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Defending democracy with international law: preventing coup attempts with democracy clauses

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In recent decades many regional inter-governmental organizations have adopted agreements committing all member states to maintain democratic governments, and specifying punishments to be levied against member states that revert to authoritarianism. These treaties have a surprisingly high enforcement rate – nearly all states subject to them that have experienced governmental succession by coup have been suspended by the relevant IGO(s). However, relatively little is known about whether these treaties are deterring coups. This article offers an original theory of how these international agreements could deter coups d'état, focusing on the way that a predictably adverse international reaction complicates the incentives of potential coup participants. An analysis of the likelihood of coups for the period of 1991–2008 shows that states subject to democracy were on average less likely to experience coups, but that this finding was not statistically significant in most models. However, when restricting the analysis to democracies, middle-income states with democracy clauses were significantly less likely to experience coup attempts. Moreover, the African democracy regime appears to be particularly effective, significantly reducing the likelihood of coup attempts for middle-income states regardless of regime type.

Keywords: democratic consolidation; coups; coup attempts; inter-governmental organizations (IGOs); international law; democracy clauses; treaties

Introduction

In April 1996, General Lino Cesar Oviedo attempted to overthrow Paraguayan President Juan Carlos Wasmosy in a coup d'état. This kind of event was not out of the ordinary for South America during the twentieth century. One recently created data set counted an astounding 145 coup attempts in the region between 1950 and

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1999.[1] Oviedo failed, but some have argued that he may well have succeeded were it not for the fact that Paraguay was a member of two regional organizations with formal commitments to democracy: the Southern Cone trading bloc MERCOSUR and the Organisation of American States (OAS).[2] By 1996, both of these organizations had adopted rules requiring all member states to be democracies, and providing for sanctions should any member state cease to be a democracy.

These organizations were not unique in creating defence-of-democracy regimes; similar treaties have been adopted by the Council of Europe, the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Andean Community, the Union of South American Nations, and the British Commonwealth. Some have argued that these democracy clauses represent an important step forward in the global advance of democracy.[3] As discussed below, there is some evidence that particular democracy regimes might be reducing the likelihood of coups within their member states. This article aims to provide a cross-national perspective to that literature.

The question is important for several reasons. It is now well-established that democratization is a difficult process and that many states that make democratic transitions eventually revert back to some form of authoritarianism.[4] Furthermore, most of the factors that have been found to influence the likelihood of democratic survival are beyond the control of human actors. Some, like beneficial levels of economic development,[5] region,[6] historical legacies,[7] and culture[8] are endowments that states either have or do not. There is little that anyone can do to influence these endowments and thereby increase the likelihood of democratic survival. Other factors, like economic growth, level of inequality, and choice of institutions are amenable to some human influence, but not as much as we may like.

This provides motivation to see whether the international community may play a role in the resilience of unconsolidated democracies. However, here again we find few mechanisms by which this can occur. Some international influences on democratic consolidation are now acknowledged, most prominently regional diffusion,[9] the influence of regional or global hegemons,[10] and the conditionality requirements imposed by the European Union.[11] However, as with the factors discussed above, the application of these influences to any particular country comes only from accidents of history. No country can change its region or geopolitical importance in the hopes of preserving democracy.

It is perhaps for this reason that state leaders have been willing to pay the sovereignty costs of allowing international organizations (IOs) to judge the validity of their successions to power. Giving international actors this kind of authority is a significant development in the evolution of sovereignty. It is worth knowing whether these sovereignty costs are netting democratic leaders any safety against the would-be autocrats among their domestic opponents.

This article shows that country-years with democracy clauses were 20–30% less likely to experience coup attempts during the period of 1991–2008 depending on the data and model specification used. In most of the models estimated the effect is not statistically significant, however one might argue that a 20–30% decline in

the likelihood of coups is a substantively significant finding for those interested in protecting fragile regimes when few other means are available. Digging deeper into the data, however, I find that middle-income states with democratic regimes are significantly less likely to experience coup attempts when a democracy clause is present. Moreover, the African defence of democracy regime appears to be particularly effective, significantly reducing the likelihood of coup attempts in middle-income states regardless of regime type. At least for some states in Africa the hopes of state leaders that adopted these treaties appear to have borne fruit.

Democracy clauses

There is some history of states creating treaties that give the collective members the right to intervene in domestic affairs when successions do not meet agreed-upon standards. An early example was the 1826 Treaty of Union, League and Perpetual Confederation at the Congress of Panama, Simon Bolivar's failed attempt to create a league of American states to counter the influence of Spain and the Holy Alliance.[12] Other treaties of this sort were the 1907 Additional Treaty to the Treaty of Peace concluded at the Central American Conference,[13] and the 1949 Statute of the Council of Europe. Each of these treaties required member states to be democratic and gave the collective members the power to employ non-recognition and/or suspension against governments that came to power by coup d'état.

With the end of the Cold War, the number of regional organizations adopting democracy clauses multiplied rapidly.[14] The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the OAS adopted democracy requirements for member states in 1990 and 1991 respectively, though with weak enforcement mechanisms. The OAS regime was strengthened with the adoption of the 1997 Washington Protocol and the 2001 Inter-American Democratic Charter (IADC). The Washington Protocol amended the OAS Charter to include a new Article 9 that provided that any member "whose democratically constituted government has been overthrown by force" would be suspended from all OAS organs and activities by a two-thirds vote of the OAS General Assembly.

Similar treaties have been ratified by other major regional organizations. The Commonwealth of Nations adopted a democracy clause in 1995,[15] MERCOSUR in 1996,[16] the EU in the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty, the Andean Community in 2000,[17] the AU in 2000 (as part of its Constitutive Act), and ECOWAS in 2001.[18] As of the time of writing, 93 of the world's 116 democracies are subject to at least one democracy clause.[19]

Literature review

The spread of democracy clauses has received quite a bit of scholarly attention in recent years, mostly in the form of qualitative appraisals of particular regional regimes. This literature has focused on two sets of regimes: the American regime created by the OAS, and the two major African regimes created by the

AU and ECOWAS. The impression one gets from this research is cautious optimism that these treaties could help prevent unconstitutional overthrows of power.

A volume edited by Tom Farer was one of first appraisals of the OAS that demonstrated that early attempts at implementation in places like Haiti, Guatemala, and Peru showed the regime to be promising, if imperfect.[20] More recent scholarship has a similar tone. There are some optimists that believe the OAS regime represents a major change in the prospects for democracy in the Americas, but most see the OAS's record on the defence of democracy as mixed.[21] Valenzuela, Cooper and Legler, McCoy, Arceneaux and Pion-Berlin, Levitt, and Boniface showed the OAS response to democratic crises to be sometimes slow and inconsistent.[22] Arceneaux and Pion-Berlin make the case that this inconsistency is rooted in differences in crises.[23] They show that the OAS has responded consistently and forcefully to coups d'état but less so when the threat to democracy comes from the incumbent executive or a mass movement of the public. Most likely this is because in these latter kinds of cases it is more difficult for outside actors to agree whether an alleged offense is really a threat to regional democracy. Levitt and Hawkins and Shaw point to domestic politics and the way it is unconsolidated democracies that tend to be the most forceful proponents of the defence of democracy, while consolidated democracies and more autocratic governments are less interested.[24] Cooper and Legler, and Legler and Tieku also make the case that calculations of state interest interfere with consistent application of the OAS regime.[25]

However, all of the authors cited here hold the view that these problems emerge most often when the threat to democracy is ambiguous, as in the case of an elected incumbent consolidating his/her position. In the more transparent case of the coup d'état, the regime seems to work reasonably well. Boniface said: "in marked contrast with the Cold War period, classic coups d'état have now become effectively proscribed as a legitimate means of domestic political change".[26]

The AU regime has been tested more often and appears to have an impressive record on coups. It has implemented the regime against every member state that underwent a successful coup since 2003: Guinea-Bissau and Sao Tome and Principe in 2003, Togo in 2005, Mauritania in 2005 and 2008, Guinea in 2008, Madagascar in 2009, Niger in 2010, Mali and Guinea-Bissau in 2012, and the Central African Republic and Egypt in 2013.[27] Indeed, Omorogbe and Williams have argued that enforcement of the AU regime may be too consistent in that sanctions are being applied even in cases where coups might advance democracy by removing autocratic incumbents, such as in Guinea-Bissau in 2003 and Niger in 2010.[28] This is an impressive level of enforcement for any international treaty, and particularly for one where sensitive sovereignty issues are in play. Whether this is deterring coups is another matter. McGowan believes the AU regime may have effectively deterred some military leaders from plotting and attempting coups, as do Legler and Tieku.[29]

The only previous quantitative piece to look at the efficacy of democracy clauses is by Powell and Lasley.[30] They restricted their analysis to only the occurrence of coups and found sizeable effects for both the AU and OAS regimes.

Looking at the period 1950–2010, they found that the adoption of the AU Constitutive Act in 2001 was correlated with a reduction in the likelihood of coups by 54% compared to the period 1950–2000, and the adoption of Resolution 1080 in 1991 was associated with a 48% decline in the likelihood of coups in OAS compared to the period 1950–1990. This effect remained significant even after controlling for average income, economic growth levels, Polity score, and the number of years since the last coup. This result supports the idea that the OAS and AU regimes are important influences in the global decline of coups and the increase in the number of democratic states worldwide.

This finding is a good first attempt at the question of whether democracy clauses work, but there are several questions that can be asked of it – the most important being that it was arrived at without trying to account for the consequences of the end of the Cold War and of regional diffusion effects. The end of the conflict between the US and the USSR meant that would-be coup leaders lost access to potential external support for their actions, which could well have led to the decline in the number of coups observed in these regions. It is also possible that diffusion effects distinct from formal treaties influenced this finding. This article seeks to build on these previous findings by fleshing out a more developed theory of democracy clauses and by controlling for these important influences to test their efficacy.

Theory: how could democracy clauses prevent coups?

This article considers only the potential influence that democracy clauses have on coups d'état. There are multiple ways that a regime can be altered unconstitutionally, including the coup, the incumbent reversal or executive coup, and popular rebellion.[31] To mix the different kinds of usurpations in a single undifferentiated category of regime change could obscure the true impact of democracy clauses.[32] Moreover, Arceneaux and Pion-Berlin's finding that regional organizations are more willing to intervene in cases of coups than in other kinds of crises makes coups a natural starting point for this line of research.[33]

One point of agreement for nearly all academic works on military coups is that they are difficult to execute. A successful coup requires the close coordination of large numbers of people, who often have conflicting interests, in secret, to attempt to overthrow an incumbent already ensconced in office. Both the Powell and Thyne data set for coups d'état and the Marshall and Marshall data set show that almost half the coup attempts in the post-World War II era failed.[34] A review of the literature shows there are several points in the coup process that are particularly difficult to navigate, most prominently the assembly of the initial coup conspiracy (sometimes called *trabajos* and *compromisos* in the Latin American context[35]), and consolidation of authority over the state apparatus in the days immediately after the coup. If democracy clauses are to influence the coup process, it is most likely during these two stages. In short, the theory offered here is that democracy clauses may make it more difficult for coup leaders to assemble a minimally

sufficient coup conspiracy to launch the coup, and democracy clauses may make it more difficult for coup leaders to consolidate their authority immediately after the coup by decreasing the likelihood of public acquiescence. Potential coup participants, anticipating these effects, may choose to forego coups as a result.

The stages of *trabajos* and *compromisos* (in English "tasks" and "compromises") consist of identifying the persons who will participate in the coup, what tasks they will perform during the coup, and what spoils each of them will receive after power has been achieved.[36] At least one commentator has stated that, more than any other phase of the coup process, it is the assembly of a sufficient coup conspiracy that decides whether a coup will be successful.[37] The difficulty arises because this is an assurance game that has significant rewards for defection and severe penalties for failure.[38] An assurance game is a kind of collective action problem in which multiple actors must cooperate to achieve some goal, and it is only rational for any individual actor to cooperate if s/he believes a minimally sufficient number of other actors will also cooperate. Rousseau's stag hunt is a classic example.[39] The hunters will achieve greater payoffs by cooperating to bring down the stag, but if any of them believe that any of the others may not cooperate, it makes no sense for the individual to participate in a venture destined to fail.

In the context of a coup conspiracy, potential participants have good reasons to be reticent about joining a coup plot. Membership in a coup conspiracy constitutes treason, regardless of whether the coup is ever actually attempted, with severe consequences for those implicated should the plot be foiled. Moreover, potential conspirators know that each of their fellows has incentives to betray the plot to the authorities; the whistle-blower(s) can bolster their standing with the incumbent government and potentially enjoy promotion as a result. The combined effect is that the choice to join such a conspiracy is only rational when the participants can expect substantial rewards for participation and a good likelihood of success.

These are two aspects of the coup process that could be impeded by the presence of a democracy clause. Among the most important rewards of participation are likely material benefits. Suspension from a regional organization is almost always accompanied by suspension of foreign aid, loans, and even trade. The international response to the 1992 autogolpe in Peru led to the suspension of more than US$1 billion in loans and aid.[40] More recently, it is estimated that the Honduran economy may have lost as much as US$2 billion from the response to the 2009 coup,[41] and the Malian finance minister estimated that the sanctions imposed after the 2012 coup cost that country more than US$1 billion.[42] These numbers may be exaggerated, but even if the true costs are fractions of those reported these are still large amounts of money, and there is that much less to spread around to potential coup supporters. This predictable diminishment in material resources available to a coup-based regime could make it difficult to credibly promise potential coup conspirators that they will receive large material rewards for participation. Moreover, even if a particular conspirator is not motivated by money, or can expect to be insulated from the effect of sanctions, the knowledge

that other conspirators might be inhibited by reduced rents could bring the assurance game into play and cause them to abstain from the coup plot.

The second mechanism proposed here is that democracy clauses could lead potential coup conspirators to anticipate that the international reaction may reduce the likelihood of coup success by making it more difficult to consolidate power immediately after toppling the incumbent government. Luttwak places great emphasis on how precarious this stage of a coup can be, in which the coup participants have little more than purely physical control over certain parts of the state apparatus.[43] He argues that coup success requires coup leaders to "freeze" the political situation and wait for key elements of the bureaucracy, civil society, and business community to accept the transition as a *fait accompli*. Any incident that evidences resistance to the new regime could undermine this process of acquiescence, and "even one well-organized demonstration, or a well-timed strike, could pose a serious threat to the coup in the delicate transitional phase."[44]

There are two ways democracy clauses might increase the likelihood of resistance to a coup d'état. The first is that impending economic dislocation could lead certain actors who would otherwise be indifferent to the usurpation to actively oppose the coup. It is the logic of sanctions to impose pain on some portion of a regime's constituency in the hope that this affected group will influence the regime's leadership to make some change desired by the sanctioning state.[45] Those whose livelihoods depend on international commerce could suddenly find themselves with interests deeply contrary to the new regime, which might well have not been the case before the promulgation of the treaty. There is support in the existing literature for the adverse effects of sanctions on domestic political stability.[46]

Democracy clauses could also increase the likelihood of resistance by delegitimizing the new leadership and adding to the legitimacy of opposition groups. Suspension from a regional IGO is not strictly the same thing as non-recognition, but as a practical matter they often go together.[47] The signal of suspension sends the same message of illegitimacy to the domestic public of the state suffering the coup as non-recognition does. Moreover, there is an added level of opprobrium that comes from being the statement of not only one state, but of the regional community in which the state sits.

This mechanism has been identified as possibly being important to the enforcement of human rights treaties by Beth Simmons.[48] Such treaties can provide "intangible resources" to domestic political forces, creating a benchmark by which to judge the actions of the government and the opposition, and reassuring domestic actors that rights demands are not unreasonable.[49] In the context of democracy clauses, this could mean that potential members of a coup opposition movement may be both more certain of the validity of their cause, and more likely to successfully recruit others to join them. Donno's finding that opposition mobilization against election fraud was significantly strengthened by the involvement of regional IGOs offers some empirical support for this idea in the democracy context.[50]

Finally, it may not be necessary for this theory that any of the possible individual effects just described be large in order to have a significant influence on the likelihood of coup attempts. As mentioned, assembling a coup conspiracy is an assurance game, and assurance games tend to be resolved by "cascades" in which small movements one way or another create a bandwagon effect, pulling all the players to make the same choice.[51] This occurs because potential coup conspirators are likely to want more than anything else to be on the winning side. Participating in a coup that fails can have very negative consequences. If a coup is less likely to succeed because of an increased likelihood of domestic mobilization, or if the payoffs from coup participation are less certain, the decision of an individual to join a coup conspiracy in its initial stages appears less attractive. If this dissuades even a small number of potential conspirators, other uncommitted individuals may refuse to participate for fear that the plot may not reach critical mass. The net result is that a cascade of actors in favour of launching a coup may be less likely to occur, coup conspiracies would be less likely to come to fruition, and consequently we might observe fewer coups being attempted.

Do democracy clauses reduce the likelihood of coup attempts?

The theory proposed above posits that democracy clauses may lead would-be coup leaders to downgrade their expectations of success, and this in turn could lead them to forego coup attempts. The first part of this causal chain is very difficult to test because of the incentives such people have to misrepresent their ambitions and calculations. However, it is a relatively straightforward process to test the second half of the causal chain: whether there are fewer coup attempts in states subject to democracies. If democracy clauses are uncorrelated with the likelihood of coups then we can reasonably conclude that the theory above is wrong. However, if there are fewer coups when democracy clauses are present then the plausibility of the theory is supported, if yet unproven.

To test whether democracy clauses reduce the likelihood of coup attempts I gathered data for the period 1991–2008 on coups, democracy clauses, and relevant control variables for all states with populations greater than 500,000 people. This study is restricted to recent decades because of the potentially confounding effects of the Cold War on the likelihood of coups in particular states.

The dependent variable examined is the incidence of coup attempts, coded as a dichotomous variable from the coup data sets of Marshall and Marshall and Powell and Thyne.[52] The Marshall and Marshall data set contains information on 736 coup successes, coup attempts, coup plots and "alleged coup plots" over the period 1946–2010. The Powell and Thyne data set includes 457 coup successes and attempts from 1950–2010. For this analysis I dropped "coup plots" and "alleged coup plots" from the Marshall and Marshall data because of the possibility that reports about such events may be biased. The resulting data sets are different in significant ways and therefore provide a useful robustness check on the findings of this analysis. See the Appendix for more details about these data sets.

To account for the primary independent variable of democracy clauses, I made a dichotomous measure of whether a state was subject to a democracy clause, defined for the purposes of this project as an international treaty committing the member states to punish any other member state in which a government comes to power by unconstitutional means, and that such treaty specifically provides for suspension or expulsion from the organization as one means of punishment. Table 1 describes the regional organizations that have democracy clauses according to these criteria, along with the dates they came into force.[53]

Testing the hypothesis

This analysis begins with a simple comparison of the incidence of coup attempts in states that were subject to democracy clauses and those that were not, shown in Tables 2 and 3. There are substantial differences between those with democracy clauses and those without. In the Powell and Thyne data, states subject to these treaties were about 40% less likely to experience a coup attempt, while those in the Marshall and Marshall data were half as likely to have a coup. Furthermore, both of these results are statistically significant. So far, this corroborates the findings of Powell and Lasley.

Examining this relationship further requires a multivariate model that could account for other potential influences on coup outcomes. The model selected was King and Zeng's rare events logistic regression.[54] As can be seen from Tables 2 and 3, coup attempts are relatively rare in these data sets. As King and Zeng describe, when the number of positive observations is a small portion of the total number, especially less than 10%, normal logistic regression yields estimated event probabilities that are inappropriately small.

There have been a variety of control variables used in previous efforts to quantitatively model coup attempts.[55] My core model is based on variables that both have previously been found to predict coup likelihoods, and are available for most states up to the end of my test period. These variables are gross domestic product (GDP) per

Table 1. Democracy clauses and year of effect.

Regional organization	Treaty	Year of effect
Council of Europe	Statute of the Council of Europe	1949
The Commonwealth of Nations	Millbrook Action Programme on the Harare Declaration	1995
MERCOSUR	The Ushuaia Protocol	1996
The EU	The Treaty of Amsterdam	1997
The OAS	The Washington Protocol	1997
The Andean Community	Additional Protocol to the Cartagena Agreement	2000
The AU	Constitutive Act of the African Union	2001
ECOWAS	Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance	2005

Table 2. Cross-tab of coup attempts and democracy clauses.

		Democracy clause		
		0	1	Totals
Coup attempt	0	1287	1480	2767
	1	41	27	68
Column percentages		0.031	0.018	0.024
Totals		1328	1507	2835

Source: Data: Powell and Thyne, "Global Instances of Coups," Coup Attempts.
Notes: Pearson $\chi^2 = 5.0625$, $p = 0.024$.

Table 3. Cross-tab of coup attempts and democracy clauses.

		Democracy clause		
		0	1	Totals
Coup attempt	0	1268	1474	2742
	1	60	33	93
Column percentages		0.045	0.022	0.033
Totals		1328	1507	2835

Source: Data: Marshall and Marshall Coup, "Coup d'Etat Events," Attempts.
Notes: Pearson $\chi^2 = 12.0611$, $p = 0.001$.

capita, GDP change in the previous year, the Banks Weighted Conflict Index, the level of democracy in the state, the degree of regime coherence,[56] a dichotomous variable of whether the incumbent government is a military regime,[57] and the number of years since the last coup in that state. Cubic splines associated with the number years since the last coup are included to deal with temporal dependence.[58] These variables, along with their anticipated effects, are described in the Appendix.

To account for diffusion effects I calculated the average level of democracy for the region of each country-year in the data set. The measure used is the regional average Unified Democracy Score (UDS)[59] for each country-year, using the regional categories of the United Nations Statistics Division. In addition, I estimated separate models with an interaction effect between democracy clauses and the regional level of democracy, based on the premise that such regimes might work better in regions where democracy is more firmly entrenched.

For both the Powell and Thyne data and the Marshall and Marshall data analyses were done looking at all states and also looking only at those states that qualified as democracies using the criteria of the Political Instability Task Force.[60]

The results for all states are presented in Table 4 and those for democracies are presented in Table 5, and graphical representations of the predictive marginal effects of democracy clauses are shown in Figures 1–4. Analysing all states shows that democracy clauses were correlated with a reduced likelihood of coup attempts, but that correlation was not statistically significant. This can be seen in Figures 1

Table 4. Democracy clauses and attempted coups d'état for all states, 1991–2008.

	Powell and Thyne (2011) coups data set		Marshall and Marshall (2009) coups data set	
Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Democracy clause	−0.146 (0.300)	−0.195 (0.283)	−0.183 (0.245)	−0.232 (0.249)
Logged GDP per capita	−0.385** (0.154)	−0.401*** (0.156)	−0.435*** (0.134)	−0.445*** (0.133)
GDP growth in previous year	−0.0320** (0.013)	−0.033** (0.0128)	−0.017 (0.012)	−0.018 (0.012)
Unified democracy score (UDS)	−0.002 (0.455)	0.031 (0.448)	0.283 (0.339)	0.301 (0.337)
UDS squared	−1.315** (0.566)	−1.357** (0.579)	−0.917** (0.362)	−0.943** (0.381)
Military government	0.826*** (0.296)	0.849*** (0.301)	0.642** (0.277)	0.644** (0.278)
Regional average UDS	0.173 (0.430)	0.518 (0.487)	−0.413 (0.321)	−0.186 (0.394)
Democracy clause* Regional average UDS	–	−0.744 (0.539)	–	−0.535 (0.594)
Banks Conflict Index	0.038 (0.036)	0.038 (0.037)	0.059* (0.031)	0.058* (0.031)
Years since last coup	−0.345** (0.135)	−0.334** (0.138)	−0.219** (0.105)	−0.214** (0.104)
Constant	0.125 (1.099)	0.187 (1.114)	0.551 (0.889)	0.618 (0.901)
Observations	2653	2653	2653	2533
Log pseudolikelihood	−232.566	−232.077	−294.553	−294.251
Wald χ^2	83.96	107.54	119.40	117.93
Prob.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Pseudo R2	0.189	0.190	0.195	0.196

Notes: Logistic regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Significance: $^{*}p < 0.1$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table 5. Democracy clauses and attempted coups d'état for democracies, 1991–2008.

	Powell and Thyne (2011) coups data set		Marshall and Marshall (2009) coups data set	
Variable	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Democracy clause	−0.005 (0.543)	0.019 (0.554)	−0.452 (0.423)	−0.460 (0.441)
Logged GDP per capita	−0.006 (0.235)	−0.027 (0.238)	−0.175 (0.188)	−0.19 (0.19)
GDP growth in previous year	−0.020 (0.017)	−0.022 (0.018)	−0.006 (0.013)	−0.003 (0.013)
Unified Democracy Score (UDS)	−1.564 (1.075)	−1.269 (1.100)	0.887 (1.303)	1.357 (1.323)
UDS squared	−0.563 (1.355)	−1.342 (1.362)	−3.190* (1.765)	−4.108** (1.815)
Military government	0.322 (0.833)	−0.030 (0.879)	0.203 (0.749)	−0.225 (0.759)
Regional average UDS	−0.56 (0.581)	−0.227 (0.838)	−0.909** (0.461)	−1.251* (0.752)
Democracy clause* Regional average UDS	–	−0.518 (1.022)	–	0.605 (1.120)
Banks Conflict Index	0.016 (0.060)	0.015 (0.061)	0.0189 (0.050)	0.021 (0.052)
Years since last coup	−0.432* (0.236)	−0.414* (0.242)	−0.055 (0.175)	−0.036 (0.175)
Constant	−1.786 (1.646)	−1.71 (1.805)	−1.381 (0.951)	−1.102 (1.405)
Observations	1606	1606	1606	1606
Log pseudolikelihood	−110.262	−110.134	−143.381	−143.192
Wald χ^2	37.83	51.72	35.62	36.37
Prob.	.000	.000	.000	.000
Pseudo R^2	0.2187	0.2197	0.2026	0.2037

Notes: Logistic regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Significance: $^{*}p < 0.1$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

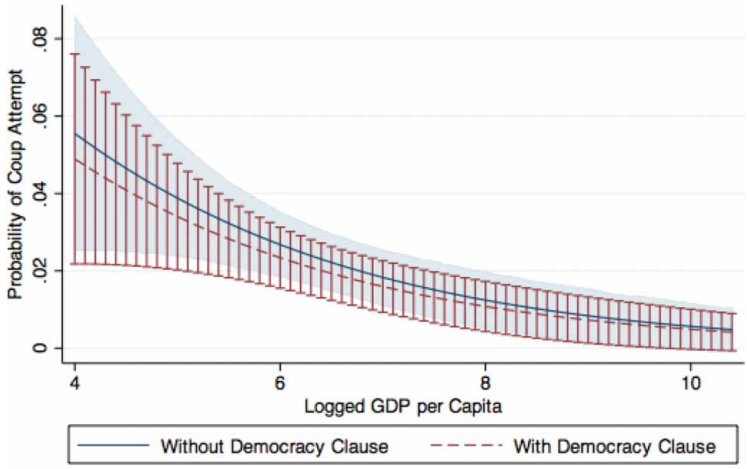

Figure 1. Predictive margins of democracy clause with 90% CIs. Model 1. All states 1991–2008.
Source: Plot based on Model 1 from Table 4.

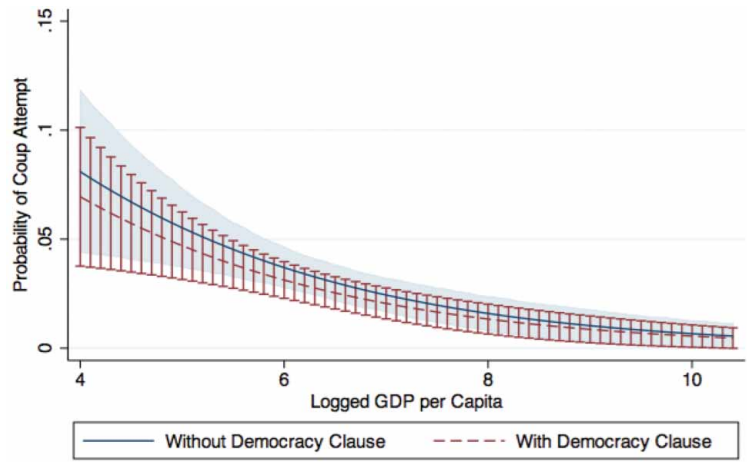

Figure 2. Predictive margins of democracy clause with 90% CIs. Model 3. All states 1991–2008.
Source: Plot based on Model 3 in Table 4.

and 2, showing the default models for each of the two data sets. The dashed line showing the predicted likelihood of a coup attempt in those states with democracy clauses is consistently lower than the solid line representing states without democracy clauses. In the Powell and Thyne data country-years with democracy clauses were, on average, 20% less likely to experience coup attempts than were those country-years without democracy clauses. The difference within the Marshall

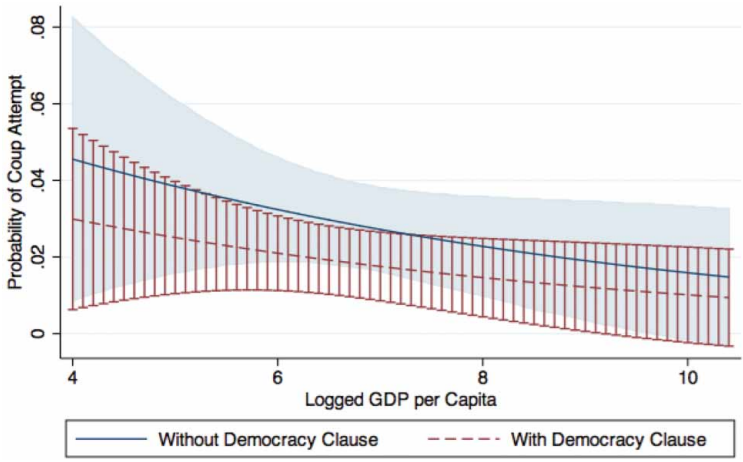

Figure 3. Predictive margins of democracy clause with 90% CIs. Model 7. Democracies only 1991–2008.
Source: Plot based on Model 7 of Table 4.

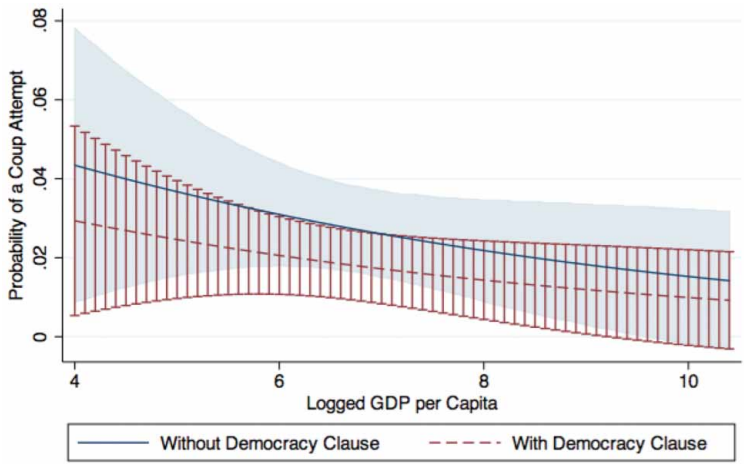

Figure 4. Predictive margins of democracy clause with 90% CIs. Model 8. Democracies only 1991–2008.
Source: Plot based on Model 8 of Table 4.

and Marshall data was 17%. However, the overlap of the confidence intervals shows that the model identifies no difference that cannot be attributable to chance.[61] This is true across all four models that examined all country-years.

The results are different when the analysis is restricted to democracies, and it is here that the differences between the coup data sets become clear. As shown in

Table 6. Democracy clauses and coup attempts for all states in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa 1991–2000.

	Latin America		Sub-Saharan Africa	
Variable	Model 9: Powell and Thyne data	Model 10: Marshall and Marshall data	Model 11: Powell and Thyne data	Model 12: Marshall and Marshall data
Democracy clause	0.412 (1.099)	0.312 (0.855)	−0.400 (0.449)	−0.345 (0.378)
Logged GDP per capita	0.695 (1.275)	0.315 (0.465)	−0.321 (0.257)	−0.345 (0.247)
GDP growth in previous year	−0.136 (0.118)	−0.064 (0.095)	−0.028* (0.017)	−0.023 (0.016)
Unified Democracy Score (UDS)	4.99 (4.043)	−0.948 (1.241)	−0.175 (0.727)	0.231 (0.592)
UDS squared	−4.296* (2.547)	−2.117 (2.177)	−1.110 (0.956)	−0.291 (0.661)
Military government	–	–	.835** (.367)	.642* (.359)
Regional average UDS	2.437 (3.490)	0.155 (1.793)	−0.102 (1.240)	−0.782 (1.030)
Banks Conflict Index	1.039* (.563)	0.452** (0.207)	−0.018 (0.041)	−0.005 (0.041)
Years since last coup	15.531 (10.331)	0.785** (0.345)	−0.393** (0.163)	−0.307*** (0.114)
Constant	−87.159 (52.702)	−10.639 (5.122)	0.308 (1.335)	0.482 (1.361)
Observations	410	410	754	754
Log pseudolikelihood	−20.710	−33.920	−144.254	−161.914
Wald χ^2	44.20	253.74	95.63	80.61
Prob.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Pseudo R^2	0.4155	0.2161	0.1253	0.1559

Note: Significance: $^{*}p < .1$, $^{**}p < .05$, $^{***}p < .01$.

Table 4, in the Powell and Thyne data no difference is observed. The result is very different in the Marshall and Marshall data. Not only is there a negative effect for democracy clauses (similar to what was observed in Models 1–4), but the effect is statistically significant for middle-income states. Interpretation of these figures is a bit difficult since the *x* axis is shown in logged GDP per capita, but converting that metric back into 2000 US$, they show that for democracies with GDP per capita of between roughly $400/year and $1500/year, democracy clauses did correlate with a reduced likelihood of coup attempts in a statistically significant way. For these states the predicted probability of a coup in a country without a democracy clause was, on average, 0.028, or roughly 3% per country-year. For states with democracy clauses the average predicted probability was 0.018. The difference represents a 36% decrease in the expected likelihood of coup attempts in those democratic country-years with democracy clauses.

The difference between the estimates for the Powell and Thyne data and the Marshall and Marshall data is probably the result of the number of the coup attempts each of them identifies during the period studied. Powell and Thyne count 29 coup attempts in democracies from 1991–2008, while Marshall and Marshall count 39. This difference of more than 25% in the number of cases probably obscures any patterns in the data and inflates the standard errors of the estimates in the Powell and Thyne coups data set.

Digging deeper into the data proves fruitful as is becomes clear that the effect observed above is being driven primarily by the results in one region: Africa. Table 6 reproduces the analyses above but with a focus on Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, the two regions most affected by coups in recent decades. For Latin America the predictive margins are negligible and the confidence

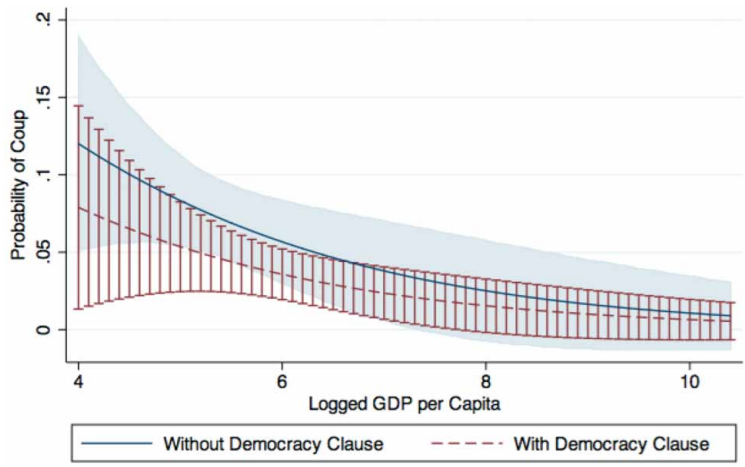

Figure 5. Predictive margins of democracy clause with 90% CIs. Model 11. African states 1991–2008.
Source: Plot based on Model 11 of Table 6.

intervals are very wide. There is not much here that resembles the general findings above. The story is different for Africa, however. Not only do we find a statistically significant effect for middle-income states in both data sets, but we also find a statistically significant effect for all states regardless of regime type. This is represented in Figure 5, which shows the results for all sub-Saharan African states regardless of regime type in the Powell and Thyne data.

Conclusion

It is now well-established that international influences play an important role in the consolidation of domestic democratic regimes. Beyond recent findings regarding diffusion effects[62] and great power interests[63] there has been a great deal of interest in the influence of IOs on the survival of democratic regimes. Pevehouse has shown that being a member of an IO with a preponderance of democratic members helps insulate a country from reversals,[64] and Vachudova and Kelley have shown that conditionality appears to be helpful at impeding reversals within members of the EU.[65] On the other hand, Ulfelder found no effect for membership in most IOs on democratic survival.[66]

The findings here support Ulfelder's conclusions that IOs are limited in their ability to directly tip the scales of national politics in favour of democrats. However, for a certain group of democracies – countries rich enough to escape the worst pathologies of underdevelopment but not so rich as to be insulated from international pressure – the threat of IO sanctions does appear to make an important difference. Moreover, it is the AU and ECOWAS, two regimes sometimes considered to be relatively weak IOs, that are most strongly associated with this effect. Democracy clauses are certainly not silver bullets against reversal – the results of the tests above confirm previous findings by scholars like Powell and Belkin and Schofer, showing that factors like national wealth and the number of years since the last coup are the best predictors of the likelihood of a coup.[67] The fact that democracy clauses only showed a statistically significant effect in middle-income states only underlines the importance that domestic factors play in predisposing a given country toward coups. However, the findings of this study suggest that IOs have a role to play in democratic consolidation beyond diffusion effects, even outside the relatively strong EU regime. The spate of recent coups in places like Honduras, Mali, and Egypt may lead some to cynicism about the efficacy of such international efforts, but the question is not how many coups have occurred but how many would have occurred without defence of democracy regimes in place. A 20–36% drop in the likelihood of coup attempts is no small thing for those interested in democracy promotion, and it is no small thing for those state leaders that paid the sovereignty costs to join these agreements.

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Notes

1. Powell and Thyne, "Global Instances of Coups."
2. For example, Pena, "Integration and Democracy"; Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy.*
3. Munoz and D'Leon, "Right to Democracy"; Diamond, *Spirit of Democracy*, 107–108, 182.
4. Kapstein and Converse, *Fate of Young Democracies*.
5. Przeworski et al., *Democracy and Development*.
6. For example, Kapstein and Converse, *Fate of Young Democracies*.
7. For example, Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition*.
8. Diamond, *Developing Democracy.*
9. Brinks and Coppedge, "Diffusion is No Illusion"; Gleditsch and Ward, "Diffusion."
10. Thyne, "U.S. Foreign Policy on Coups."
11. Vachudova, *Europe Undivided*.
12. Fenwick, "Meeting of Presidents at Panama."
13. Stansifer, "Application of the Tobar Doctrine."
14. Piccone, "International Mechanisms"; Duxbury, *States in International Organisations*.
15. The Millbrook Action Programme on the Harare Declaration.
16. The Ushuaia Protocol.
17. The Additional Protocol to the Cartagena Agreement.
18. The Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.
19. This is calculated using the criteria of Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland, "Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited."
20. Farer, "Collectively Defending Democracy"; Acevedo and Grossman, "The Organization of American States"; Maingot, "Haiti"; Palmer, "Peru"; Remmer, "External Pressures and Domestic Constraints"; Weiss Fagen, "El Salvador."
21. Munoz and D'Leon, "The Right to Democracy"; Parish and Peceny, "Kantian Liberalism."
22. Valenzuela, "Paraguay"; Cooper and Legler, *Intervention Without Intervening?*; McCoy, "International Response to Democratic Crisis"; Arceneaux and Pion-Berlin "Issues, Threats and Institutions"; Levitt, "Desultory Defense of Democracy"; Boniface, "The OAS's Mixed Record."
23. Arceneaux and Pion-Berlin, "Issues, Threats and Institutions."
24. Levitt, "Desultory Defense of Democracy"; and Hawkins and Shaw, "Legalising Norms of Democracy."
25. Cooper and Legler, *Intervention Without Intervening?*; and Legler and Tieku, "What Difference Can a Path Make?"
26. Boniface, "The OAS's Mixed Record," 54.
27. Legler and Tieku, "What Difference Can a Path Make?"; Omorogbe, "A Club of Incumbents?"
28. Omorogbe, "A Club of Incumbents?"; and Williams, "From Non-Intervention to Non-Indifference."
29. McGowan, "Coups and Conflict in West Africa," 242; Legler and Tieku, "What Difference Can a Path Make?"
30. Powell and Lasley, "Constitutional Norms and the Coup d'Etat."

31. Maeda, "Two Modes of Democratic Breakdown"; Ulfelder, *Dilemmas of Democratic Consolidation*.
32. See Geddes, "Changes in Causes of Democratization," on the value of studying different pathways of democratic breakdown separately.
33. Arceneaux and Pion-Berlin, "Issues, Threats and Institutions."
34. Powell and Thyne, "Global Instances of Coups"; Marshall and Marshall, "Coup d'Etat Events."
35. For example Farcau, *The Coup*.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., 15.
38. Sutter, "A Game Theoretic Model of the Coup d'Etat."
39. Rousseau, "Discourse on the Origins of Inequality."
40. Parish and Peceny, "Kantian Liberalism," 240.
41. El Pais, "Zelaya deja Honduras"; Legler, "Coup Coalitions," 3.
42. Xinhua News Service, 12 June 2012.
43. Luttwak, *Coup d'Etat*, 168.
44. Ibid., 1 30.
45. For example, Marinov, "Do Economic Sanctions Destabilize?"
46. Marinov, "Do Economic Sanctions Destabilize?"; Allen, "Political Institutions and Constrained Response," 935.
47. See, for example, Levitt, "Desultory Defense of Democracy."
48. Simmons, *Mobilizing for Human Rights.*
49. Ibid., 146–7.
50. Donno, "Partners in Defending Democracy."
51. Kuran, "Sparks and Prairie Fires"; Sutter, "A Game Theoretic Model of the Coup d'Etat," 213.
52. Marshall and Marshall, "Coup d'Etat Events"; and Powell and Thyne, "Global Instances of Coups."
53. One complication is determining what year to begin coding the OAS regime. The formal modification to the OAS treaty did not occur until 1997, but the organization began enforcing an OAS General Assembly resolution with a democracy requirement in 1991. I ran alternate versions of the analysis below using both dates to see if there were any differences based on the coding date. There were no substantive differences in the results of any of the models.
54. King and Zeng, "Explaining Rare Events."
55. See, for example, Londregan and Poole, "The Coup Trap"; Belkin and Schofer, "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk"; Thyne, "U.S. Foreign Policy on Coups"; Powell and Lasley, "Constitutional Norms and the Coup d'Etat"; Powell, "Determinants of Coups d'Etat."
56. By "regime coherence" I mean the extent to which state institutions are clearly autocratic, clearly democratic, or somewhere in between. It is believed that "mixed regimes," also called "anocracies," are more unstable than regimes at the ends of the autocracy-democracy continuum (for example, Goldstone et al., "A Global Model").
57. The reader will note that the population examined in this analysis is not limited to democracies. This choice is based on the fact that regional organizations have not discriminated in their application of democracy clauses based on the de facto political conditions of the relevant states. As evidenced by the AU suspensions of Togo in 2005, Guinea in 2008, and Niger in 2010, regional organizations have applied democracy clauses against states regardless of whether the displaced regimes met academically accepted criteria for democracy. This being the case, a variable for military government is essential to control for the oft-confirmed observation that military

governments are much more likely to fall to coups than other forms of government (for example, Belkin and Schofer, "Structural Understanding of Coup Risk"; Powell, "Determinants of Coups d'Etat").
58. Beck, Katz, and Tucker, "Taking Time Seriously"; and Powell, "Determinants of Coups d'Etat."
59. Pemstein, Meserve, and Melton, "Democratic Compromise," see Appendix.
60. For example, Ulfelder and Lustik, "Modeling Transitions"; Goldstone et al., "A Global Model."
61. As indicated, I use 90% confidence intervals in Figures 1–5 to correspond with a one-tailed test at the 0.05 level. This is because the hypothesis tested predicts a negative direction for the correlation.
62. For example, Gleditsch and Ward, "Diffusion."
63. For example, Thyne "U.S. Foreign Policy on Coups."
64. Pevehouse, *Democracy From Above*.
65. Vachudova, *Europe Undivided*; and Kelley, "International Actors on the Domestic Scene."
66. Ulfelder, "International Integration and Democratization."
67. Powell, "Determinants of Coups d'Etat"; and Belkin and Schofer, "Structural Understanding of Coup Risk."
68. Marshall and Marshall, "Coup d'Etat Events."
69. Powell and Thyne, "Global Instances of Coups."
70. Powell, "Determinants of Coups d'Etat."
71. Belkin and Schofer, "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk," 608.
72. Beck, Katz, and Tucker, "Taking Time Seriously."
73. Banks, *Cross-National Time Series*.
74. Finer, *The Man on Horseback*.
75. See Belkin and Schofer, "Towards a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk"; Thyne, "U.S. Foreign Policy on Coups"; Powell, "Determinants of Coups d'Etat."
76. Teorell et al.' *The Quality of Government Dataset*.
77. Pemstein, Meserve, and Melton, "Democratic Compromise."
78. Goldstone et al., "A Global Model."

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Appendix

Dependent variable: coup attempts

For 1991–2008, the Marshall and Marshall[68] data set counts 93 country-years that experienced coup attempts, of which 31 were successful. In the Powell and Thyne[69] data there were 68 country-years that experienced coup attempts, of which 30 were successful.

GDP per capita and yearly change in GDP per capita

The most common control variables in quantitative studies of coups are GDP per capita and GDP growth in the previous year. The measures used here were taken from the World Bank's World Development Indicators.

Years since the last coup
This was one of the most important variables identified by Powell.[70] In the years immediately following a coup another overthrow might appear to be an attractive means of acquiring power; as time goes by the coup may acquire an air of illegitimacy.[71] A variable indicating the number of years since the last coup attempt is thus included, along with associated cubic splines, as recommended by Beck, Katz, and Tucker.[72] The data for years since the last coup are left-censored, with the initial count beginning in 1950.

Banks Conflict Index
The Banks Weighted Conflict Index[73] is a measure of assassinations, general strikes, guerilla wars, government crises, purges, riots, revolutions, and anti-government demonstrations. I include the natural log of the Banks index because in times of crisis the military's power relative to other domestic institutions increases.[74] It has become standard within the coups literature to include the Banks index as a control.[75]

Military government
To distinguish states that have military governments I include a dichotomous variable denoting if the World Bank's Database of Political Institutions indicates that the chief executive for that country-year was an active military officer. These data were acquired through Teorell et al.'s Quality of Governance data set.[76] States with military governments are expected to experience more coups.

Democracy level
There are many ways to measure levels of democracy. I chose the Unified Democracy Score (UDS) created by Pemstein, Meserve, and Melton.[77] The UDS treats the other major democracy indexes as imperfect sources of information about each country-year's level of democracy and aggregates them into a single measure. This approach appears to mitigate some of the deficiencies identified in measures such as Freedom House or Polity IV.

Regime coherence
To account for regime coherence I included the squared value of each country-year's UDS. As described in note 56, research by Goldstone et al. and others has shown that states with institutions somewhere between autocracy and democracy, "anocracies", tend to be more unstable than are states at either end of the institutional scale.[78]

Regional average democracy
Regional democracy diffusion effects are accounted for by calculating the average UDS score for the regions of the United Nations Statistics Division, described in Table 6. I prefer these relatively small regions (compared to larger regional designations such as "Latin America" or "sub-Saharan Africa") because diffusion effects are expected to be most important between close neighbours. More democratic regions are expected to experience fewer coups.