Democratic Survival and the Third Wave of Democratization

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After the euphoria of the third wave of democratization began to subside, both scholars and democratic reformers turned to the next task: guaranteeing democracy's survival (Huntington 1991). This would be a daunting task, including re-building institutions grounded in democratic practice and (re)legitimating democracy for elites and masses within the state. Most importantly, it meant overcoming opposition to new institutions by groups that could halt reform or return the regime to authoritarian rule. Although a variety of factors are hypothesized to influence democratic consolidation, both the international and regional contexts are often overlooked.\(^2\)

Here, I develop and test a general theory of how membership in regional international organizations (IOs) can influence the process of democratic consolidation. My contention is that regional IOs are used by young democratic regimes to consolidate reforms through multiple mechanisms. IOs serve as a commitment device to bind elites (both those in favor and against new institutions) to reform. This commitment arises from the political and economic costs incurred by joining IOs and failing to abide by these agreements. In addition, IOs can be used by elites to bribe groups who may turn against the regime, by offering a direct transfer of resources or expanding the range of resources that can be used as side-payments to opponents.

This theoretical and empirical investigation is important to international relations theorists, comparative politics scholars, and policymakers. For international relations, I highlight the importance of international institutions in influencing outcomes at the domestic level. In the realm of comparative politics, I show that factors external to the nation-state can have a

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\(^1\) This paper is closely based on my paper With a Little Help from My Friends? Regional Organizations and the Consolidation of Democracy, *American Journal of Political Science*, 2002. While the theoretical setup of the paper is largely taken from that piece, all of the empirical results are new.

\(^2\) This is less true than was the case ten years ago: See Gleditsch and Ward 2006; Kelley 2004; Rudra 2005; for a few examples.
significant (although not determining) impact on the process of democratic consolidation. Finally, given the recent interest from policymakers in utilizing IOs to preserve democracy, this study provides important findings concerning the circumstances under which these organizations will assist in solidifying democracy.

I begin by discussing the nature of the consolidation problem and the dynamics of domestic politics that can threaten young democracies. Next, I outline how regional institutions can assist in the consolidation of democracy with discussions of both the demand for regional organizations as well as the supply-side arguments. Finally, I test the argument using event history analysis to analyze democratic longevity from 1975 to 2000. I find that joining regional organizations that are more homogenously composed of democracies are associated with increased longevity for new democracies.

**The Nature of the Consolidation Problem**

What factors contribute to the duration of democracy? Can young democracies overcome challenges to their nascent institutions posed by anti-democratic forces that previously benefited from authoritarianism? For democracy to become consolidated, it must overcome these short-term challenges, often labeled negative consolidation (Pridham 1995, 169). Empirically, the survival rate of democracies in their infancy is quite low: one-third of all new democracies fail within five years (Power and Gasiorowski 1997).³

A key factor explaining this political vulnerability is the change in the structure of domestic institutions. By their very nature, institutions have distributional consequences, and as old institutions are cast aside and new institutions are formed, new "winners" and "losers" arise

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³ I am largely using consolidation and longevity as synonyms in this paper. I realize many would argue that consolidation is a more qualitative than quantitative measure, yet at a minimum, longevity is a necessary even if not sufficient condition for consolidation.
(Przeworski 1991). As Valenzuela notes, distributional squabbles flowing from institutional change are the essence of the consolidation process: "while democratic consolidation is basically about the elimination of formal and informal institutions that are inimical to democracy, it takes the form of a struggle between actors who benefit-or think they could benefit at a certain point-from those institutions' existence, and those who do not" (1992, 71). Both winners and losers can pose a threat to democracy.

**Losers' Incentives and New Political Institutions**

Distributional losers often pose the most visible threat to nascent democracies. Unhappy with their new status, losers focus only on their short-term deprivations rather than the prospect of future gains under a democratic system. Any group may fall into this category but the military and business elites often stand out as potential spoilers in the consolidation effort.

The military can provide the largest roadblock to democratic consolidation, especially if they were an integral part of the previous authoritarian government (Aguero 1995). There are generally two dynamics that lead the military to move against a nascent democracy. First, if the military feels its interests are threatened during a time when institutions are contested, it is likely to move against its opponents at home (Dassel 1998). Moreover, the military may feel that society has become too polarized and that strong central leadership is necessary to protect "the state" (Huntington 1968, 194-196). In these cases, democratization suffers a clear setback even when power is returned to an elected government as the political fabric of a society suffers and the probability of recurrent coups increase (Londregan and Poole 1990).

The second dynamic that may lead the military to move against a new democratic regime arises when the regime attempts to establish civilian control over the military. Post-transitional
governments are placed in a difficult position vis-a-vis the military: although it is widely recognized that democracy requires civilian supremacy over the military, this can prove a difficult task since the regime must simultaneously try to keep the military loyal to the new democratic institutions.

The military, however, does not usually act alone. Other societal groups may collude and even pressure the military for action against a democratic regime. Concerns of business elites can trigger such an intervention (Whitehead 1989, 84). The lack of protection for property rights, fear of losing favorable treatment within government institutions, or excessive regulation can spur economic elites to withhold support from a regime, even actively work against it. While economic elites may not possess the resources to directly overthrow the regime, they can sow the seeds of discord that could undermine consolidation of the system or ally with a group which does possess the power to depose the government (Aguero 1995).

Because transitional political institutions are new and fragile, the costs of altering them are lower than if the institutions were highly entrenched (North 1990). This lower cost translates into a lower risk for elites who perceive themselves as "distributional losers" under the reformed institutions. It is important to remember that military or economic elites do not necessarily "lose" before they move against the system. A perception that they may suffer losses under the new government will be enough to spur them to action.

**Winners and the Threat to Democracy**

Winners can attempt to undermine political institutions by canceling elections, suspending reform, or even cracking down on potential anti-regime forces. Why would winners take this action, especially if they are winning in the short term? The explanation arises out of a
perceived lack of credible commitment from the winners to the new institutions. If groups within
the state do not feel democratic reform is sincere, they will not support new political institutions
which can force elites in control to reverse democratic reform.

There are two main sources of political credibility problems for newly democratic states. The first difficulty is information-related. Regimes can and do begin reform which they have no
intention of completing since there are benefits that accrue to those who make economic reforms
(Frye 1997). Given that the regime is new, external and internal actors have little information
about the true type of government in power. This uncertainty over the intentions of the new
government can limit the benefits of reform for those who are sincere. Earnest reformers would
benefit from sending a credible signal to distinguish themselves from fraudulent reformers.

The second source of credibility problems lies in the new regimes' lack of reputation for
self-restraint and honoring commitments (Linz 1978). New regimes have no track record of
enacting reform and thus foster fewer expectations that commitments will be credible.
Compounding this problem is that the winners cast existing institutions aside during many
transitions, giving a negative reputation to those in power (Whitehead 1989, 78). Since winners'
past behavior consisted of gutting domestic institutions, their ability to signal commitments will
be limited. This is especially true of attempts to signal credible reform through domestic, internal
mechanisms. One way to enhance the credibility of such a commitment would be to raise the
costs of reneging on reforms and to have the commitment monitored by an external agent.

If societal elites do not believe reform to be sincere, they are unlikely to lend support to
the new government. This lack of support can lead to reactions on the part of the regime which
undermine the new democracy: "If each political sector concludes that the democratic
commitment of the other is lukewarm, this will reduce the motivation of all, and so perpetuate
the condition of fragility" (Whitehead 1989, 94). The winners perceive that the new institutions are under attack, and this lack of respect for the governing elite's authority can lead winners to reverse the democratization process, citing the need to pursue further reform. Haggard and Kaufman allude to this dynamic when they argue "the fact that so many leaders in new democracies have acted autocratically in crisis situations implies that such behavior cannot be explained simply in terms of personal ambition or lack of concern for democratic institutions" (1995, 8). Domestic elites need to be reassured that liberalization is credible. Leaders would benefit from a way to guarantee their commitment to reform and/or a credible signal that they are serious about reform. Regional organizations can help fulfill this role.

**Regional Organizations: Binding Winners and Losers through Commitments**

Regional IOs can assist reformers in making a credible commitment to political reform when their own domestic options for credible commitments are limited. These causal mechanisms function when the state is a member of an organization and especially when a state joins a regional IO. Why are these external commitments potentially more credible than domestic acts? First, IOs signal a commitment to reform by setting in place mechanisms to increase the cost of anti-regime behavior. This increased cost arises from conditionality imposed by the organization on members. Any reversal of reform can bring sanctions, even expulsion, from the organization.

This conditionality is a credible signal to internal and external actors that the regime is serious about reform, especially since a third party controls monitoring and enforcement. In addition, the costs associated with membership (fulfilling the initial conditions as well as traditional costs of membership) lend credibility to the commitment. Finally, membership in
regional IOs can create unique audience costs for nascent democracies. Membership in some IOs is sometimes conditional upon domestic liberalization. The European Union (EU) requires all members to be liberal, free market democracies, as does the Council of Europe (Whitehead 1993). This phenomenon is not limited to Europe: the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) also contains a clause in its founding treaty requiring members to have a democratic polity (Dominguez 1998). In addition, the Organization of American States (OAS) now conditions membership on democracy (Hakim 1993; Legler, Lean, and Boniface 2007).

International organizations have been noted for their ability to constrain the actions of member states. Specifically, it argued that joining IOs is a credible way to lock-in policies or reforms to guard against future policy reversals (Goldstein 1998, 143-144). These same principles and mechanisms are at work here—because the IOs serve as an external enforcement agent, the credibility of the commitment is enhanced. In addition, the high costs imposed by these organizations (e.g., sanctions or expulsion) create a clear incentive to work within the rules of the system. This cost serves as a potential deterrent to winners who would undermine liberal reform and thus is the key source of credibility for domestic reformers.

This external constraint can guard against backsliding arising from time-inconsistent preferences of leaders or changes in state leadership (political parties or individuals). This delegation "is a tactic used by governments to 'lock-in' and consolidate democratic institutions, thereby enhancing their credibility and stability vis-a-vis nondemocratic political threats" (Moravcsik 2000, 220).

Membership conditionality costs and external monitoring, however, are not the only sources of credibility enhancement for winners who join these institutions. Joining an IO can entail financially costly measures that enhance the action's credibility. Fulfilling the initial
condition of membership can require substantial policy changes and financial outlays. In this view, membership in many IOs requires either the creation of additional bureaucracy, membership dues (to fulfill the IO's budget obligations), even economic or monetary reform. For example, upon joining the EU, Spain was forced to implement a value added tax (VAT), which required a large restructuring of the domestic tax system (Pridham 1995, 181). Such costs can be a clear signal of the state's commitment to the organization and its conditions.

Moreover, conditions imposed by IOs often require specific policies that may ease tensions among competing groups. For example, the EU requires a commitment to respect property rights and compensation for property taken by the state. Whitehead argues this has "offered critical external guarantees to the business and propertied classes of southern Europe" (1996b, 271). For Spanish economic elites, a potential roadblock to the consolidation of democracy, the various stipulations of the EC "provided guarantees and reassurances to those who faced the post-authoritarian future with apprehension" (Powell 1996, 297).

Even if the conditionality policy of the IO is unclear or there is a possibility of nonenforcement by the organization itself, reneging on international agreements bring reputation and audience costs on the regime. Making international agreements places a state's relatively new reputation on the line. Any reversal or abrogation of their obligations of a treaty, even if it does not bring sanction from the organization, creates reputation costs for the state. As important as the international audience costs are domestic audience costs which leaders incur when they renege on international agreements. These domestic audience costs can lead to a loss of face for new leaders, which can have electoral ramifications (Fearon 1994, 581).

These audience costs are uniquely high in post-transitional settings and flow from the fact that these young democracies are attempting to establish a reputation as upstanding members of
the international community. In this setting, the domestic political audience is likely to be attuned to these issues since association with a highly democratic IO is an early chance to break with the vestiges of an authoritarian past (Pridham 1994, 26-27). As Pridham discusses, there is a symbolic element to regime transitions and membership in an IO: "There is an evident link . . . between recasting the national self-image and opening the way for consolidating democracy" (1995, 177). Losing this membership risks a backlash from elite and mass publics who would blame regime leaders for ruining their opportunity at international acceptance.

These same incentive structures can deter distributional losers as well. Any military junta or economic elite group allied with the military would think twice before embarking on a policy that would cost their economy valuable international links. Because the conditions are monitored and enforced by third parties, the threat of punishment gains credibility and becomes "an external anchor against retrogression to authoritarianism" (Huntington 1991, 87-88).

One example of this exact scenario was played out in April 1996 in Paraguay. While attempting to replace a powerful military general early that year, Paraguayan president Juan Carlos Wasmosy found himself the target of a potential coup. The general, Lino Oviedo, not only refused to resign as requested by Wasmosy, but called for Wasmosy to step down and threatened to foment popular unrest in Paraguay (Valenzuela 1997). Immediately a host of international actors condemned the act, led by MERCOSUR ministers from neighboring states. The crises ended with Oviedo stepping down and being exiled. Observers have noted the importance of MERCOSUR in enforcing its democracy condition: "But for MERCOSUR, Paraguay would this year almost certainly have gone back to military rule, setting a dangerous precedent for Latin America" (Economist 1996, S4; see also Dominguez 1998).

IOs can also provide positive incentives to support young democratic institutions and
governments. They can provide direct material resources to groups or help create credible side-payments in the form of new policies that would otherwise be difficult to enact or guarantee. While new democracies frequently employ these domestic side-payments after a democratic transition, there are two potential problems with such policies. First, a regime may not possess the requisite resources to effectively bribe the groups in question. Regimes emerging from transitions are usually not flush with excess resources to distribute to groups (Haggard and Kaufman 1995). Second, because of a new democracies' diminished capacity to make credible commitments, it is difficult for those in power to commit to any particular policy course as a side-payment. The previously discussed commitment problems that plague a new regime's liberal reforms can hinder their ability to make internal side-payments as well.

Some organizations such as the European Union and NATO provide direct resource allocations to states. These resources can be used to mollify groups that threaten the regime. One example is the EU's policy towards Greece after its accession in 1981. The rural sector of Greek society was traditionally susceptible to the call of authoritarian movements (Tsingos 1996). To complete the consolidation of democracy, the government needed to garner the support of this segment of society. EC development assistance was used to improve the quality of life for the agricultural sector and "facilitate the full and managed incorporation of the countryside's rural population into the new democratic regime" (Tsingos 1996,341).

IOs can also provide a credible commitment to certain policies that benefit disaffected groups such as the military. Regional IOs, especially military alliances, can provide assistance in the area of civil-military relations. One example of this dynamic is Spain's membership in NATO. Spain became a NATO member in 1982 and its membership was solidified after a national referendum called in 1986. The timing of the accession to NATO is no accident—during
the previous year Spanish military forces attempted a coup against the young democratic regime. Joining NATO was seen as a way to divert the military's attention away from internal Spanish politics (Pridham 1995, 199). Moreover, NATO membership provided the military itself with access to more resources than had previously been available, helping to redirect the Spanish military attention away from domestic politics (Agüero 1995, 162).

Of course, not all IOs will serve these purposes adequately. To this point, we have only examined the demand for international institutions in the post-transitional context. IOs may lack both the resources and the political will to serve as an external sustainer of democracy.

**Regional IO's: The Supply-side Argument**

Part of the credibility gained by winners in post-transitional settings arises from the fact that a third party becomes the monitoring and enforcement mechanism. Of course, given that the outside party is an organization composed of sovereign states with their own set of interests, there is potential for the supply of enforcement to be problematic. This section discusses which organizations will be more likely to supply the means to credibly signal domestic groups that democratic reforms are credible and that reneging on those commitments will be costly.

To serve as a force for democratic consolidation, an IO must have at least three characteristics. First, the political will to set conditions on membership in the first place. Since conditions on IO membership or assistance are important to signaling a credible commitment to democracy, existing IO members must agree amongst themselves to implement conditions. This requires substantial agreement among current members that may not exist in all organizations.

Second, the IO must possess the political will to enforce the conditions once the nascent democracy is admitted. Members face a potential problem with such arrangements since such
enforcement can be costly to the existing members. These costs may be especially high in the case of third-party enforcement and monitoring (North 1990, 58). This points to the third and related characteristic, the *means* to enforce political conditions. Monetary costs do exist where bribes are concerned. Any time these mechanisms are involved, as in the case of Greece, a substantial monetary outlay can occur. Political will becomes important especially when it involves direct cost to states. Enforcement costs also include opportunity costs—if an IO confronts a condition violator, they can suspend that state's membership or expel the state in question. Member states will no longer enjoy free trade, economic policy coordination, or military support from the offending regime.

In light of these potential roadblocks to enforcement, the hypothesis I put forth is that the higher the "democratic density" of an IO, the more likely liberalization requirements will exist and be enforced. That is, taking member states as the unit of analysis, the higher the average level of democracy within a regional IO, the more likely the organization will be to serve this role of external guarantor. Note that this measure does not refer to the level of democracy within the organizational structure or procedures. Rather, the higher the "democraticness" of each state, averaged within the organization, the more likely the organization will be to set and enforce condition.

There are several reasons why highly democratic IOs are more likely to set and enforce conditions in order to assist in the consolidation of democracy. First, "democratic density" functions as a proxy for commonality of interests within the organization. This is not to say that IOs composed of only democracies are completely harmonious, but compared to a mixed-regime IO, however, the range of shared interests will be larger (cf. Gartzke 1998). One of these shared interests is likely to be democracy promotion. Although common interests are no guarantee that
regional IO will promote democracy, this should bode well for the setting and enforcement of political conditionality.

Second, the more democratic an IO, the lower the probability that member states will openly shirk in enforcing conditions. One important argument highlighted in the democratic peace literature as well as the recent rationalist causes of war literature, is that democracies are more transparent, especially to one another (Schultz 1999). This transparency means that states would have a more difficult time cheating on enforcement. If a state is deciding whether to help enforce a conditionality clause (e.g., by suspending free trade or imposing sanctions), it is easier to witness the behavior of fellow democratic members than autocratic members. Thus, a member state can ensure that other states do not cheat by working with the offending state outside the organization. If a member state anticipates this type of cheating, it will be less likely to push for enforcement against the rule violator.

Among democracies, this lower risk of cheating will raise the probability of enforcement. Third, just as nascent democracies face high audience costs for reneging on their international agreements, so do democratic member states of IOs. The same logic applies here: leaders in democracies face costs if they do not carry out the terms of their agreements. Brett Leeds (1999, 998) has shown that democracies are more likely to keep their agreements because of audience costs as well as low policymaking flexibility. Since leaders in democratic countries face electoral incentives to keep their agreements, more homogenously democratic IOs will be more likely to enforce conditionality.

Empirically, IOs do inflict punishment on those who break conditions of agreements. For example, the EU suspended the Greek association agreement in 1967 after a military coup (Whitehead 1993, 154). Turkey has been continually frustrated by the EU’s refusal of admission,
which has come of the grounds of that state's questionable record of democracy (Whitehead 1993, 159-161). The OAS threatened Guatemala with punishment after a threatened coup by its president (Cameron 1998).

Finally, on the issue of means, highly democratic IOs are more likely to posses the resources to bribe domestic actors and pay the cost of enforcement. Although the democracy and development link is still controversial, the empirical fact remains that democracies are more affluent than their nondemocratic counterparts (Londregan and Poole 1996). In addition, because of their larger aggregate wealth, they can more easily absorb the opportunity costs of punishing a condition violator.

There is an additional demand-side issue to consider as well. These highly democratic organizations are more likely to be tapped by democratizing states, since these regional IOs will provide the clearest signal of intent. Joining an IO made up of semi-democracies and autocracies does little to assuage political and economic forces that there is little risk of reversal in the future.

One note is necessary on the nature of the organizations included in this analysis. As a first examination of this question, I limit the sample to regional IOs. I do this for several reasons. First, regional organizations are the most common type of IOs in the world system (Jacobson, Reisinger, and Mathers 1986, 143). Examining the most common type of organization has clear advantages in terms of statistical inference. Second, much of the literature on the international influences on democratization concentrates on regional organizations versus global organizations (cf. Pridham 1994). This is likely a result of comparative politics scholars focus on regions in the study of democratization. Given these considerations, I concur with Whitehead that "the importance of such international dimensions of democratization seems much clearer at this regional level than at the world-wide level of analysis" (1996a, 395).
Finally, from a theoretical perspective, one expects the causal processes hypothesized above to function more readily in regional organizations. Because regional IOs tend to operate with small numbers and with higher levels of interaction than global organizations, processes such as political conditionality with monitoring and enforcement are much more likely in regional organizations (Nye 1987). In addition, by their very nature, global institutions rarely maintain no conditions on membership and do not require any change in domestic policy. For these reasons, I limit the initial sample to regional IOs. I later relax this assumption, however, to assess its empirical validity.

**Testing the Argument**

If the preceding theory is correct, membership and/or accession to democratic regional IOs should increase the chances for democratic survival. To test this argument, this section will build and estimate several statistical models of democratic longevity. The expectation is that membership in and especially *joining* a regional institution with a high "democratic density" will be positively associated with the survival of democracy. Since much of the value of a regional IO comes from their signaling of credible commitments to domestic and international actors, joining a highly democratic IO should have an independent effect.

**Measuring Democratic Consolidation**

To operationalize the concept of democracy, I use the Polity data that measures institutional characteristics of political regimes. The setup of my data is a panel design where

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4 Specifically, I use Kristian Gleditsch's updated Polity data. See Gleditsch 2004 and Marshall 2004. In previous work (Pevehouse 2002b), I also utilized Mark Gasiorowski's data on democratic transitions and breakdowns, but unfortunately, his data ends in 1992. In future iterations, I plan to use other datasets to assess the robustness of the findings here.
the unit of analysis is the country-year. Most states of the world system are included in the data, which ranges from 1975 to 2000. In the following models, the dependent variable is the length of time a regime persists as a democracy, labeled *Democracy Age*. This measures the number of years since a transition to democracy until democratic breakdown (both defined below). The counter would stop and the variable would be missing until another democratic transition occurs (thus excluding all autocracies from the analysis). *Democracy Age* also takes on a non-missing value if the state begins its time in the sample as a democracy.

Although the issue of left-censoring is important to keep in mind, *Democracy Age* begins at 1 for all democratic states entering the sample in 1945 or upon their independence. If a breakdown does not occur for the remainder of the observation period the observation is right-censored. The first is computed using Gleditsch's updated Polity data set. Using this single measure of democracy, scholars set "cut-points" for labeling the regime type. Any regime at or above the cut off (here, a value of +6) is labeled a democracy, while any regime at or below the lower bound (here, -6) is labeled an autocracy. Regimes between these bounds are often labeled anocracies. Any time a state passes these thresholds, a transition is coded. That is, moving below +6 is coded as a democratic breakdown, while moving above a +6 is coded as a democratic transition.

**Modeling Regime Duration**

To test whether regional IOs are associated with democratic longevity, I estimate the following model:

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5 In my previous work, I analyzed the 1950-1992 period, but this did not allow good analysis of the potential consolidation effects of IOs for the newly democratic Eastern European and post-Soviet states. By restricting the sample to the "third wave" of democracies, we loose statistical inference power, but gain leverage on the particular determinants of democratic longevity for the most recent set of democratic transitions.

6 The results are robust to starting the counter in 1975.
Democracy Age = $\beta_0 + \beta_1 IO Democracy Level_{t-1} + \beta_2 \Delta IO Democracy Level_{t-1} + \beta_3 pcGDP + \beta_4 \Delta pcGDP + \beta_5 Past Breakdown + \beta_6 Presidential + \beta_7 Dispute + \beta_8 Violence + \beta_9 Regional Contagion + \beta_{10} Independence + \beta_{11} Stable Democracy + \varepsilon$

The model is estimated using event history analysis. Due to the shape of the underlying baseline hazard function, I estimate the model using a Weibull parameterization, but relax this distributional assumption later as a robustness check. Each model will tell us the influence of each independent variable (covariate) on the probability (hazard rate) that democracy will fail at time $t$ for each state in the sample.

The first independent variable, $IO Democracy Level$, is a measure of the average democratic density of all the regional IOs of which state $i$ is a member in year $t-1$. This variable is computed by first coding the memberships of all regional organizations listed in the Correlates of War International Organizations dataset. Next, the average level of democracy in each IO is computed using each member's Polity regime score (excluding a state's own democracy score). $IO Democracy Level$ is the yearly average of the democracy scores for all regional IOs of which the state is a member.

The next independent variable, $\Delta IO Democracy Level$, is computed to isolate the effects of joining regional organizations. As previously discussed, the signaling value of joining a highly democratic IO is important to domestic and international economic, as well as domestic political interests. This variable is the simple, one year difference of $IO Democracy Level$, measured in year $t-1$. If a state joins a new IO that is more democratic than their current average of $IO Democracy Level$, the value of $\Delta IO Democracy Level$ will be positive. Including this change variable as well as the level variable will allow a comparison of the effects of joining a more

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7 See Pevehouse, Nordstrom, and Warnke 2003 for a description of the data. Regional organizations are defined as organizations where all of the core members of the organization were based in a particular geographic region, where regions are defined by the Correlates of War project.
highly democratic IO versus the overall level of "democratic-ness" in all IOs of which the state is a member.\textsuperscript{8}

The next two independent variables tap the economic context of the regime. The first variable $pcGDP$ measures the natural logarithm of per capita GDP levels of each state at time $t$. A large body of literature has developed around the hypothesis that higher income countries are more likely to be democracies. One of the most recent contributions to this debate holds that it is not the level of income that causes democracy, but rather higher income preserves democracy (Przeworski and Limongi 1997). The second economic variable, $\Delta pcGDP$ measures the change in per capita GDP over a one year interval, $t-1$ to $t$.\textsuperscript{9} This variable controls for growth rates, which are often found to affect the likelihood of anti-regime activities (Londregan and Poole 1990).

*Past Breakdown* is the next independent variable and equals 1 if the state has undergone a democratic reversal since the beginning of the observation period; otherwise the variable is coded as 0. Once a breakdown occurs the remainder of observation years for that state are coded as 1. Some scholars argue that a past experience with democracy in a state should bode well for new democracies since civil society and democratic norms have a head start in these states (Linz and Stepan 1996). Przeworski and colleagues (1996) contend, however, that because a history of democracy implies a past democratic breakdown, similar forces may arise to undermine the nascent regime.

The next independent variable is *Presidential* coded as a 1 if a state has a presidential or mixed system, and 0 otherwise.\textsuperscript{10} One key hypothesis in the democratization literature is that

\textsuperscript{8} This variable could also measure changes in the level of democracy in existing IOs of which the state is a member, either up or down. The *Regional Contagion* variable, however, will control for democratization in regional states.
\textsuperscript{9} Both variables are taken from Heston, Summers, and Aten 2002.
\textsuperscript{10} Data are taken from the Database of Political Institutions. See Beck, et al, 2001.
parliamentary democracies are more stable than presidential systems, since presidential systems can produce all-or-nothing outcomes (Linz 1990) and potential for immobilism (Przeworski et al. 1996). Thus, I expect Presidential to be associated with faster democratic breakdowns.

Two variables are coded to measure the effect of external and internal conflict. Thompson (1996) has argued that for democracy to flourish, a stable and peaceful military environment must exist. To control for regional conflict, including war, use of military force, and the threat of military force, Dispute measures the total number of Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs) in which state \( i \) is involved in year \( t \) (Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996; Ghosn and Palmer 2003). In addition to external conflict, I control for internal conflict in the form of domestic violence as captured by the International Peace Research Institute's Civil Conflict data (Gleditsch et al. 2002) and Strand (2006). The variable, Violence, measures the presence of intrastate conflict in year \( t-1 \). The variable is lagged one year since the breakdown of democracy may spur domestic violence that would be captured by the dataset.

The variable Regional Contagion controls for possible diffusion effects from other established democracies. Although the causal mechanism may vary, several theories hold that the presence of democracies or democratic transitions is likely to encourage democracy in other countries (O'Loughlin et al. 1998; Starr 1991). Here, Contagion measures the number of states in state \( i \)’s region that are democratic (as coded by the Polity data).\(^{11}\)

Next, it is also important to control for how long each country has existed as an independent nation-state, since young states may have little opportunity to develop stable institutions of any kind. To control for this possibility, I code a continuous variable, Independence, which counts the number of years since the state's political independence (Small

\(^{11}\) Similar results to those below hold if the variable is recoded to account for the percentage of countries in the region which are considered democratic.)
and Singer 1994). For states independent before 1950, the count begins in 1815.\footnote{The results are robust to changing the start date of the counter.}

Recall that both states that are democracies at the beginning of the observation period and recently democratized states are included in the sample for this model. Given the theory the regional IO-consolidation link will likely be stronger for newly democratized states versus those well-established democracies. Excluding stable democracies from the investigation, however, risks inducing selection bias. Therefore, to distinguish stable democracies from new democratic polities, I code a variable, \textit{Stable Democracy}, which equals 1 if the state began its tenure in the analysis as a democracy.\footnote{Allowing the coding to vary based on different starting points for judging stability (i.e., 1945, 1950, 1975), makes no difference in the results.}

I also add region-specific fixed effects to control for possible underlying differences in the probabilities for transitions across each region. I introduce a dummy variable for each geographic region to account for factors which may be important only in certain geographic regions that are not included in the model, yet may be correlated with membership in regional IOs. Estimates of these fixed effects are omitted from the tables, but statistical tests show they can be safely included in the model. Finally, $\varepsilon$ is a stochastic error term.

\textbf{Results}

Table 1 presents the estimates of the model, given each measure of the dependent variable. It is important to note that the interpretation of the event history models is slightly different than traditional regression models. A negatively signed coefficient estimate means that the hazard rate of experiencing democratic breakdown is proportionally lower. Conversely, a positive coefficient signifies an increase in the hazard rate and means a shorter duration for the polity.
Turning to the estimates from the baseline model in column 1, the first variable of interest, *IO Democracy Level*, is not statistically significant. While the variable takes on the predicted sign (membership in more democratic IOs lowers the rate of failure for democracies), because the variable is not statistically significant, one can conclude that membership in an IO with higher levels of democracy does not appear to be systematically associated with longer-lasting democratic regimes.

The effect of joining regional organizations is assessed by turning to the second independent variable, *ΔIO Democracy Level*. This estimate presents a stronger case for the influence of democratic regional IOs as the estimates of the coefficient are negative and highly statistically significant. This indicates that an increase in the level of democracy in the profile of regional organizations of which state *i* is a member is associated with a decreased risk of democratic breakdown. To gauge the importance of this variable, we can compare predicted values of survival times based on the estimates of our data. Note that an increase in the average aggregate level of democracy in a state's IO membership by one standard deviation increases the expected length of democracy by over 35 percent. Thus, the result is both statistically and substantively significant.

These estimates largely confirm the basic argument: regional IOs can assist in the consolidation of democracy and this influence is strongest when states join these organizations. While the discussion of each causal mechanism provided illustrative case material to this end, this cross-national statistical examination provides more systematic evidence on the veracity of these ideas. Although these estimates show the importance of one set of external factors, I make no claim that these variables are determining or even the most important in terms of democratic

14 For these predictions, all continuous variables are set at their respective means, while discrete variables are set at their modal value.
consolidation, only that they are significant factors in that process. Domestic political and
economic factors are clearly important as well.

The estimates of the economy-related independent variables, \( pcGDP \) and \( \Delta pcGDP \) are
both statistically significant and in the expected direction. Consistent with the political
development literature previously discussed, higher levels of per capita GDP are related with
longer-lasting democracies. This result is yet another piece of evidence in support of Londregan
and Poole (1996) as well as Przeworski et al. (1996), that income levels do as much to stabilize
existing democracies as it does to create new democracies. Change in the levels of wealth in a
state, \( (\Delta pcGDP) \) is also consistently negative and statistically significant. Regimes that can
increase growth face a higher chance of survival, while those who suffer economic downturns
are vulnerable to democratic breakdown (Gasiorowski 1995).

Table 2 shows the percentage changes in the baseline hazard rate given variation in these
economic measures. An increase of one standard deviation from the mean of the \( pcGDP \) variable
results in an almost 150 percent increase in the expected survival time of democracy. Likewise,
an increase of one standard deviation in the value of \( \Delta pcGDP \) results in a nearly 50 percent
increase in expected survival time. Again, it is clear that domestic economic variables have a
significant influence on democratic survival. Yet, even when accounting for these factors,
involvement in regional organizations still plays a role in regime survival.

Many of the remaining control variables take on the predicted sign, but only two of these
achieve statistical significance. The \textit{Presidential} variable is of the expected sign and highly
statistically significant: presidential democracies face an increased probability of failure versus
their parliamentary counterparts. \textit{Independence} is also statistically significant, but with an
unpredicted sign: older states tend to be more likely to fail quickly than more newly independent
ones. Finally, it is worth noting that neither measure of violent conflict, whether internal or external, achieves statistical significance.

**Further Statistical Considerations**

It is important to determine whether these findings are robust to variations in estimation techniques, the inclusion of potentially omitted variables, and changes in the coding of regional organizations. First, column 2 relaxes the distributional assumption made by estimating a Weibull event history model. Rather, I use a Cox proportional hazard model, which makes no assumption about the underlying baseline hazard rate (see Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 1997). As is evident from the estimates, this statistical choice has little influence on the results. Indeed, the only change of note is that now *Dispute* is statistically significant, suggesting that engagement in international conflicts may shorten the duration of democratic regimes.

Second, there are other possible domestic-level variables that it could be important to include when modeling regime duration. In particular, country-specific measures of political polarization within the government and the quality of domestic institutions could account for the longevity of a regime. To address this possibility, I augment the existing model with three different independent variables to ensure my results are not due to omitted variable bias. The first variable is labeled *Polarization*, and measures the degree of difference between the ideological position of the executive's party and the three largest pro-government parties as well as the largest opposition party in the legislature. As shown in column 3 of Table 1, this variable has little influence on the longevity of democratic regimes in the sample. Moreover, its inclusion

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15 This variable is taken from the Database of Political Institutions (DPI). Ideology here is measured by content analyzing party political platforms.
has little effect on the existing estimates of the key independent variables.\textsuperscript{16}

In addition, I add two variables to the baseline model coding the competitiveness of legislative and executive institutions. The first of these, $LIEC$, is a variable measuring the extent of competition for legislative seats in the country. The second, $EIEC$, is a similar measure for the office of the chief executive in a country.\textsuperscript{17} These measures are seven point scales which measure factors ranging from the number of parties eligible for election, the presence of dominant parties in the electorate, as well as the presence of autonomous legislatures and/or executives. If it is true that there is significant variation in the quality of democratic institutions, this could be a reason that democracies fail. Institutions that are more representative, contrariwise, would be expected to foster more longevity.

Indeed, when examining the estimates of the final two columns of Table 1, some evidence emerges consistent with this logic. The measure of legislative competitiveness is negative and statistically significantly related to longer-lasting democracies. While the same measure for the executive branch is of the predicted sign, it does not achieve statistical significance. Moreover, even in the presence of these additional measures, the estimates of $\Delta IO$ Democracy Level remain negative and statistically significant.

Another possibility is that my hypothesis concerning the homogeneity of democracy within the regional IO is incorrect. A counter-hypothesis is that any IO, not just highly democratic ones, can carry out the causal mechanisms outlined in my theory. To test for this possibility, I add two new variables, one measuring the lagged raw number of regional organizations of which the state is a member ($Number\ Regional\ IOs$), the other is the lagged first

\textsuperscript{16} Adding other measures of preference divergence in states yields similar results. Specifically, adding the CHECKS variable from DPI (measuring the number of effective veto players), as well as measures of party size and variance from the DPI are never statistically significant, nor do they influence the estimates of $\Delta IO$ Democracy Level.

\textsuperscript{17} For more information on this variable, see Beck, et al, 2002.
difference of this new variable ($\Delta \text{Number Regional IOs}$). As shown in the first column of Table 2, the latter of these two variables is negative and statistically significant, suggesting that joining any regional organization can influence democratic longevity. Interestingly, however, the original variable of interest, $\Delta \text{IO Democracy Level}$, remains negative and significant, suggesting that both the number and type of organization matters. Thus, it is still the case that democratically dense regional organizations play an independent role in the democratization process even when controlling for the raw number of regional IOs joined by a particular state.

A related possibility is that non-regional organizations can help support democratic stability. To address this possibility, I re-create the first two independent variables in the model to include all international organizations, rather than only regional organizations. As shown in column 2 of Table 2, the estimates of these new parameters do not achieve statistical significance. Thus, there appears to be something unique about regional organizations over broader, universal international institutions.

As the last robustness check, I evaluate a hypothesis put forward by Alex Cooley (2005) who contends that a major benefit to basing American military forces in foreign countries is to assist new democracies in their efforts to consolidate democratic rule. Similar arguments have been made about other international military organizations, such as NATO (see Gheciu 2005). In order to account for this possibility, I include a variable, $\text{US Troops}$, which counts the number of American forces based in a particular country. Although not an ideal measure, if the presence of American military forces had a positive impact on the prospects for democracy, one should see an association with this variable and democratic longevity. As the final column of Table 2 shows, however, there appears to be no statistical relationship between US troop presence and the survival of democracy. Again, the inclusion of this new variable makes no difference to the
existing estimates of the regional organization variables.

A final issue is of both statistical and theoretical importance. It is possible that there is a selection process among states trying to join democratic regional organizations. That is, only states where democracy is likely to consolidate are allowed in these organizations. The implication is that the causal theory is backwards or that there is another variable that taps the propensity for consolidation that drives the results. While this process may occur, statistical tests and research design precautions make this less likely.

This possibility is addressed in multiple ways. First, both measures of membership in regional organizations are lagged one year to prevent any direct statistical simultaneity. Second, I re-estimate the original model, adding the predicted probability from a model of transitions to democracy from autocracy (model specification details can be found in Pevehouse 2002). Adding this variable to the model adds a measure of the likelihood of an initial democratic transition that, I argue, is likely correlated with any underlying propensity to be an "easy case". That is, if certain states can be identified \textit{ex ante} by regional organizations as likely candidates for consolidation, it is likely based on similar characteristics that predict the transition away from authoritarianism. This new variable is negative and statistically significant, suggesting the higher-likelihood transition cases do last longer as democracies. The remaining estimates, including the measures of regional IO involvement, however, remain unchanged: \( \Delta IO \) \textit{Democracy Level} remains negative and highly statistically significant. Thus, we can be somewhat more confident that endogeneity behind our initial findings.

\textbf{Conclusion}

This article has outlined a theory linking regional organizations with the longevity of
democracy. While the policymaking community has clearly established such a link in their policy rhetoric, little theoretical or empirical work establishes this important association. Before IOs undertake a wholesale strategy to integrate new democracies, it is important to understand the causal mechanisms by which these organizations might consolidate nascent democracies. I have outlined such mechanisms and provided the first empirical evaluation of the link between IOs and democratic consolidation.

The empirical tests were generally supportive of the theory as outlined. Of course, the statistical tests do not discriminate between the various mechanisms (e.g., bribing versus credible commitments), but this task is best left to multiple case studies (see Pevehouse 2005). One clear policy implication of this work, however, is the importance of enforcing conditions on regional IO membership. Given the importance of signaling credible commitments to reform, it is essential that regional IOs hold up their end of the bargain. If domestic actors perceive that conditions will not be enforced, the influence of the IO will be minimal.

These findings are also important for international relations theory. Primarily, this research speaks to the issue of when and how international institutions matter. 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 (Martin and Simmons 1998, 749 & 757). By showing how IOs can 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 regional organizations to bolster domestic institutions.

Regional organizations are no guarantee of success for new democracies. This article has
shown how membership in and joining an IO with many democratic members can assist in lengthening the longevity of democratic regimes. Although there are clearly many factors that are important for the consolidation of democracy, I have shown that the external dimension of international or regional politics should not be given short shrift. While domestic factors may still hold a privileged position in theories of democracy, international and regional factors can, at times, be equally important.
<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Polariz</th>
<th>LIEC</th>
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NOTE: *** = p<.01; ** = p<.05; * = p <.10
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NOTE: *** = p<.01; ** = p<.05; * = p <.10
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