consists of states that transitioned to democracy following Portugal's 1974 Carnation Revolution (Huntington 1991).
2 The argument developed in this chapter builds closely on work previously published in *Comparative Political Studies*. See Meyerrose (2020).
3 A case is coded as an instance of backsliding if the change from year $t-5$ to year t along the Liberal Democracy Index is negative. This focus on 5-year periods, rather than year-to-year changes, is justified by the fact that democratic backsliding is an incremental process that occurs over time (Waldner and Lust 2018).
4 The one exception is Article 7 of the Treaty of the European Union which gives the European Commission the power to revoke certain membership privileges, such as voting rights in the European Council, for "serious and persistent breaches of democratic principles" (Sedelmeier 2014, 106). Although in 2018 the European Parliament did finally vote to invoke Article 7 against Hungary, any action would require an unanimous vote within the European Commission. This is quite unlikely, given that Poland also has a representative in the Commission.
5 Rodrik (2011) defines hyper-globalization as global economic neoliberalism, which has essentially been the equivalent of economic globalization since the 1980s.

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