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Empowering Evidence -Based Solutions



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At the international level, IOs are in themselves effective platforms for leaders of democratizing states to effectively engage with those from established democracies that have consolidated democracy. This allows them to exchange ideas, knowledge and experiences about democratic policy procedures and standard practices. It also facilitates the formation of

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Democratic Backsliding

IOs are proven to be successful in promoting democracy in emerging and new democracies, but a closer analysis reveals that these mechanisms are insufficient and are often less effective in ensuring democratic resilience. Although IOs generally promote ~~dem~~, their emphasis on the electoral cycle and executive empowerment creates conditions for and increases the likelihood of democratic backsliding in transitional democracies.

Emphasis on Electoral Cycle

One of the most significant reasons why IOs contribute to democratic backsliding in transitional democracies is their predominant emphasis on the electoral cycle at the detrimental of developing other critical democratic institutions. As democracies ~~de~~ a functioning governance structure when they are in a state of transition, IOs often prioritize building the capacity of states in first fulfilling the traditional requirements of democracy, mass political participation and free and fair electi ~~on~~ as a baseline for developing other democratic



to power through the traditional component of democracy but has also given them internal and external legitimacy as democratically elected leaders.

While elected executives maintain traditional requirements of democracy



Weak Enforcement Devices

Even after reversions have taken place, IOs often lack a strong enforcement mechanism to impose policies on the now autocratic states to restore democratic order and reorient these states back on track with previous democratic development. This is not that IOs simply do not have a mechanism to curb autocratic reversion once it has taken place. There are wide arrays of mechanisms such as economic sanctions and regime condemnation (Poast and Urpelainen, 2018). These mechanisms may enable IOs to create economic, political, and reputation costs on the now autocratic states for renegeing on democratic commitment, and eventually force IOs to embrace the mutually beneficial cooperation within IOs and the value of being a part of a democratic community. However, the incentives to encourage perpetrators of autocratic reversals to conform as they believe that incentives to remain in power by exercising their monopoly on the use of force far outweigh the benefits of the slow and uncertain process of democratic transition and consolidation.

commitment is not absolute. There remains room for autocratic states to renege on a commitment without significant repercussions. Consequently, there is no reason for initiators to maintain autocratic



backsliding more likely but have also failed to prevent autocratic reversion in transitional democracies. Having advanced this main argument, it is important to consider the broader debate relevant to this phenomenon. In the baseline, this research directly engaged in a general debate on the IOs democracy nexus, that is, does the IOs membership and the subsequent benefits derived from joining IOs strengthen the democratization efforts of transitional democracies? This research posits the argument that while IOs seem to be effective in achieving these ends, they can be limited in ensuring that their member states abide by democracy indefinitely. Specifically, the findings of this research suggest that IOs promote democracy by catering to domestic politics of democratizing member states and building their capacity at both domestic and international level, their efforts that tend to focus on elections and executive aggrandizement have instead allow democratic backsliding to occur. Moreover, as IOs cannot intervene in the internal affairs of their member states and often lack an overarching enforcement mechanism to reorient them back to democracy, autocratic reversals often succeed, and autocratic regimes tend to survive in transitional democracies despite their IOs membership.

It is observable that despite much impotence of IOs pertaining to democratic backsliding and autocratic reversion, they carry some benefits in helping states democratize. The question then is: are backsliding and autocratic states within IOs a threat to the democracy-promoting goals and overall operations of these organizations? If so, should IOs then encourage all states regardless of their established or potential regime type to democratic or non-democratic to join IOs for the sake of effective global governance? As mentioned before, as IOs are effective platforms for multilateral engagement between leaders of democratizing states and those of consolidated democracies, they can facilitate the formation and maintenance of common expectations on democratic policy procedures and standard practices and reduce future uncertainties among member states. However, at the same time that IOs encourage democratization by allowing the Z } u u μ v] š Ç } (u } Œ] • [š } • }] o] ì š Z] Œ À o μ • allow%o Œ š] • their autocratic and backsliding counterparts to socialize their illiberal norms and values that directly challenge those of the former.



backsliding or autocratic states with a powerful alternative to democratic transitions at the international level but has also allowed leaders of these states to maintain power at the



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zin Mar Khing is a recent graduate, holding both undergraduate and graduate degree in international relations at Webster University. She has presented her research Covert Operations: Means or Ends at the annual Peace and Conflict Resolution Conference, while pursuing her undergraduate degree. Her academic interests and research focus on conflict management, ethnic conflict, international organizations, democracy, and human rights issues.



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