THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN PROMOTING DEMOCRACY: A BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW OF RECENT STUDIES (2010-2019)

O papel das instituições internacionais na promoção da democracia: uma breve revisão da literatura de trabalhos recentes (2010-2019)

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to present a complex literature review of recent studies on the role of international institutions in democracy promotion. The articles analyzed were selected through a previous bibliometric study conducted on the Web of Science platform. Based on the considerations obtained through the literature raised, the main gaps and contradictions in the studies in question were identified, suggesting at the end a research agenda for future works.

Keywords: Democratization; International Institutions; Web of Science.

RESUMO

O presente artigo tem como objetivo apresentar uma revisão bibliográfica complexa de estudos recentes sobre o papel das instituições internacionais na promoção da democracia. Os artigos analisados foram selecionados com base em um estudo bibliométrico prévio, conduzido na plataforma *Web Of Science*. Partindo das considerações obtidas através da literatura levantada, são identificadas as principais lacunas existentes nos trabalhos em questão, sugerindo, ao final, uma agenda de pesquisa para trabalhos futuros.

Palavras-chave: Democratização; Instituições Internacionais; Web of Science.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, research on democratic transitions has become increasingly sophisticated and comprehensive, with the so-called "third wave of democratization" being responsible for stimulating a broad debate on the origins and consequences of these regime transitions (see: Geddes, 1999; Huntington, 1991). Several quantitative studies have been presented, suggesting connections between the emergence and maintenance of democratic regimes and factors such as rates of development, education, urbanization, and income distribution (see: Barro, 1999; Boix e Stokes, 2003). Up until recently, international factors seem to have been little incorporated into the statistical models that address the chances of democratization, being generally treated merely as intervening or auxiliary variables, rather than the focal point in studies on democracy promotion. Nevertheless, as Geddes (2013, p. 12) points out, many theorists have suggested that international forces, such as the diffusion of democratic ideals and pressures from international institutions, may have a much more substantive impact on democratic transitions than has been identified so far, especially when it comes to the democratization processes that have occurred since the 1980s.

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With this in mind, this article aims to present a complex literature review[3] regarding studies made over the last decade (2010-2019) that address the role of international institutions on the processes of domestic democratization. To define the set of literature that would be reviewed, a bibliometric study was conducted using data from the Web of Science (WoS) platform[4]. Specifically, the platform was searched for documents of the article type, published between 2010 and 2019, which contained in their titles, abstracts, or keywords, a combination of the term "democratization" with at least one of the following terms: "international institutions"; "international organizations"; "intergovernmental organizations"; or "international governmental organizations". At first, 81 results were found, with an initial review based on the reading of the abstracts reducing the final *corpus* to 37 articles[5]. Although these articles represent only a sample of the total production in the period, the use of WoS data ensures that only articles published in journals with a high impact factor were selected, thereby being the ones with the highest chances of influencing future studies.

To fulfill its goals, the article will follow a five-section structure. After this introductory section, in which the research objectives and the main methodological strategies adopted are outlined, a brief theoretical review on international institutions will be presented. Then, in the next two sections, the proper literature review will be presented. At first, in order to understand the starting point of the studies that make up this research *corpus*, we will review the most cited references by these articles, resorting to their citation data provided by WoS; then, at the second stage, the analysis will focus on the articles that make up the *corpus* itself, i.e., those selected throughout the initial bibliometric study. Finally, the last section presents some final considerations and tries to briefly propose a future research agenda for the topic in question.

2. A THEORETICAL-CONCEPTUAL REVIEW ON INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The analysis of the role of international institutions in the national states' democratization processes implies resuming one of the central questions of the theoretical debate on international relations about the relevance of these institutions and their capacity to determine the behavior of states in the themes of the international agenda. This is a constant debate in the theoretical development of international relations, and can be summarized in the key question of neo-

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[3] According to Machi and McEvoy (2016, p. 28), a literature review can be defined as "a written document that presents a logically argued case founded on a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge about a topic of study". In its turn, the idea of a complex literature review is established as a counterpoint to a simple review, which merely presents the current state of a research field, while in the complex review the objective is to identify and list possible problems and unanswered research questions on the literature.

[4] The Web of Science is a website that provides access to multiple databases of citation data for a wide variety of academic fields. Maintained by Clarivate Analytics, the platform currently claims to have over 34,000 indexed journals. Although its coverage is slightly smaller than that of its main competitor (Scopus), as Falagas et al. (2008) indicate, WoS presents the advantages of offering a more detailed data, greater temporal coverage and a greater focus on English journals – reasons why the platform was chosen.

[5] Works excluded at this stage refer to articles which, although present the relevant terms, do not refer to the role of international institutions on domestic processes of democratization, usually referring to the democratization of the international institutions themselves. For examples, see: Davies (2012), Dufek (2013), and Ginter and Nartis (2014).

institutionalist analyses of political science and international relations: do institutions matter? This question is asked, for example, in Stephen Krasner's (1983) collection of articles on international regimes published in the journal *International Organization* in 1982. In the introduction of this collection, Krasner presents the definition of international regimes and the different theoretical perspectives that analyze these regimes' role in international politics. For Krasner, regimes are sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which the actors' expectations in a particular area of international relations converge.

On the one hand, realists like Susan Strange (cited in Krasner, 1983) argue that international regimes do not matter. For the author, they would be mere "pieces of paper" at the service of the most powerful states in international politics. On the other, Oran Young (1983) says that the regimes would be effective when they manage to discipline the states' behavior in specific thematic areas of international relations. Young's perspective is informed by the theory of the English School and its concept of international society. For Young (2000), international institutions would be essential driving forces whose analysis would lead to identifying the predictability and variations in the individual and collective conduct of states as members of international society and as active participants in institutions the states themselves create.

In an intermediate position between the realism and theory of the English School, Robert Keohane (quoted in Krasner, 1983) suggests that the basic function of the regimes would be to coordinate the behavior of states in order for them to achieve the results desired in matters of the international agenda. This coordination would be necessary when state actors are unable to achieve the desired results based solely on individual calculations. For Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (2001), it is not possible to interpret states' behavior without considering their interdependence relations. Such relations are determined by rules, norms, and procedures that regulate the states' behaviors and control their interactions.

Different from these perspectives that are interested in the role of international institutions regarding the states' behavior, this study aims to assess how the literature interprets the influence of these institutions in the functioning of the states' political regimes. The intention is to observe to what extent, under what conditions, and what type of institutions can collaborate to develop the national democratization process.

Therefore, it is essential to highlight the pressures of the recent changes in international politics on international institutions' functioning. First, international institutions have become an important decision-making locus that impacts the state's internal political and economic situation. This is especially true concerning specific issues on the international agenda that requires cooperation among states, such as the environment and the control of the spread of diseases. In the area of international security, the UN Security Council, despite its limitations in enforcing its decisions, produced a debate on how to carry out interventions in countries for building peace. At the same time, the Security Council has introduced the need to spread democracy and promote development strategies to achieve this purpose. The connection between peacebuilding and democracy appeared in the document "An Agenda for Peace," published in 1992. The document

supports the diversification of instruments for peacebuilding and the need to disseminate democracy as a strategy to resolve modern international conflicts. The link between peacebuilding and development was defended in the document "An Agenda for Development," published in 1994.

In the regional integration processes, international supranational and intergovernmental institutions have become spaces for deliberation and sharing of knowledge, ideas, proposals, and policies that can influence decision-making within national states (see Stone, 1999; Pereira et al., 2018). Held (2004, p. 366-367) observed how the complex nature of problems and the growing interaction and interconnection between states and societies lead to the expansion of the global and regional international institutions' competence, requiring new international regulatory frameworks. For Held, these new frameworks involve multiple actors, various political processes, and several levels of coordination and operation. Among these actors are civil society organizations that interact with local and national governments and with international institutions using means such as ICT. Sikkink (1991) emphasized the interaction of the different actors, revealing the specific way that networks of civil society and systemic actors associate and mobilize, which have become alternatives to the inter-state model centered on the state's sovereignty. These networks include international institutions, national and international non-governmental organizations, and control agencies working in the area of human rights.

Second, international institutions need to manage the limitations of the international environment (Keohane, 2011), which hinders the development of their governance functions. They need to make decisions on matters of the international agenda. However, they have no access to essential enforcement instruments, such as coercion. International institutions have to make decisions that need the consent of member states to gain legitimacy and come to effect. Besides, the current context is marked by a constant diffidence regarding these institutions' capacity of (i) facing the problems of the international agenda, and (ii) providing solutions to the international community. Keohane (2011) also stresses how the political and academic debate approaches the need to reform international institutions to make them more compatible with the complex nature of the international agenda in the post-Cold War context.

Finally, in general, international institutions need to deal with recent pressures to adopt mechanisms to offer transparency on decisions, processes, and operations, as well as to democratize decision-making processes. Civil society organizations, as agents of such pressure, play an important role in pushing international institutions to be more accountable and transparent. This phenomenon can be observed in the case of the World Bank, which has included the NGOs' participation in formulating and monitoring projects since 1995, during the administration of James Wolfensohn (1995-2005) (Pereira et al., 2017; Guimarães, 2012).

Thus, the changes in international politics affect international institutions' functioning and ability to influence the countries' democratization processes. Given the importance of international institutions according to the elements discussed above, the next sections will examine how the literature in international relations has addressed the theme.

3. CITED LITERATURE: THE WORKS OF JON C. PEVEHOUSE

As stated in the introduction, the corpus of this research was based on a bibliometric study using WoS data, followed by an initial review of the abstracts that reduced the final *corpus* to 37 articles, which are listed in Appendix A. Throughout them, a total of 2,037 cited references were found. Of this total, only 5 were referenced 10 or more times, all of them having Professor Jon C. Pevehouse among their authors, with at least one being cited on 22 of the 37 articles. These studies seem to have laid the foundations on which much of the later debate was built, the reason why this section will focus on briefly reviewing their main contributions. Table 1 summarizes these findings, providing complete references and information on the number of citations for each work, both within the research *corpus* and the WoS database as a whole.

Table 1. Sources cited at least 10 times in the research *corpus* according to the chronological order of publication

	Reference	Times cited in the research corpus	Total times cited in the WoS database
1	Pevehouse, J. (2002). Democracy from the Outside-In? International Organizations and Democratization. *International Organization, 56*(3), 515-549.	11	210
2	Pevehouse, J., Nordstrom, T., & Warnke, K. (2004). The Correlates of War 2 International Governmental Organizations Data Version 2.0. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 21(2), 101–119.	10	240
3	Pevehouse, J. (2005). *Democracy from Above: Regional Organizations and Democratization*. New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press.	10	159
4	Mansfield, E., & Pevehouse, J. (2006). Democratization and International Organizations. *International Organization, 60*(1), 137-167.	12	131
5	Mansfield, E. D., & Pevehouse, J. C. (2008). Democratization and the Varieties of International Organizations. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 52(2), 269–294.	10	52

Source: research data, based on the bibliometric study conducted in the WoS database on May 7, 2020.

In the very first of these articles, Pevehouse (2002) presents the argument that regional international organizations (IOs) can influence the dynamics of political liberalization by listing three possible causal mechanisms: (1) through pressure, both diplomatic and economic, that can compel authoritarian regimes towards liberalization; (2) by establishing supranational institutional safeguards that ensure certain rights of local elites will be respected, reducing the risks they face during democratization; and (3) through the socialization of domestic elites. Pevehouse also provides a statistical test of this argument, computing the probability of a democratic transition occur as a dependent variable and, as independent variables, the higher average level of democratization in a regional international organization of which the state in question is a

member[6], and the adhesion to a more democratic international organization than those that the state was previously a member[7], returning positive results that reinforce his theory.

The second article in chronological order, produced with Timothy Nordstrom and Kevin Warnke as co-authors (2004), differs greatly from the others, being dedicated to summarize the *Correlates of War 2 International Governmental Organizations (IGOs) data*, produced by the three authors as an update of Wallace and Singer (1970) original data set. As the authors point out, "this article is not meant to analyze any particular theoretical debate within international relations, but rather to familiarize the reader with the data, our coding criteria, and decision rules, as well as to highlight some of the major descriptive trends in the data" (Pevehouse, Nordstrom e Warnke, 2004, p. 102), therefore, its relevance is more associated with the data it presents than with a specific theoretical or methodological contribution.

Next, in 2005, Pevehouse released a book dedicated to further expanding the argument presented in his first article. In short, the book is dedicated to exploring two hypotheses: (1) that membership in democratic regional organizations is associated with an increased probability of a transition to democracy; and (2) that membership in and/or accession to democratic regional organizations is associated with the longevity of democracy. Although his large-N tests supported the association between the variables, Pevehouse (2005, p. 203) acknowledges that "it is difficult to know if the causal processes outlined [...] are behind these statistical correlations". Thus, he reinforces his findings with case studies, observing processes of democratic transition in Hungary, Peru, and Turkey; and processes of democratic consolidation in Greece, Paraguay, and Guatemala. In this regard, he also points to Turkey as a case of a failed democratic consolidation, theorizing that although democratic regional organizations facilitate processes of democratic transition and consolidation, these can still be outweighed by opposite domestic factors.

The last two articles among the most cited references in the research *corpus* were co-written with Edward Mansfield. In the first one, the authors look at the interplay between IOs and processes of domestic democratization from another perspective, arguing that "states undergoing democratic transitions have a strong incentive to join IOs, because doing so sends a credible signal to domestic and international audiences that political reform efforts are sincere" (Mansfield e Pevehouse 2006, p. 162). Thus, using the previously cited Intergovernmental Organizations data from the Correlates of War Project, they find strong evidence that democratizing states join IOs more frequently than other countries, and tent to enter IOs mostly composed of other democracies – creating what the authors called "clubs of democracies". The last article expands on these findings, with its main argument revolving around the idea that not all IOs are useful in

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[6] Computed based on the average of democracies among all member states of a given international organization, excluding the state being analyzed.

[7] Pevehouse (2002) also controls the effects of economic factors, processes of diffusion coming from other democracies, the existence of a democratic past, regional conflicts, internal violence, the presence of military regimes prior to democratization, and time as an independent state.

consolidating democratization processes. Based on the same set of data, their results here suggest that states undergoing democratic consolidation see little use in joining broad political organizations, tending to join standards-based IOs in areas such as human rights and environmental processes – which publicizes their commitment with the democratic reforms – or economy-related IOs – which provides assurance to foreign investors (Mansfield e Pevehouse, 2008).

Having reviewed the five works of Jon Pevehouse that seem to have been responsible for laying the foundations for further research, the next section advances to the articles selected through the bibliometric study on the WoS database, which are the true focus of this research.

4. THE RECENT DEBATE (2010-2019)

Following the line proposed by Pevehouse, other authors have sought to analyze the impact of international institutions on the processes of democratization that occurred after the 1980s, producing results that both support and contradict his theses. Among the former, Freyburg (2011) reinforces the argument that IOs can act as channels for the democratic socialization of domestic elites, promoting a change in attitude towards democracy through personal experiences in political networks created and controlled by well-established democracies, while Warren (2016) echoes Pevehouse's findings showing that states that ally themselves with democratic partners tend to develop their own democratic institutions. In his turn, Matanock (2017) argues that post-conflict democratic consolidation tends to be more robust when agreements between government and opposition include "electoral participation provisions" [8], i.e., clauses mandating that rebel parties compete alongside government parties in post-conflict elections, pointing out that these provisions facilitate the engagement of IOs in the process of peace consolidation and democratization, acting as outside observers that can provide incentives for compliance.

The argument that international institutions can impact the processes of domestic democratization has also been expanded to other fronts, with authors such as Greenhill (2010) reinforcing Pevehouse's findings on the capacity for democratic socialization associated with IOs, noting that they have "a surprisingly powerful influence" not only on democracy promotion, but on the diffusion of human rights norms as a whole; Karreth and Tir (2013) also suggest that IOs can prevent the escalation of armed conflict at the domestic level through the same causal mechanisms identified by Pevehouse (2002), by increasing the costs of escalation and providing safeguards for both government and rebel forces that certain rights and guarantees will be respected; and Thyne *et al.* (2018) point out how the international posture, especially when coordinated through international institutions, not only increases the chances of a regime liberalizing itself, but also influences on the duration of coup-born regimes. Furthermore, authors

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[8] The results of Matanock (2017) indicate that, although post-conflict elections as a whole do not produce peace, instances where electoral participation provisions supported by IOs were applied are associated with an 80 percent increase in the odds of enduring peace.

such as Nelson and Wallace (2017) expand the scope of analysis to economy-related institutions, noting the existence of a positive correlation between participation in the International Monetary Fund lending programs and democracy scores; while Kim and Kroeger (2017) highlight how receiving international aid seems to be correlated with carrying out democratic reforms at the domestic level, yielding strong incentives for authoritarian leaders to implement them, even if they avoid full democratization.

From a conceptual point of view, the most significant contribution[9] seems to have come from Stephan Krasner (2011), who argues how IOs can be used to strengthen domestic institutional arrangements – particularly when the support for such arrangements is low –, since they would work as a form of "lock in the new structures", raising the costs of a future democratic reversal. This concept was used by Pevehouse himself, who, in an article published in 2013 with Hafner-Burton and Mansfield, points out how democratizing states tend not only to join human rights organizations as a way to create the democratic *lock-in* but also seek to join the organizations that impose the highest demands and costs in terms of sovereignty, which was later reinforced by Hill (2016) when analyzing the European Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

Despite these positive results, the studies produced in the 2010s have also presented outcomes that contradict the initial optimism about the impact of international institutions on democracy promotion. Poast and Urpelainen (2013), for example, directly contradict Pevehouse and Mansfield's (2006) thesis that states undergoing a democratic transition would have strong incentives to join IOs, arguing that "since democratizing states face different governance problems than established democracies, existing IOs may not be a good 'fit'" (Poast e Urpelainen 2013, p. 831). Accordingly, they resort to the same data used by Pevehouse and Mansfield (2006), differentiating the creation of new IOs from the entry into existing IOs, noting that only the former appears to affect democratization, something noteworthy since newly formed IOs may not have the strength or even the durability to provide the *lock-in* on the undergoing democratic reforms. These results are further reinforced by a subsequent study by the same authors (Kaoutzanis, Poast e Urpelainen, 2016), in which they find evidence that consolidated democracies tend to create IOs with strict accession rules that allow founding members to regulate entry, limiting the access of democratizing states to the benefits generated by these IOs. Furthermore, they disagree with Pevehouse, who, according to them, "seems to suggest that international organizations can promote consolidation and prevent or stop reversals" (Poast e Urpelainen 2014, p. 73), arguing that IOs may be able to promote democratic consolidation through the socialization of agents, but

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[9] Other theoretical contributions include the Banjac (2010, p. 669) proposal of "a Lacanian psychoanalytic approach combined with Foucault's notion of governmentality", understanding the role of IOs as "technologies that trigger desires of not-yet-fully democratic countries"; and Goodliffe and Hawkins (2015), which apply the concept of "dependence networks" to understand how networks of trade, security and shared international organization membership have a measurable influence on the domestic political institutions of a given state.

are ineffective when it comes to preventing coups, revolutions, and other types of authoritarian reversals, given their inability to resort to the use of force.

Besides Poast and Urpelainen, other authors have criticized the literature on IOs and democracy promotion as a whole, in what Lappin (2019, p. 1) even calls an "unrealistic expectation of the benefits of democracy aid, and the often-exaggerated importance that international organizations proclaim for their work". The most frequent criticism seems to be how the literature has focused on cases of seeming success, ignoring failures whose understanding is as or even more important. Authors such as Subotić (2010), Elsig (2013) and Fang and Owen (2011) point out how participation in IOs can even have negative effects on democratization, given their capacity to demonstrate "credibly commitment" to economic reforms aimed at attracting foreign investment while avoiding political liberalization and strengthening domestic elites[10]. Furthermore, as Nygård (2017, p. 8) points out, if IOs "routinely attempt to pressure or constrain the behavior of incumbent governments during transitions, then this should be anticipated and factored into the decision-making calculus by incumbents", thus, incumbents who seek access to IOs' assets but also anticipate that "their hands will be tied" if they attempt to suppress a regime transition, tend to adopt strategies to "coopt challengers into the coalition before they take to the streets", which, paradoxically, is facilitated by the access to IOs' membership benefits.

This kind of criticism even appears in the literature on the European Union (EU), once mostly regarded as a good instrument in democracy promotion[11]. Guerra (2016), for example, highlights possible negative effects associated with membership clauses such as those adopted by the bloc, since, by linking the democratization process with the entry into the EU, there is a risk of producing a negative association to the democratic regime if the ascendancy to the EU fails to meet the expectations of social and economic prosperity created within the society. This criticism extends to the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) as well, with authors such as Eriş (2012) and Richter (2012) pointing out how its potential for democracy promotion is limited by the very security demands it aims to meet, resulting in "a process in which the EU [is] primarily concerned with itself and its own interests, rather than with the realities and socio-economic problems of its periphery" (Eriş, 2012, p. 256). Additionally, Buşcaneanu (2015, p. 274) notes how "EU has provided under the ENP increased benefits in the absence of sustained or any democratic progress", mostly based on what Richter (2012, p. 507) calls a "political conditionality", that may even have "generated counterproductive side effects that may impede the consolidation of democracy".

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[10] This result further suggests a new interpretation of Pevehouse and Moravcsik's (2008) findings, since the preference for economic IOs may be more associated with the search for channels able to assure foreign investors without the need to begin proper democratization.

[11] For examples of studies in this direction, see: Kelley (2004), Dimitrova and Pridham (2004), Vachudova (2005), and Beissinger (2007).

As Von Borzyskowski and Vabulas (2019) indicate, this 'political conditionality' is far from exclusive to the EU. In general, even IOs with pro-democratic suspension clauses have inconsistent standards in their application, suspending some members who backslide on their democratic commitments while ignoring others. This pattern seems to stem from the fact that most IOs are not founded having democracy promotion as their primary goal, but rather provide economic and geopolitical gains for their members, making it costly for all parties to suspend key-players. Therefore, "once a state becomes an IGO member, it can often remain in the IGO even after violating its democratic commitments" (Von Borzyskowski and Vabulas, 2019, p. 1). Ambrosio (2010) goes even further, highlighting the role of organizations such as ASEAN and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which, while verbalizing neutrality towards the domestic policies of its members, by advocating stability "as the highest political value of the region" (Ambrosio, 2010, p. 387), end up effectively strengthening autocratic regimes; and Libman and Obydenkova (2013), using the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as a case study, find that, in the same way that entry into democratic IOs is correlated with the advance of democracy at the domestic level, the opposite also holds in the case of participation in non-democratic IOs. Thus, as summarized by Dandashly and Noutcheva (2019, p. 106), it is possible that there are "multiple unintended consequences of external action in this field", including the "empowering [of] illiberal reform coalitions [...] and [the] strengthening [of] the current authoritarian regimes through the socio-economic support/security cooperation thus prolonging their survival".

Taking these arguments into account, two currents of thought seem to be emerging in recent years. On the one hand, authors such as Freyburg (2019) and Miller, Welch, and Vonasch (2019) argue that while cooperation with authoritarian regimes may provide them access to economic and geopolitical assets that would help stabilize the regime in the short and medium terms, it also establishes channels for democratic socialization at the level of state administration, which are ultimately required to the democratic reforms take root. Furthermore, the suspension in IOs due to democratic setbacks would sever bonds of socialization between states, reducing social incentives to comply and leading to a "long-run drop" in democracy levels and human rights.

On the other hand, authors like Öge (2017) argue that the institutional reforms promoted by IOs might succeed, but only if they are accompanied by strong incentives for domestic elites to position themselves in favor of such reforms – and, in those cases where the socialization effects are expected to promote democratization on their own, the result may prove to be the opposite. Accordingly, Dersso (2017) notes how the African Union might be one of the most effective examples from an institutional point of view, since it was primarily built as an instrument for maintaining peace and security at the regional level and with a strong normative aspect regarding unconstitutional changes of government, reinforcing the idea that this type of institutional instrument works best for democracy promotion and consolidation when coupled with other economic and geopolitical incentives, or, as put by Von Borzyskowski (2016, p. 277), "democracy assistance [seems to be] a strategic interaction between developing countries and IOs" and, as such, may need to fulfill other demands of both parties to properly work.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As pointed out by Geddes (2013, p. 1), the approaches used to study democratization processes have changed a lot since the mid-1980s, with economic models and statistical studies occupying an increasing role in the research of the subarea in question. That said, it is frustrating that our knowledge on the subject is still so incomplete and even contradictory, with the results of studies differing based on the variables, time period, and cases evaluated, leaving even some basic ideas open for debate. Moreover, the theoretical treatment of democratization processes remains largely focused on domestic factors, despite the shreds of evidence that international influences have become more relevant since the end of the Cold War. A few researchers seem to have accepted the challenge of trying to fill this gap, but their work still seems to be a typical example of the area as a whole: much has been discovered in recent years, but this knowledge still presents large gaps and contradictory results.

When it comes to the influence that international institutions exert on the processes of domestic democratization, the only point that seems to be genuinely clear is that, if the potential for influence exists, it is not shared equally by all types of international institutions. Yet, even after at least two decades of research on the subject, it still seems difficult to ascertain which types of international institutions can actually support democratic transitions and consolidations. This sort of question is made even more urgent by the fact that part of the recent literature suggests that international institutions may sometimes end up strengthening authoritarian regimes. In this regard, it is still worth noting the current debate as to whether or not states that backslide in their democratic commitments should be excluded from the membership benefits of international institutions: if ignored, the institutions lose credibility in their main instrument of pressure; if excluded, the channels of democratic socialization are severed, possibly reducing the chances of eventually creating a durable democratic regime. Thus, ultimately, the fundamental debate here seems to be whether the socializing capacity of international institutions can, in the long term, promote democratization by itself – which mimics the grand debate about the relevance of international institutions as whole.

Hence, based on the literature review presented here, it appears that a future research agenda on the topic in question should have among its primary objectives: (1) improve the control of the variables, looking to differentiate and identify which types of international institutions actually have a positive effect over democracy promotion, and the scenarios and courses of action that amplify or reduce this influence; (2) strengthen research lines beyond the model of Regional IOs, seeking to verify whether the results obtained in them extend to other types of international institutions; (3) refine and further elaborate the very concept of democracy that underpins these works, aiming to ascertain if international institutions have an impact not only on the establishment of a democratic regime, but also on the quality of that regime as a whole; and, and, above all, (4) seek to better understand the socializing capacity of international institutions and their potential to promote democratic socialization in their member states.

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Appendix A – Articles included in the research *corpus*

Author	Title	Year	Journal	Does it cite Pevehouse?	Times cited in the WoS database
Greenhill, B	The Company You Keep: International Socialization and the Diffusion of Human Rights Norms	2010	International Studies Quarterly	Yes	96
Ambrosio, T	Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion: Concepts, Dynamics, and Future Research	2010	International Studies Perspectives	No	62
Freyburg, T	Transgovernmental networks as catalysts for democratic change? EU functional cooperation with Arab authoritarian regimes and socialization of involved state officials into democratic governance	2011	Democratization	No	46
Subotic, J	Explaining Difficult States: The Problems of Europeanization in Serbia	2010	East European Politics And Societies	No	28
Matanock, AM	YY Bullets for Ballots: Electoral Participation Provisions and Enduring Peace after Civil Conflict	2017	International Security	No	19
Poast, P; Urpelainen, J	Fit and Feasible: Why Democratizing States Form, not Join, International Organizations	2013	International Studies Quarterly	Yes	17
Warren, TC	Modeling the coevolution of international and domestic institutions: Alliances, democracy, and the complex path to peace	2016	Journal Of Peace Research	Yes	15
Hafner-Burton, EM; Mansfield, ED; Pevehouse, JCW	Human Rights Institutions, Sovereignty Costs and Democratization	2015	British Journal Of Political Science	Yes	15
Poast, P; Urpelainen, J	How International Organizations Support Democratization: Preventing Authoritarian Reversals or Promoting Consolidation?	2015	World Politics	Yes	14
Libman, A; Obydenkova, A	Informal governance and participation in non-democratic international organizations	2013	Review Of International Organizations	Yes	14
Richter, S	Two at one blow? The EU and its quest for security and democracy by political conditionality in the Western Balkans	2012	Democratization	Yes	14

Karreth, J; Tir, J	International Institutions and Civil War Prevention	2013	Journal Of Politics	Yes	13
Fang, SY; Owen, E	International institutions and credible commitment of non-democracies	2011	Review Of International Organizations	Yes	13
Von Borzyskowski, I	Resisting democracy assistance: Who seeks and receives technical election assistance?	2016	Review Of International Organizations	No	8
Krasner, SD	Changing state structures: Outside in	2011	Proceedings Of The National Academy Of Sciences Of The United States Of America	Yes	8
Marinov, N; Nili, S	Sanctions and Democracy	2015	International Interactions	No	6
Buscaneanu, S	EU Democracy Promotion in Eastern ENP Countries	2015	East European Politics And Societies	Yes	5
Freyburg, T	The two sides of functional cooperation with authoritarian regimes: a multi-level perspective on the conflict of objectives between political stability and democratic change	2012	Democratization	No	5
Dersso, SA	Defending Constitutional Rule as a Peacemaking Enterprise: The Case of the AU's Ban of Unconstitutional Changes of Government	2017	International Peacekeeping	No	4
Nelson, SC; Wallace, GPR	Are IMF lending programs good or bad for democracy?	2017	Review Of International Organizations	Yes	3
Kaoutzanis, C; Poast, P; Urpelainen, J	Not letting 'bad apples' spoil the bunch: Democratization and strict international organization accession rules	2016	Review Of International Organizations	Yes	3
Elsig, M	The democratizing effects of multilateral organizations: a cautionary note on the WTO	2013	World Trade Review	Yes	3
Banjac, M	Developing Tanzanian civil society Desiring democracy, self-empowerment and the World Bank	2010	Journal Of Organizational Change Management	No	3

Hartshorn, IM	Global Labor and the Arab Uprisings: Picking Winners in Tunisia and Egypt	2018	Global Governance	No	2
Goodliffe, J; Hawkins, D	Dependence Networks and the Diffusion of Domestic Political Institutions	2017	Journal Of Conflict Resolution	Yes	2
Guerra, S	Distrust unbound: What next after joining the EU	2016	Communist And Post-Communist Studies	No	2
Lappin, R	Bridging the Capabilities-Expectations Gap: Lessons Learned from Post-Conflict Democracy Assistance to Liberia	2019	Democracy & Security	Yes	1
Kim, NK; Kroeger, A	Rewarding the introduction of multiparty elections	2017	European Journal Of Political Economy	Yes	1
Nygard, HM	The role of international organizations in regime transitions: How IGOs can tie a dictator's hands	2017	Conflict Management And Peace Science	Yes	1
Oge, K	Elite preferences and transparency promotion in Kazakhstan	2017	Communist And Post-Communist Studies	No	1
Von Borzyskowski, I; Vabulas, F	Credible Commitments? Explaining IGO Suspensions to Sanction Political Backsliding	2019	International Studies Quarterly	Yes	1
Dandashly, A; Noutcheva, G	Unintended Consequences of EU Democracy Support in the European Neighbourhood	2019	International Spectator	No	0
Miller, GL; Welch, RM; Vonasch, AJ	The psychological effects of state socialization: IGO membership loss and respect for human rights	2019	International Interactions	Yes	0
Thyne, C; Powell, J; Parrott, S; VanMeter, E	Even Generals Need Friends: How Domestic and International Reactions to Coups Influence Regime Survival	2018	Journal Of Conflict Resolution	Yes	0
Hill, DW	Why Governments Cede Sovereignty: Evidence From Regional Human Rights Courts	2018	Foreign Policy Analysis	Yes	0
Ghica, LA	Foreign Policy of Post-Communist Countries After The Eu Enlargement: From Post-Accession Fatigue To Exporting The Democratic Transition	2015	Analele Universitatii Bucuresti-Stiinte Politice	No	0

Eris, OU	European Neighbourhood Policy as a tool for stabilizing Europe's Neighbourhood	2012	Southeast European And Black Sea Studies	No	0

Source: research data, based on the bibliometric study conducted in the WoS database on May 7, 2020.