Tutelage and Regime Survival in Regional Organizations’ Democracy Protection  
 the case of mercosur and unasur

By Carlos Closa and Stefano Palestini

Why do states adopt binding and enforceable democracy clauses at the regional level, thereby permitting neighboring states to monitor and potentially sanction their breaches of democracy? To answer this question, the authors test a set of hypotheses in two South American intergovernmental regional organizations, mercosur and unasur. Following the epistemological and methodological requirements of process-tracing analysis, the authors conducted thirty-six interviews with top-level policymakers and decision makers who were responsible for the design and enforcement of the Protocol of Ushuaia (mercosur), the Protocol of Montevideo (mercosur), and the Protocol of Georgetown (unasur). The authors argue that actors formalize these provisions in response to threats to regime survival. Unlike international organizations for the protection of human rights, which rely on the delegation of power to institutions such as supra-state courts, democracy clauses are intergovernmental instruments whose enforcement relies on states’ capabilities. Because of this, the perceptions of governments regarding their own stability and their expectations regarding the future enforcement of the clauses against their own country are causally linked to the decision to support the adoption of the clauses. Thus, governments that perceive themselves as stable democracies or expect that they are too big to be sanctioned support the adoption of democracy clauses because these clauses are functional for others*.* Conversely, governments that perceive themselves as unstable democracies support the adoption of democracy clauses as functional for themselves. The authors contend that any such asymmetry of self-perceptions and expectations, together with regime protection, explain the move toward the formalization of clauses for the protection of democracy in member states within mercosur and unasur.

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