

Political Elites' Views of Regional Intergovernmental Institutions Promoting
Democracy: Evidence from A Survey Experiment

by

Angguntari Ceria Sari

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Cameron G. Thies, Co-Chair
Thorin M. Wright, Co-Chair
Fabian G. Neuner
Henry Thomson
Sarah-Shair Rosenfield

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ABSTRACT

How do political elites perceive regional intergovernmental organizations that seek to promote democracy? When do political elites view regional intergovernmental institutions promoting democracy as legitimate? Many informal and formal types of regional intergovernmental institutions have sought to spread democracy. However, previous research on the nexus of regional intergovernmental institutions and democracy has focused primarily on the latter. Furthermore, these studies claim that membership in these formal international institutions (a.k.a. international organizations) increases the likelihood of the democratic survival of a newly democratic regime. Membership in these organizations provides a seal of approval that the newly democratic country intends to remain democratic. This kind of external validation should dissuade spoilers from undermining the transition and encourage ordinary people to support the transitional regime. This argument assumes that the domestic audience trusts this organization and believes it plays a vital role in society. Whether elites have confidence that the regional organization can positively impact democratic consolidation and how they perceive different types of regional organizations promoting democracy are empirical questions. This project seeks to answer these questions through a small sample and non-population-based elite survey experiment in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. I also run a laboratory survey experiment with a larger sample of university students, giving me the opportunity for statistical power. The results suggest that political elites are skeptical of regional intergovernmental bodies promoting democracy. Meanwhile, non-elites consider regional institutions promoting democracy illegitimate when they are informal, i.e., no written shared expectations, rules, and permanent secretariate. When regional interstate cooperation on democracy operates under a formal procedure or codified in

an international treaty and supported by a permanent secretariat, non-elites tend to consider them more legitimate.

DEDICATION

To Hari and Bya

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

On December 9-10, 2021, the United States hosted a virtual Summit for Democracy in response to the increasing challenges to democracy worldwide. It is an example of informal intergovernmental institutions or multilateral efforts to advance democracy at the global level. Multilateral efforts, which involve the participation of more than two states, seem to be a favored mechanism of democratization and appear to be the popular way to promote and defend democracy around the world. Following the US involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, multilateralism is perceived as a more legitimate vehicle to spread democracy. Unlike the unilateral or go-it-alone democratization approach, the multilateral system appreciates states' sovereignty because of the involvement of multiple states in the decision-making process (Piccone 2016).¹

The multilateral efforts to promote democracy take place not only at the global but also at the regional level. Major regional organizations, a.k.a. formal type of international cooperation, such as the European Union, African Union, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, etc., have sought to strengthen democracy in their member states (Legler and Tieku 2010,466). They are categorized as a formal type of cooperation because the interstate interaction is codified in an international treaty or a

¹ This project has received support from Fulbright, the America Indonesia Exchange Foundation (AICEF) Overseas Travel Grant, and Southeast Asia Research Group (SEAREG) Pre-Dissertation Fellowship/Henry Luce Foundation. I also have received valuable feedback from participants of 2020 ISA Mid-West Conference, 2021 ISA West and Annual Conference, and 2022 Midwest Political Science Association Conference.

Charter, providing a written contract made publicly by high-ranking officials (Lipson 1991: 508).

Not all multilateral democracy promotion takes place under a formal framework. Some states favor a more informal path. For example, a stand-alone informal regional institution such as the Bali Democracy Forum has existed for over a decade. It is now expanding its reach to Africa and the European continent by establishing BDF Tunisia and Berlin chapter. In this project, I label informal forums such as Summit for Democracy or BDF as regional institutions instead of regional organizations. Participants of these informal intergovernmental forums do not sign any binding international contract. The absence of formal pledges in the form of an international treaty or charter allows the participant to interact with much flexibility as any participant can easily abandon the regional cooperation on democracy.

This project, thus, concerns the perception of elites towards two regional cooperation arrangements on democracy: formal and informal regional intergovernmental cooperation on democracy. Specifically, it asks the following questions: How do elites perceive regional intergovernmental bodies promoting democracy? Does regional intergovernmental bodies' degree of formalization or institutional features affect their legitimacy?² Do elites perceive a formal regional intergovernmental body that promotes democracy as more legitimate in encouraging democratic consolidation than the informal ones?³ These questions have been unanswered in the literature on regional or international organizations and democracy

² Institutional feature is related to an input legitimacy.

³ In other words, I want to know which regional cooperation arrangements generate the strongest legitimacy beliefs.

and elites' opinions towards regional or international organizations and, therefore, deserve greater attention.

Scholarship on the nexus between regional or international organizations and democracy has increasingly found that regional cooperation matters, though insufficient, in affecting democratization, democratic survival, and negative or positive consolidation following the third wave of democracy, which occurred between 1974 and 1990 (Pevehouse 2005; Poast and Urpelainen 2018).

These studies invoke various mechanisms to explain this link. One of the mechanisms through which the democratization and survival of a democratic regime occur is related to the psychological benefit of association with these regional democracy institutions. According to these studies, membership in these regional institutions confers international validation on pro-democratic government. The association with the regional democracy club signifies that the new democratic administration is breaking ranks with previous authoritarian governments. Further, it indicates their country's acceptance as a 'normal country.' The external validation has a positive impact on democratization or democratic consolidation. It can improve domestic political support for the democratic regime. The leaders of the new regime will receive domestic backlash if they engage in anti-democratic activities and ruin the chance at global acceptance. This approval from international or regional organizations can also encourage the population to continue the transition or democratic consolidation process (Pevehouse 2005,40).

The underlying assumption of the abovementioned argument is that people hold favorable views of regional democracy organizations such that they honor the commitments to political reform. In other words, they believe that the regional or

international intergovernmental organizations play an essential role in society or have a right to decide on democracy that their members must abide by. Simply put, this argument assumes that the people in the newly democratic country perceive the regional organizations as legitimate.⁴

In a world marked by regional democracy institutions, understanding the legitimacy of regional democracy institutions is part and parcel of the theory of international democracy promotion. This dissertation project, therefore, offers an empirical account of political elites' perception of regional democracy institutions.

Moreover, this project seeks to examine the relationship between the types of institutional design that structure regional cooperation on democracy. Regarding the variety of regional organizations, the literature on regional organizations and democracy has focused exclusively on the formal kind of multilateralism. Regional organizations can be categorized as a subset of the regional multilateral institution (Pevehouse 2005; Johnstone and Snyder 2016; Pevehouse 2016; Genna and Hiroi 2014; Poast and Urpelainen 2018).⁵ Surprisingly, scholars have paid little attention to understanding the fact that democratic values are also promoted by informal regional intergovernmental institutions such as the Bali Democracy Forum, Asia-Europe Meeting, Asia Pacific Democracy Partnership, Summit for Democracy, etc.⁶

⁴ The other assumption is that people value external validation.

⁵ International and regional intergovernmental institutions operate both informally and formally international organization is a term that is used to describe a formal form of interstate multilateral cooperation. Some scholars such as Felicity Vabulas and Duncan Snidal use international organizations for both formal and informal multilateral cooperation. In this paper, I reserve the term organization for formal form of cooperation. For more discussion on this subject please refer to the literature review section.

⁶ The literature of international organizations and democratization suggests that they have acted as transmission belts for a norm of democratic governance, a process that was set in motion not only by the creation of regional international organizations with democracy promotion mandates but also strengthened in a series of UNGA resolutions and the agenda of democratization and culminated with the 2005 world summit (McMahon and Baker 2006; Johnstone and Snyder 2017).

The presence of informal and formal types of intergovernmental cooperation in democracy raises the question of whether people perceive them as equally legitimate or look at one kind of cooperation more favorably than the other.

I argue that people will bestow more legitimacy on regional institutions promoting democratic consolidation when it adopts formal institutional design. A formal institutional design refers to a highly formalized, i.e., international cooperation on democracy is encoded in a treaty and coordinated by a permanent secretariat and staff (Acharya and Johnston 2007; Voeten 2019; Vabulas and Snidal 2020; Westerwinter et al. 2020). The treaty represents an explicit binding public commitment to a specific cause that encourages compliance. At the same time, the headquarter provides administrative support to ensure the members comply with the shared norms or goals the regional body embodies in the treaty (Lipson 1991).

Unlike the more formal type of regional cooperation, the absence of an explicit written target, reward and punishment, and administrative support to ensure adherence to shared norms in informal intergovernmental institutions discourages the members from taking international cooperation seriously. Thus, I anticipate that the more formal the cooperation on democracy, the more people will perceive a regional institution promoting democracy to be legitimate.

This project seeks to answer these questions through a survey experiment. I aim to make relevant the perception of individuals about the role of institutional designs on the perceptions of the legitimacy of regional organizations promoting democracy by exposing the respondents to a brief text. It describes the role of international cooperation in safeguarding democracy, including maintaining the survival and stability of democratic practices (democratic consolidation). To elicit attitudes under a range of

institutional contexts, some participants in the treatment group will be presented with an institutional scenario that alters the type of the institutional setting: formal and informal institutional settings, and the absence and the presence of a democratic decision-making process. Some participants will be exposed to a brief text that describes how regional cooperation on democracy benefits and does not benefit their member countries.

1.1 Chapter Outline

The rest of this project is presented as follows. Chapter 2 discusses the current state of the literature on the relationship between regional intergovernmental institutions and elites' perception of their legitimacy, providing a background for the discussions within which this project will rest. After that, I explain the contribution of this project and the definition of key concepts in this project.

Chapter 3 elaborates on the trends in the role of regional intergovernmental institutions in promoting and protecting democracy. Chapter 4 articulates the theoretical argument concerning the link between institutional design, i.e., formal versus informal types of regional intergovernmental cooperation, and elites' legitimacy beliefs towards regional intergovernmental cooperation on democracy.

Chapter 5 provides a detailed empirical strategy (methodology) for analyzing the four hypotheses developed in the previous chapter. Chapter 6 presents results from the elite survey experiments. Chapter 7 discusses the results from the laboratory survey experiment and the gap between the elite and non-elite perspectives on regional democracy intergovernmental institutions. Chapter 8 concludes the work by

summarizing the arguments laid out in the last chapter and reflecting on areas for future study.

Chapter 2

REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS, DEMOCRACY, AND LEGITIMACY

2.1 Current State of the Literature on Elites' Perceptions towards Regional Institutions Promoting Democracy and Significance of The Study

Scholars of regional intergovernmental organizations (RO) and democracy have found how they are instrumental in facilitating political transition (Pevehouse 2005; Poast and Urpelainen 2018).⁷ One primary causal mechanism linking external force and democratic consolidation is the legitimization of the interim regime.⁸

According to this literature, RO influences the internal dynamics of democratic countries by legitimizing the transitional regimes. Membership in the RO, especially where most participants are from democratic countries, confers a stamp of approval on a newly democratic country. These international or regional bodies help convince spoilers and ordinary citizens in the transitional regimes that their country is now part of an exclusive respected democratic club and intends to remain democratic. Consequently, spoilers and ordinary people in those countries will support the interim

⁷ The emergence of a host of new democracies since the third wave of democratization has stimulated interest among some comparativists and scholars of International Relations to understand if these new democracies are really democratic and will remain democratic/consolidate. Third wave of democratization occurred between 1974 until 1990. This study focuses on democratization and democratic consolidation process during the third wave and after the 90s. New democracies face a risk of failure. Both the winners and losers of democratization can pose a threat to the new democracy (Pevehouse 2005, 28-; Poast and Urpelainen 2018). In other words, once a given country has more or less managed to hold a free, fair, and competitive election, the next big challenge for political actors is to reduce the probability of its breakdown (Schedler 1998; Wike et al. 2017). There are many ways to define democratic consolidation (Schedler 1998). However, at a minimum, for democracy to become consolidated, it must be able to solve any problems remaining from the transition process, and in general the containment or reduction if not removal, of the short-term problems. It is measured by the continuity of democracy or the absence of a democratic breakdown or an authoritarian reversal. While democratic survival or durability is not the same as a consolidation, it is at a minimum, a necessary condition (Schedler 1998; Pevehouse 2005, 28-29; Poast and Urpelainen 2014, 7-8).

⁸ The other mechanisms are socialization, and conditionality (Pevehouse 2005).

regime (external validation of the reform process feeding the legitimization process), and eventually, RO increases the likelihood of long-term consolidation (Pevehouse 2005, 26-27,46; Poast 2015, 27).⁹

This argument, however, assumes that the domestic audience or political actors trust these democratic clubs or regional organizations. Whether elites have confidence in these bodies and whether RO work to influence the durability of democracy through the legitimization process is an empirical question.¹⁰

So far, research on this topic relies on qualitative evidence such as the testimony of country experts to demonstrate the psychological impact of membership in RO on the internal dynamics of the newly democratic regimes. Without individual-level data such as survey data, it is unclear whether the people in democratic countries have the confidence or trust in the regional or international organizations promoting democracy. Moreover, it is difficult to assess whether regional organizations positively affect people's psyche, leading to higher support for the new democratic regime (legitimization process).

⁹ Pevehouse assumes that the interim government prefer to advance reform and needs an external help to do it.

¹⁰ Previous study on the nexus of regional organization and democratization and democratic consolidation rely on aggregate data. These study focuses on an aggregate policy choice at the state or national level to measure of the effectiveness of the influence of regional organization in influencing democratization and the quality of democracy, i.e., it affects the national score of regime type of a country. The discussion about the role of the individual in the literature of regional organization and regime change is not absent. Scholars explore the role of individual agents in a case study that complements the regression analysis to understand how external factor produces a domestic level outcome. While research on the nexus of formal regional/international organizations and democracy acknowledges that the collective change at the national level involves individuals participating in these forums, the survey data could shed light on the effect of different institutional designs of regional intergovernmental cooperation on individuals who participate in those forums and/or organization. The study about the effect of the types of international institutions on individual rather than the state is present in the literature of International Relations and Political Science, but little of this has made it into the study of international democracy promotion (Checkel 2003; Hooghe 2005; Butler, et al. 2017). After all, international diplomacy including the effort to persuade, shame, pressure states to change the collective minds and behavior must involve individuals.

Another thing that characterized the existing research on the role of an external factor on regime type and quality is the strong emphasis on regional formal institutions, a.k.a. regional organization. As I mentioned in the introduction section, there are many intergovernmental institutions at the regional level that includes democracy as one of the agenda of cooperation. They vary in terms of the level of formality: some of them are formal, while others are less formal.

The term informal institutions have been employed to describe different phenomenon ranging from illicit behavior to uncodified norms and rules. In this project, they refer to a stand-alone regional intergovernmental forum. An informal intergovernmental institution is a less rigid form of cooperation that is established without a treaty and/or not equipped with a permanent secretariat (Lipson 1991; Abbott and Snidal 1998; Koremenos et al. 2001; Boehmer et al. 2004; Acharya and Johnston 2007; Stone 2013; Cockayne 2016; Vabulas and Snidal 2020; Westerwinter et al.2020).

On the other hand, a formal intergovernmental organization is an institution established through an international treaty. It possesses a headquarters and secretariat, whose governing bodies meet with some degree of regularity. The treaty represents an explicit binding public commitment to a specific cause that encourages compliance. At the same time, the headquarter provides administrative support to ensure the members comply with the shared norms or goals the regional body embodies in the treaty (Lipson 1991).

Like any other international institution, the regional intergovernmental institutions promoting democracy need to obtain resources, attract participation, make a decision, secure compliance, or solve problems related to democracy. These institutions seek to and are expected to make an impact. The ability to make an impact

depends on whether individuals, public or elites, perceive them to be legitimate or have confidence that these bodies can contribute to domestic political processes such as democratic consolidation (Dellmuth and Tallberg 2020,312).¹¹

Previous scholarly work on the individuals' perception of certain regional institutions and anecdotal evidence suggests that people hold different views about the legitimacy of formal organizations. Some of these organizations are the European Union and informal regional institutions such as the Asia European Meeting (ASEM) and the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN).¹² Some people view informal forums in a negative light. Critics view them as a mere talking shop, where representatives of states get to exchange views on the experience of societies in democracy but do not take concrete actions to implement the shared written targets of democracy promotion,¹³

Furthermore, an informal intergovernmental forum, which serves as a deliberative forum, lacks formal authority and is sometimes viewed as less effective than the more formal institution in achieving its goals, including promoting international cooperation (Sheany 2017; Grassi 2018; Acharya and Johnston 2007,2; Kurlantzick 2013, 212, 230; Karim 2017; Huijgh 2019, 187).¹⁴ Take Asia Europe

¹¹ There are many ways to define democratic consolidation (Schedler 1998). However, at a minimum, for democracy to become consolidated, it must be able to solve any problems remaining from the transition process, and in general the containment or reduction if not removal, of the short-term problems. It is measured by the continuity of democracy or the absence of a democratic breakdown or an authoritarian reversal. While democratic survival or durability is not the same as a consolidation, it is at a minimum, a necessary condition (Schedler 1998; Pevehouse 2005, 28-29; Poast and Urpelainen 2014, 7-8).

¹² ASEAN prior to the adoption of the ASEAN Charter in 2008.

¹³ In general, intergovernmental organizations are 'talking-shop' places where delegates meet to discuss various issues. Whether or not an international organization is a talking-shop is a matter of degree. Both formal and informal international institutions share this characteristic. Because informal forum lacks a written commitment, the agenda-setting role or the 'talking-shop' purpose is more pronounced in this type of institution.

¹⁴ The perception that an informal regional or international intergovernmental body as a mere talking shop is prevalent among pundits and scholars. It has inspired some scholars of international organizations to study the effectiveness of informal intergovernmental institutions versus the formal ones (Acharya and Johnston 2007,2).

Meeting or ASEM, for instance. One prominent scholar of Southeast Asia and Europe regionalism, Jurgen Ruland, thinks that ASEM needs to create a secretariate, deepen institutionalization, and move beyond its non-binding and consultative format if it wishes to be a role model for regional intergovernmental institutions.¹⁵ Similarly, the largest less-formal regional forum on democracy in the Asia Pacific, Bali Democracy Forum, has been perceived by some journalists and activists as a merely routine event that will not engender the establishment of both procedural and substantive democracy. The Chairman of the Association of Independent Journalists of the Bali chapter in Indonesia stated that BDF should cease to exist (Republika 2014).¹⁶

At the same time, there is a prevalent assumption that more intrusive institutions (formal institutions) are the only way to achieve meaningful cooperation (Acharya and Johnston 2007). Consequently, some call into question the usefulness or effectiveness of the informal or less intrusive form of cooperation. The criticism leveled against informal forums is sometimes accompanied by a call for reform or formalization of these forums.¹⁷

Therefore, an empirical study on elites' perception of the legitimacy of different types of regional cooperation can help us determine the extent of the resistance towards the informal forum and if the demand for the formalization of informal cooperation is warranted.

The examination of elite perception toward different types of regional intergovernmental cooperation on democracy is also important given the elites' role in

¹⁵ <https://www.southeastasianstudies.uni-freiburg.de/documents/occasional-paper/op43.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/umum/13/11/28/en/national-politics/14/10/09/nd67fb-coalition-of-civil-societies-reject-bdf>

¹⁷ One example where an informal forum is under pressure to formalise is the G 20 (Benson and Zurn 2019,551,555).

creating, operating, defending, or contesting international organizations. In this project, I focus on the opinion of elites because I consider regional cooperation on democracy as a non-high-profile issue or publicly debated issue such as foreign intervention or war (Drezner 2011). Although the public could form a powerful influence on foreign policy issues, I assume that elites are more influential in shaping the nature of regional cooperation on democracy. As Scholte, et. Al (2021) notes:

“Elites have pre-eminent roles in setting agendas, producing knowledge, constructing institutions, taking and implementing strategic decisions, and assessing policy outcomes. No regime, national or global, can thrive if it lacks substantial endorsement from elite circles (...) knowing what elites think can suggest what amounts and types of global policy are in prospect in the future as well as what steps could stimulate more (or less) elite backing for global regulatory institutions (Scholte et al.862).”

Yet, so far, we have lacked the data and theory to identify and explain elite judgments of different regional democracy institutions (formal vs. informal intergovernmental institutions at the international or regional level). Previous empirical work on elite opinion towards international organizations mostly explored elites’ satisfaction with major global organizations. For example, Verhaegen et al., 2021 look at elites’ perceptions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), UN Security Council (UNSC), and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC).

Another study by Dellmuth and Tallberg, 2018 assesses elites’ perceptions of the European Union (EU), United Nations (UN), and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Dellmuth et al., 2021 follow the same path by assessing elites’ view of the legitimacy of the World Health Organization (WHO), International Criminal Court (ICC), World Bank (WB), and WTO. A recent study by Brandi (2019) assesses elites’ opinions towards Group of 7 (G 7) and Group of 20 (G 20), both of which are considered a more informal institutions. Therefore, this study is critical because governments promote democratic values through regional bodies, and the topic of

elites' opinions toward regional democracy institutions has not yet been the subject of detailed study.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, many regional formal organizations and informal forums play an active role in democracy promotion. Therefore, the more an international organization is perceived as legitimate, i.e., perceived to have the right to rule and exercise its authority appropriately, the more likely it will obtain resources, attract participation, take a decision, secure compliance, and ultimately solve problems.

Legitimacy is also helpful if regional or international intergovernmental bodies pursue ambitious policy goals or comply with international rules and norms. Low legitimacy will hurt the respect for international rules and norms (Keohane 2006, 57; Sommerer and Agne 2018; Zelli 2018; Tallberg and Zurn 2019, 581-2; Verhaegen et al., 2021).¹⁸

The question of both public and elite perceptions of global governance legitimacy (legitimacy in the sociological sense) has attracted growing research attention (Tallberg and Zurn 2019; Dellmuth et al., 2021; Verhaegen et al., 2021).¹⁹ By virtue of elites' position in political institutions or private organizations and their control of resources, they can influence important political (domestic or foreign) decisions. Because of this involvement in the decision-making process or implementation of domestic or foreign policies, or interest in public policies, they are generally more knowledgeable about politics than the general public (Hoffman-Lange 2008, 53-54).²⁰

¹⁸ Rules are prescriptions that serve as constraints on action (North 1990).

¹⁹ The term governance refers to sets of rules that guide the collective activities of a group (Keohane and Nye 2000, 12)

²⁰ As Anderson et al., (2019) point out, many scholars of public opinion toward global governance institutions argue that the public is ignorant, and their opinion is shaped by cues from elites or media. I

Although the number of the stand-alone regional semi and pure informal intergovernmental institutions seeking to advance democratic ideals is small, only fourteen of them are still in operation compared to 19 formal regional cooperation on democracy; their presence suggests that they are an important feature of world politics. Furthermore, the criticism against an informal intergovernmental forum as a mere talking shop raises a question about the prevalence of this view among key political actors regarding the legitimacy of this type of cooperation.

I, therefore, seek to fill the research gap and extend prior research on institutional sources of legitimacy in international and/or regional institutions by privileging institutional conditions, focusing on their opinion toward the different features of regional cooperation on democracy (formal vs. informal design).²¹ What levels of legitimacy do elites accord to these two types of regional intergovernmental institutions on democracy? What drives those elites' beliefs?

This project will examine whether the level of formalization of regional intergovernmental bodies affects elites' perceptions about the legitimacy of regional institutions promoting democracy. It does so through a non-population-based elite survey experiment in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines,²²

would like to extend this research to understand if elites are indeed knowledgeable and use their knowledge to form an opinion on the legitimacy of regional interstate institutions.

²¹ This project focuses on legitimacy in the sociological sense, as revealed by the perceptions and beliefs of governed as opposed to legitimacy in the normative sense which stems from the governing body's conformance to philosophical ideals (Cogan et al. 2016, 1109). Furthermore, it refers to foundational support for a governing body, as opposed to support for certain person or particular policies (Verhaegen et al., 2021, 625).

²² The literature of international institutions focuses on the degree of normative and preference change, or internalization of new preferences, norms, and roles as the dependent variable (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Acharya and Johnston 2007,24; Hooghe 2005). Meanwhile, the scholarship of democracy and regional and/or international organization emphasize on the effect of it on commitment to consolidate democracy as the outcome of interest (Pevehouse 2005; Mansfield and Pevehouse 2006; Poast and Urpelainen 2018). Scholars disagree on the driver of this outcome. Pevehouse 2005 argues that regional organization socializes commitment to consolidate democracy, while others such as Pevehouse and Mansfield (2006,140), Poast and Urpelainen (2008) contend that policy makers of democratizing countries enter regional or international organizations with a desire to consolidate democracy.

2.2. Concepts and Measures

In examining the elites' perceptions of regional institutions that advance democratic values (RI), it is necessary to define the key concepts in this research. The key independent variable in this study is the level of formalization of regional democracy institutions. The regional democracy intergovernmental institutions are therefore distinguished according to their level of formality. It refers to the strength of the mechanism of regional institutions.²³

Formalization is one of the ways scholars of institutions conceptualize and measure the characteristics of institutions. In the literature of international or regional institutions, scholars vary in how they conceptualize and measure institutional design. Scholars such as Kenneth Abbott, Robert Keohane, Andrew Moravcsik, Anne-Marie Slaughter, and Duncan Snidal, for example, employ the concept of legalization to explain a set of characteristics that institutions may or may not possess (2000).²⁴

Legalization is defined as institutionalization characterized by three dimensions: the degree to which rules are obligatory, the precision of those rules, and the delegation of some functions of interpretation, monitoring, and implementation to a third party (Abbott et al., 2000; Goldstein et al. 2001, 3-4). Each of these three dimensions is a matter of degree and graduation instead of a rigid dichotomy, and each can vary independently.

The role of domestic factor as the driver of support towards international norm such as support towards the EU, is also noted by Hooghe (2005).

²³ For a discussion about the study of institutions in the field of Comparative Politics please see Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, *Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda*. in *Perspective on Politics*, 2 (4), December 2004, 726-40. The study of informal institutions in comparative politics focuses on practices outside officially sanctioned channels or extra-legal frameworks, and the players of such practices such as mafias, clans.

²⁴ See Abbott et al, (2000)

The concept of legalization encompasses a multidimensional continuum. It ranges from the ideal type of formal organization, where all three properties are maximized; to hard formalization, where all three (or at least two of the dimensions) are high; through multiple forms of partial or soft formalization involving different combinations of attributes; and finally, to the complete absence of formalization, another ideal type (Abbott et al., 2000, 401-402). Abbott et al. also develop indicators for each dimension of legalization that allow us to measure the degree of legalization of international institutions or norms, agreements, and regimes.

The concepts of formalization and legalization are related but also distinct from each other. Both formalization and legalization are associated with codifying international corporations into international agreements that legally bound states. However, unlike legalization, formalization does not deal with precision.²⁵ In my research, therefore, I will use both measures offered by Vabulas and Snidal as well as Abbott et al.

The concept of formal institutional design is more commonly used in the literature on the role of international organizations in democratization and democratic consolidation than the concept of legalization (Pevehouse 2005; Poast and Urpelainen 2018).

With regards to the informal institutions, Oliver Westerwinter et al. (2020), Velocity Fabulas, and Duncan Snidal (201,2020) point out three types of informality in world politics: informality of institutions, within institutions, and around institutions. The first type of informal institution is a stand-alone informal institution. Examples of

²⁵ Some scholars suggest that the discussion about legalization can be only done in the context of formal institutions (Golterman et al., 2012, 7 in Borzel et al Roads to Regionalism; Lenz and Marks in Risse and Borzel 2016, 667; Hooghe et al., 2019).

this type of institution are Group of 8, Group of 20, and the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision.²⁶

The second kind of informal institution refers to an informal arrangement, practices, understandings, and norms operating within a formal international governmental organization. The second kind includes informal communication networks, methods of reaching consensus, etc., that are not specified in the written rules of the organization, such as the informal decision-making process within the United Nations Security Council (Stone 2013; Conzelmann 2012; Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 200). The third type of informal institution is often associated with trans governmental initiatives *around the global* institutions, which can be perceived as the third United Nations.²⁷

In this project, informal institution refers to a stand-alone institution, which is the first type of informal institution, instead of informal arrangements or mechanisms within formal organizations or around global governance. Such institutions use the informal mechanism as an overarching design of interstate cooperation (Vabulas and Snidal 2013,2020).

I utilize the measurement of informal institutions developed by Vabulas and Snidal (2013, 2020). Formal international or regional organizations are the ones where

²⁶ The interest in informal institutions, governance, agreements, and organizations in the field of International Relations started as early as the 1990s (Lipson 1991). This movement is driven by the proliferation of international institutions that do not fall squarely within the traditional or standard definition of International Governmental Organizations or IGOs, which is a formal entity formed by an internationally recognized treaty with three or more states as members and supported by a permanent secretariat or other significant institutionalization such as headquarters and/or permanent staff (Pevehouse 2005; Vabulas and Snidal 2013, 196; Vabulas and Snidal 2020, 6; Poast and Urpelainen 2018). Since 1980s states have relied on informal intergovernmental organizations. This trend accelerated in the 1990s. See Westerwinter et al. 2020)

²⁷ Rendall Stone says that the term informal governance in the literature of international organizations have been given multiple meanings.

interstate arrangements are legalized through a charter or international treaty, and the activities of states are coordinated by a permanent secretariat or headquarters.

They define a pure informal international institution as:

1. An explicitly shared expectation—rather than a formalized agreement—about purpose. The explicit understanding may be expressed in a diplomatic communiqué but is not formalized or codified in international law. Although member states share expectations about purpose, their motivations for participating may vary. Explicit expectations may take the form of public joint statements/reports.²⁸
2. With explicitly associated state “members.” This does not preclude the participation of non-state actors such as other IGOs, business firms, or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as (say) observers, but it requires that states play the dominant role. The term “membership” applies only loosely to IGOs and may not always be clear since states neither sign a treaty nor ratify it with their domestic public. The emphasis is that states are explicitly associated with (non-legal) mutual acknowledgment.
3. The members participate in regular meetings but have no independent secretariat or other significant institutionalization such as a headquarters and/or

²⁸ Vabulas and Snidal follow the footsteps of Pevehouse et al (2004) in defining formal international organizations within the Correlates of War (COW) International Organizations dataset. Some of the examples of informal international organizations are G8 summits. Other Scholars such as John Duffield (2007, 10-11) and Charles Lipson (1991) distinguish formal and less formal organizations or institutions based on the level at which the agreement is made within a government and the form that it takes. They exclude membership and the presence of permanent secretariat or headquarters in their typology. Treaties, for example, may simply be signed as an executive agreement, which makes it less formal than treaties that are ratified by legislative body. Other possibilities are government only sign memoranda or understanding, exchange of notes, and joint communique. With respect to the form, interstate cooperation might be stated verbally like oral agreement or codified into written down document like international treaty. Lipson also notes that some agreements take the form of tacit or unspoken rules. This variable is then measured in an ordinal scale (formal, less formal, and informal).

permanent staff. The regular meetings include relatively informal get-togethers to discuss common concerns, share information, build consensus, and agree on joint action. Indeed, operating these institutions need some staff and organizational structure. Still, such administrative support is deliberately kept minimal by having a rotating secretariate or relying on assistance from existing formal intergovernmental organizations. This supporting body is also not granted autonomy by states to make or implement decisions.

A pure informal institution must meet all the three conditions above. If an institution meets two out of three requirements above, equipped with a permanent secretariate but lacks a treaty, it is categorized as a semi-informal institution. In this research, I lump these two categories into one category, which is informal institutions.

The other important concept in this study is the elite perception of the legitimacy of different features of the regional intergovernmental institution (formal vs. informal design). I follow the recent research on this topic that distinguishes between the normative dimension of legitimacy (the right to rule) and the sociological dimension of legitimacy (a widely held belief in the right to rule).

I focus on legitimacy in the sociological sense revealed by the governed individuals' perceptions and beliefs. An institution's sociological legitimacy is derived from its objectives and practices congruence with the beliefs, values, and expectations that justify its power. It differs from approval from certain persons or policies (Verhaegen et al., 2021, 625; Zaum 2016,1109; Tallberg and Zurn, 2019,587).²⁹ My dependent variable measures legitimacy beliefs through four different questions. These

²⁹ The normative legitimacy stems from the adherence to the organization's philosophical ideals (Verhaegen et al., 2021, 625). Legitimacy is also distinct from authority and support, which is driven by cost-benefit calculation and short-term satisfaction with its distributional outcomes) (Tallberg and Zurn 2019,587).

questions ask them to rate how much legitimacy they accord to regional institutions promoting democracy but are worded differently.

The key dependent variable, legitimacy, is measured with several questions because scholars of elite or public opinion on international organizations rely on different measures of legitimacy. Therefore, I think there are no single questions that could capture the concept of legitimacy belief.

The first is the most commonly used measure in the literature of public or elite opinion on international organizations. I operationalize the concept of legitimacy with the following question: 1) “To what extent do you believe that the international mechanism that these countries use for improving the quality of democracy in their own countries is legitimate?”.

Other studies use concepts such as confidence or trust as proxies for legitimacy. Anderson et al. (2019, 673) note that confidence is a necessary but insufficient condition of legitimacy. They mention that some may have confidence in an international organization to perform its duties but not view its authority as being appropriately exercised, i.e., legitimate. Thus, I also include the following question in my survey: 2) “How much confidence do you have in this interstate cooperation that focused on facilitating democratic transition and consolidation in their own countries?”

Legitimacy can also be understood as the individuals’ acceptance that an institution is justified. In other words, people are willing to substitute the international organizations’ or regimes’ decisions to evaluate a situation (Anderson et al., 2019, 673). Some survey operationalizes this by asking the respondents if an institution has the right to make decisions people abide by or if it is widely believed to be justified.

I use the Likert scale in this survey experiment to measure how respondents agree or disagree with a particular question. I thus asked survey participants the following questions: 3) “To what extent do you agree that this international cooperation among states has the right to make decisions about democracy that their members must abide by?”.

Other scholars adopt a broad conceptualization of legitimacy. Legitimacy is associated with an individual’s social affinity with an institution. Here, a legitimate international regime or organization is one that is regarded as appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, and beliefs. This conception of legitimacy is referred to as “substance grounded” legitimacy. I, therefore, include the following question as a measure of legitimacy: 4) “To what extent do you think this interstate cooperation on democracy serves an important role in society?”.

Responses to these four questions are measured on 5-point scales, with one representing the most negative and 5 representing the most favorable opinion. I include a neutral midpoint in the response options.

Given how diverse scholars measure the concept of legitimacy, I created an additive index of four dependent variables (*confidence*, *legitimacy*, *important_rolesoc*, *right_abide*) (Neuner 2020,68; Anderson et al.2018, 673).³⁰

Another important concept in this paper is democratic consolidation. The emergence of a host of new democracies since the third wave of democratization has stimulated interest among some comparativists and scholars of International Relations to understand if these new democracies are really democratic and will remain

³⁰ Anderson et al. different method that I use to aggregate the multiple questions and answers into one dependent variable.

democratic/consolidated.³¹ New democracies face a risk of failure. Both the winners and losers of democratization can threaten the new democracy (Pevehouse 2005, 28-; Poast and Urpelainen 2018). In other words, once a given country has more or less managed to hold a free, fair, and competitive election, the next big challenge for political actors is to reduce the probability of its breakdown (Schedler 1998; Wike et al. 2017).

There are many ways to define democratic consolidation (Schedler 1998). However, at a minimum, for democracy to become consolidated, it must be able to solve any problems remaining from the transition process and, in general, the containment or reduction, if not removal, of the short-term issues. It is measured by the continuity of democracy, the absence of a democratic breakdown, or an authoritarian reversal. While democratic survival or durability is not the same as consolidation, it is, at a minimum, a necessary condition (Schedler 1998; Pevehouse 2005, 28-29; Poast and Urpelainen 2014, 7-8).³²

Turning to the other key concept in this paper, the notion of an institution, either a domestic, regional, or international institution, refers to a set of man-made formal or informal rules, conventions, or practices, together with the organizational manifestations of these patterns of group behavior sometimes take on (Parsons, 2007, 66-70). Sometimes these patterns take on formal organizational shape and manifest in buildings, resources, and groups of people acting collectively according to specific rules

³¹ Third wave of democratization occurred between 1974 until 1990. This study focuses on democratization and democratic consolidation process during the third wave and after the 90s.

³² In this project I ignore the long-term aspects of democratic legitimization (Pevehouse 2005, 28, 156). The long-term aspect of democratic consolidation involves an attitudinal shift in society towards democratic norms. It is also known as a positive consolidation. Some scholars associate democratic consolidation with not only the presence of the minimum criterion of free, fair, and competitive elections, but also citizen support of democratic rules and principles as the only game in town. Democratic consolidation, furthermore, is achieved when the risk of an authoritarian reversal reaches a negligible level (Linz and Stepan 1996; Przeworski et al. 2000; Svobik 2008; Poast and Urpelainen 2018).

(Borzal and Risse 2016, 25; Klabbers 2016, 135). Any international institutions need not contain all of these elements, however. Rules, conventions, treaties, laws, practices, or organizations are properties of groups, manipulable, and once established structures, the relationship between individuals within it.³³

Understanding what an institution is not can sharpen the idea of what it is. According to Craig Parsons (2007,68), many political scientists use the term institution interchangeably with the word structure.³⁴ An institution is not the same as a structure. Unlike institutions, structures are associated with many factors as if they are material, exogenous, and non-manipulable. On the difference between institutions and organizations, Kathleen Thelen suggests that institutions can be considered game rules, whereas organizations are the players (Thelen, 2003, 217-224).

For my research, I will use the more general term of a regional or an international institution. This concept includes informal and formal regional interstate cooperation. I reserve the word organization for formal institutions or international intergovernmental cooperation that have attained a higher degree of

³³ According to Parsons (2007, 66-67) the label institutionalist should be reserved for claims in which institutions cause something. When institution is discussed only as dependent variables and considered a product of causal processes that are structural or ideational, then it such discussion should not be considered institutionalist perspective. Thus, not all discussions about institutions are institutionalist arguments. Furthermore, an institutionalist explanation, unlike structural claim incorporates feedback between action and constraints within the temporal scope of their causal claims. This is a consequence of institution being a man-made constraint whereby people can affect their environment. With regards to international institutions, Erik Voeten (2019,148) adopts John Mearsheimer's definition by defining it as "formal and informal rules that prescribe the way actors should cooperate and compete in the international system". Another concept that is related to institution is agreement. Mark S. Copelovitch and Tonya L. Putnam (2014,2) explain that "an "agreement" is a negotiated arrangement between states formalized by a common contractual document or official exchange of letters. Institutions may be constituted by a single agreement or jointly by a number of related agreements. Thus, a single institution may embody more than one design outcome."

³⁴ For a review of the use of different terms associated with the concept of institution such as institutions as formal organizations (traditional conception), practices (sociological conception), rules (rationalist conception), and norms (constructivist sociological conception) please refer to John Duffield (2007, 1-8). Duffield proposes a definition that similar to Parsons. Duffield's definition reflects a synthesis of existing conceptions of international institutions.

institutionalization.³⁵ Some scholars, such as Felicity Vabulas and Duncan Snidal (2013, 2020), use informal international organizations to denote informal institutions. However, if we refer to international organizations as more or less formal the word organization will lose its meaning. If an entity becomes too informal, it ceases to be an organization.³⁶

In the next chapter, I will further define the phenomena under examination: regional intergovernmental institutions that include democracy promotion as (one of) their agenda(s) of cooperation.

³⁵ This is in line with the existing practice in the field of International Relations. For example, the Correlates of War dataset, and some existing research on the role of regional or international organizations in the context of democratization and democratic consolidation (Pevehouse 2005, Poast and Urpelainen 2018; Pevehouse et al., 2020; Hooghe et al., 2019) use the term international or regional organization for formalized interstate international cooperation.

³⁶ Some scholars suggest that one way to distinguish informal and formal institution is by looking at the label that states use. Informal interstate multilateral cooperation that is informal in nature are usually manifested in the avoidance of the use the term 'organization'. Instead, they use the term 'summit', 'forum', e.g Asean Regional Forum, G8 Summit, etc. (Khong and Nesadurai 2007, 61). I think Khong and Nesadurai's way of differentiating formal and informal by looking at the label is not really useful. In order to distinguish the two, we need to compare them along several dimensions such as the presence of international treaty/charter, headquarter or secretariat, among many. I would categorize European Union as formal institutions although it does not use the term organization in its name.

Chapter 3

PATTERNS OF REGIONAL DEMOCRACY INTERGOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS

Regional intergovernmental institutions have gained a prominent role in promoting democracy in their member states. They represent an intermediate level of agency between the state and global institutions.

This chapter offers a descriptive mapping of the adoption of democratic principles across the region. It attempts to answer the following questions: Which regional intergovernmental institutions adopt pro-democracy standards? How do these regional bodies influence the political system of their member states? What are some of the expected benefits of regional cooperation on democracy?

3.1 The Role of Regional Institutions in Promoting and Defending Democratic Values

The early regional organization that actively advanced democratic norms was the Organization of American States or OAS. It adopted the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man in April 1948. The signatories of this declaration agreed to comply with principles that embodied the democratic ideals of the human rights agenda, among other things. Article XXVIII specifically stipulated that the rights of man are limited by the rights of others, security of all, and the just demands of the general welfare and the advancement of democracy.³⁷ Thirty months after the adoption

³⁷ See <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/bbm%3A978-94-011-9514-0%2F1.pdf>

of this Declaration, the Council of Europe adopted the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in November 1950 (Stapel 2022, 124).

Although democracy and human rights have traditionally been viewed as internal political issues, regional institutions can hold states accountable for their actions or induce the transformation of regime type. In the context of democracy promotion, regional bodies influence the internal political dynamics of their member states by defining and prescribing how their members should act (Pevehouse 2016). In times of democratic backsliding and the rise of authoritarian practices in some parts of the world, regional institutions may limit or punish the violation of democratic standards through various means (Pevehouse 2005). Even when regional institutions are ineffective in holding their member states accountable for their actions, they may still serve as focal points. They raise awareness about the importance of democratic values, set the standard for assessing government behavior, and make democracy a strategic agenda at the regional level (Stapel 2002).

Before I discuss regional institutions that promote democracy, a definition of the region is in order. The term region itself refers to a geographical area that is located between the national and global levels.³⁸ However, what constitutes a region and when an organization is regional is a subject of disagreement. Some scholars broadly define a region (Borzel and Risse 2016, 24; McFarlan in Weiss and Wilkinson 2013, 431; Stapel 2022, 59-60). Borzel and Risse, for example, define regions as:

“social constructions that make references to territorial location and geographical or normative contiguity.”

³⁸ Union of International Associations (UIA), for example defines universal organizations as the ones with membership covers at least 60 countries regardless of distribution, or membership covers at least 30 countries and is equitably distributed over several continents”. Scholars such as Pevehouse cites IMF, United Nations as example of universal organizations.

This definition suggests that a region is both an objective category like geographical contiguity and social constructions, which embodies a claim to a common identity based on shared culture or religion or some combination of cultural, economic, linguistic, and political ties (Russet 1968; Van der Vleuten and Hoffmann 2013, 431). So, although geographically speaking, Europe might end at the Bosphorus, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) defines Europe as ranging from Canada, the United States, and all post-Soviet states (Borzel and Risse 2016, 24).³⁹

In this paper, my understanding of the region and geographical proximity is inclusive and consistent with the broad definition of the region. It, therefore, encompasses both contiguous /neighboring states and non-contiguous states that do not share sea or land borders but share another common geographic feature, such as the Atlantic Ocean and Arctic Pole.⁴⁰ States may also create a regional institution based on cultural affinity.

A regional organization, therefore, is defined as state-led cooperation of more than three states established through an international treaty, which possesses a headquarter

³⁹ Thus, region can be continental (Europe, Asia, Africa, Oceania/Australia, North America, South America and Antarctica), sub-continental (Southeast Asia, North Africa, etc.), or transcontinental (Transatlantic, Eurasia). Such definitions of a region and regional organization raise some questions, however. If a region can span multiple continents, can we call an organization membership that covers three or more continents such as APEC which is composed of 15 East Asian, two North American, and two South American countries a regional organization? How do we measure geographical and normative contiguity? Is it when the name of a regional organization make specific reference to territorial or geographical location or is there a specific threshold to measure geographical proximity? If a region can be transcontinental and contiguity is a necessary condition of a region, EU-Latin American and Caribbean Summit and Asia-Europe Meeting Meanwhile, Pevehouse et al., equates universal organizations with that of United Nations, or International Monetary Fund, and exclude cross-regional organizations such as NATO as regional organizations. Regional organizations, therefore, consist of states belonging to a 'region', a certain geographical area with borders which are not simply natural but also constructed and geopolitical and embodies a claim to a common identity, based on a shared history of this geographical entity and some combination of cultural, economic, linguistic, and political ties (Van der Vleuten and Hoffmann 2013, 431)

⁴⁰ It follows from this definition that regional organizations are groups of states that purport to share common objectives regarding their area, created by international treaties, possess diplomatic forums, and assisted by international bureaucracy (Nye 1971; McFarlan in Weiss and Wilkinson 2013, 431).

and secretariat and whose governing bodies meet with some degree of regularity. Unlike in international organizations, membership in a regional organization is based on the criteria mentioned earlier as well as geographical criteria, particularly geographical contiguity⁴¹ (Nye 1971, 8; Pevehouse 2005, 67; Borzel and Risse 2016, 25-26; McFarlan in Weiss and Wilkinson 2013, 431; Van der Vleuten and Hoffmann 2013, 431; Panke and Starkmann, 2019, 4 in Codebook ROCO; Ribeiro-Hoffmann 2016, 786).⁴²

A region and a regional organization or institution may cover the entire expanse of a continent, such as the African Union (AU). Or, it may be parts of a continent, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Alternatively, it can be transcontinental such as the Trans-Atlantic area, Asia Pacific, European Union-Latin America-Caribbean (EU-LAC Summit), Eurasia (McFarlan in Weiss and Wilkinson 2013, 431; Vabulas and Snidal 2020; Borzel and Risse 2016, 25). Trans-continental cooperation is called quasi-regional organization by Joseph Nye (1971,8).

The geographical criterion most of the time is evident in the name of the intergovernmental regional organization or institution, e.g., Arctic Council, Asia Cooperation Dialogue, European Union, etc. In other words, I also take self -

⁴¹ Scholars or regional organizations do not clearly measure geographical contiguity. However, research on international democratic diffusion suggests that the term geographical contiguity can refer to a state's neighbours, and the neighbours of my neighbours. It seems that these scholars also associate geographical proximity with a continent wide , or sub-continental, or transcontinental organizations.

⁴² Scholars basically divided into two camps in defining what constitutes a region. Those that adopt a broad definition of a region suggest that a region consist of states belonging to a certain geographical area with borders which are not simply natural but also constructed and geopolitical, and which embodies a claim to a common identity, based on a shared history of this geographical entity and some combination of cultural, economic, linguistic, and political ties (Van der Vleuten and Hoffmann 2013, 431). Those that adopt a narrower definition like Nye (1971), and Pevehouse (2005) choose to put a more emphasize on geographical proximity, while noting the relativity of regional images , e.g. although Algeria and France are close to each other, France belongs to the continent of Europe and Algeira belongs to the continent of Africa. See also <https://ir.uiowa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5425&context=etd> for an example of regions and states that belong to each region.

identification of the geographical scope by members of an international institution as evidence of regional organization. In some cases, the geographical dimension appears in the vision or mission

The remainder of this chapter describes further regional institutions that include democracy promotion as one of their cooperation agendas and the mechanisms that regional institutions use to influence the regime type and quality of their member states.

3.2 Regional Democracy Institutions

Today, many regional institutions have followed the footsteps of the two early adopters of democracy and human rights norms: the Organization of American States and the Council of Europe. The trend in adopting democracy promotion agenda manifests itself in different types of the regional institution.

Regional democracy intergovernmental institutions can be distinguished according to their type (geographical scope such as continental, sub-regional, or trans-regional, level of authority, level of formality). They can also be distinguished according to their function (a primary purpose they were supposed to initially address, such as security, economic, or political).

Using the definition of the key concepts in this paper, regional institution and democracy promotion, I came up with 39 regional democracy institutions. In constructing the list of regional democracy institutions, I broadened my search to include both formal and informal types of regional institutions. I then relied on existing datasets and research to identify the intergovernmental regional democracy institutions.

The first dataset is on informal international organizations by Felicity Vabulas and Duncan Snidal, just published in 2020.⁴³

I only picked regional institutions from this dataset and excluded institutions with global or universal membership, usually marked by the term ‘international,’ ‘world,’ and ‘global’ in the institution's name. From this set of regional informal institutions, I excluded those focusing solely on security (nuclear weapons, terrorism, military alliance, etc.), economy or international finance and trade, technical (internet access, for example), or environmental issues. This dataset is biased towards informal institutions that leave a digital or non-digital trail, and the pure informal ones, i.e., meet all three criteria of informal institutions.

I conducted my search using specific keywords such as “informal,” “democracy,” and “region” to identify a regional democracy institution. In addition to Vabulas and Snidal’s dataset, I also relied on existing research on regional organizations and democracy promotion by Tanja A. Borzel and Vera Van Hullen (2015), Jon Pevehouse (2015), Frithjof Ehm and Christian Walter (2015), and Gaspare M. Genna and Taeko Hiroi (2016). Since I was primarily interested in democracy standards in written and official documents, I visited regional intergovernmental institutions' websites and the United Nations Treaty Collection to retrieve those official documents.

In creating the list of regional intergovernmental institutions that engage in democracy promotion, I used several criteria to separate those which do and do not engage in democracy promotion.

⁴³ I thank Duncan Snidal and Felicity Vabulas for sharing the data prior to their public release.

To be included in my list, regional institutions must satisfy several criteria:

- a. The inclusion of the concept of democracy in the name of a regional organization or explicit reference to any democratic principles in vision, mission statements, or the official documents that reflect shared expectations. Such official document includes joint statements, communique, websites, memoranda of understanding, declarations, acts, guiding principles, charter, framework, goals, plan of action, program, and resolution. Democracy promotion may or may not be the central area of cooperation of the institution in question.
- b. The reference to democratic principles must be present at least twice in two different public joint documents as a manifestation of shared group expectations and some continuity in the democracy promotion effort. Sometimes the official documents mention a vague notion of democracy promotion or do not mention any core democracy-related programs or concrete steps to achieve the goal.

These documents will be considered a manifestation of democracy promotion. Although democracy may not constitute the primary area of cooperation within the regional body and is stated vaguely, including such vague democratic-related values may lead to a more concrete plan.

Some regional bodies have stood for democratic principles since its foundation, while others have taken on the mission to promote democracy several years after their establishment. The last column of Table 3.1 contains information about the year when the regional institutions incorporated democracy-related standards.

- c. It does not include the effort to produce a more democratic multilateral regional or global governance system, such as democratic decision-making procedures that are inclusive and transparent in managing global challenges.

- d. Sometimes, regional institutions showcase their interest in democracy without using prominent labels such as democracy or human rights (Stapel 2022). The democratic-related activities range from support for a free election, representation of the public in governmental bodies, citizen participation in decision-making or political process, and good governance (characterized by participation, transparency, accountability, effectiveness, and equity). In addition to these keywords, I use the conceptual equivalent of democracy, such as voting rights, freedom of assembly, etc.

Suppose a regional institution adopts a universal human rights document such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. In that case, it is very likely that these international norms cover fundamental political and civil rights. I am indifferent to whether the reference to any of these terms signals sincere commitment. So, whether or not the reference to democratic values is implemented is irrelevant.

I am also indifferent to the question of whether the regional institution refers to democratic principles at an abstract level or a narrow scope. It is abstract if it only mentions any of the three abstract principles of democracy, human rights, or the rule of law. It is narrow if only focusing on a specific area, such as fair election, regular transfer of power, etc. (Stapel 2022, 66).

Table 3.1 lists the names of regional democracy institutions. As table 3.1 and figure 3.1 show, there is a global trend toward the adoption of democracy or democracy-related principles across the globe.⁴⁴ Further, the promotion and protection of democracy have a long tradition in regional intergovernmental institutions.

⁴⁴ To build the data base of formal and informal intergovernmental regional institution, I rely on existing dataset and research to identify the list of both types of institutions. The first dataset is on informal international organizations by Felicity Vabulas and Duncan Snidal which is just published in 2020. From this dataset, I only pick regional informal institutions, and exclude informal institutions with global or universal membership, usually marked by the term ‘international’, ‘world’, ‘global’ in the name of the institution. If the name of a regional institution includes any of these words but specify the geographical scope within which it operates, I will look at the profiles of the members. If almost or all of the members are geographically proximate countries, I will categorize it as a regional institution. From this set of regional informal institutions, I exclude the ones that focus solely on security (nuclear weapons, terrorism, military alliance, etc.), economy or international finance and trade, technical (internet access, for example), or environmental issues. Since this dataset is biased towards informal institutions that leave a digital or non-digital trail, and the pure informal ones, i.e., meet all three criteria of informal institutions, I conduct my search using certain key words such as “informal”, “democracy”, “region” to identify semi formal organization or semi-informal institutions. I also rely on academic literature such as books on regional institutions and democratization by Gaspare M. Genna and Taeko Hiroi (2016), Frithjof Ehm and Christian Walter (2015) to identify the list of international organizations (formal institutions at the regional level) that promote democracy.

Table 3.1

List of regional intergovernmental institutions promoting democracy

No.	Name	Abbreviation	No. of State Members as of 2017 (or End Year)	Founding Year	End Year	Incorporation of Democracy Agenda Year
1	Africa South America Cooperation Forum/ Africa-South America Summit	ASACOF; ASA	67	2006		2006
2	Africa-EU Strategic Partnership	AEUSP	83	2000		2000
3	Asia-Europe Meeting	ASEM	51	1996		1996
4	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe	CSCE	35	1973	1994	1975
5	Contadora Group	CG	4	1983	1986	1983
6	EU-LAC Summit	EULAC	60	1999	2010	1999
7	GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development	GUAM	4	1997	2001	1997

No.	Name	Abbreviation	No. of State Members as of 2017 (or End Year)	Founding Year	End Year	Incorporation of Democracy Agenda Year
8	Lima Group	GL	13	2017		2017
9	Polynesian Leaders Group	PLG	8	2011		2011
10	Sahel Group of Five	SGF	5	2014		2017
11	Southeast European Cooperation Process	SEECF	13	1996		1996
12	Summit of South America-Arab countries	Better known by its Portuguese and Spanish acronym - ASPA	34	2005		2005
13	Visegrad Group	V4	4	1991		1991
14	Asia Pacific Democracy Partnership	APDP	12	2007	2008	2007
15	Bali Democracy Forum	BDF	57	2008		2008
16	Central European Initiative	CEI	18	1989	1996	1989
17	Council of Baltic Sea States	CBSS (Council of Baltic Sea States)	11	1992	1998	1992

No.	Name	Abbreviation	No. of State Members as of 2017 (or End Year)	Founding Year	End Year	Incorporation of Democracy Agenda Year
18	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation	APEC	21	1989		2007
19	African Union	AU	6	2002		2012
20	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa	COMESA	21	1993		1994
21	Southern African Development Community	SADC	16	1992		2001
22	East African Community	EAC	6	1999		2001
23	Economic Community of West African States	ECOWAS	15	1975		2001
24	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region	IGGLR	12	2000		2008
25	European Union	EU	27	1992		1992
26	Council of Europe	CoE	47	1949		1949
27	Organization for Democracy and Economic Development -Georgia-Ukraine-Azerbaijan-Moldova	GUUAM	4	1997		2001

No.	Name	Abbreviation	No. of State Members as of 2017 (or End Year)	Founding Year	End Year	Incorporation of Democracy Agenda Year
28	Andean Community	CAN / Comunidad Andina	4	1969		2000
29	Central American Integration System	SICA	8	1991		1993
30	Common Market of the South	MERCOSUR	5	1991		1998
31	Organization of American States	OAS	35	1948		1988
32	Union of South American Nations	UNASUR	12	2008		2014
33	Pacific Island Forum	PIF	18	1971		2000
34	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	ASEAN	11	1967		2008
35	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation	SAARC	8	1985		2011
36	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe	OSCE	57	1975		1990

No.	Name	Abbreviation	No. of State Members as of 2017 (or End Year)	Founding Year	End Year	Incorporation of Democracy Agenda Year
37	North Atlantic Treaty Organization	NATO	30	1949		1999
38	EU-LAC Summit	EULAC	60	1999		2010
39	Arab League	LAS	22	1945		2004

One regional organization that stands for the principles of democracy since its foundation is the Council of Europe. The importance of democracy is reflected in the second preamble consideration of the Statute of the CoE of 1949, which reads:” Reaffirming their devotion to the spiritual and moral values which are the common heritage of their peoples and the true source of individual freedom, political liberty, and the rule of law, principles which form the basis of all genuine democracy” (Frithjof Ehm and Christian Walter, 2015).⁴⁵ CoE, therefore, pioneered the adoption of democratic agenda in regional interstate cooperation.⁴⁶

From 1949 until the end of the Cold War, only a handful of regional institutions advanced democratic principles. The other four regional bodies that took on democracy promotion before the 1990s were the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Contadora Group in the South America region, the Organization of American States (OAS), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Over time, the regional institutions that pioneered the adoption of democratic principles were joined by others. Since the end of the Cold War, there has been an increase in the adoption of democratic standards at the regional level, as figure 3.1 below shows.⁴⁷ Given the proliferation of regional democracy institutions, these bodies' legitimacy needs further study.

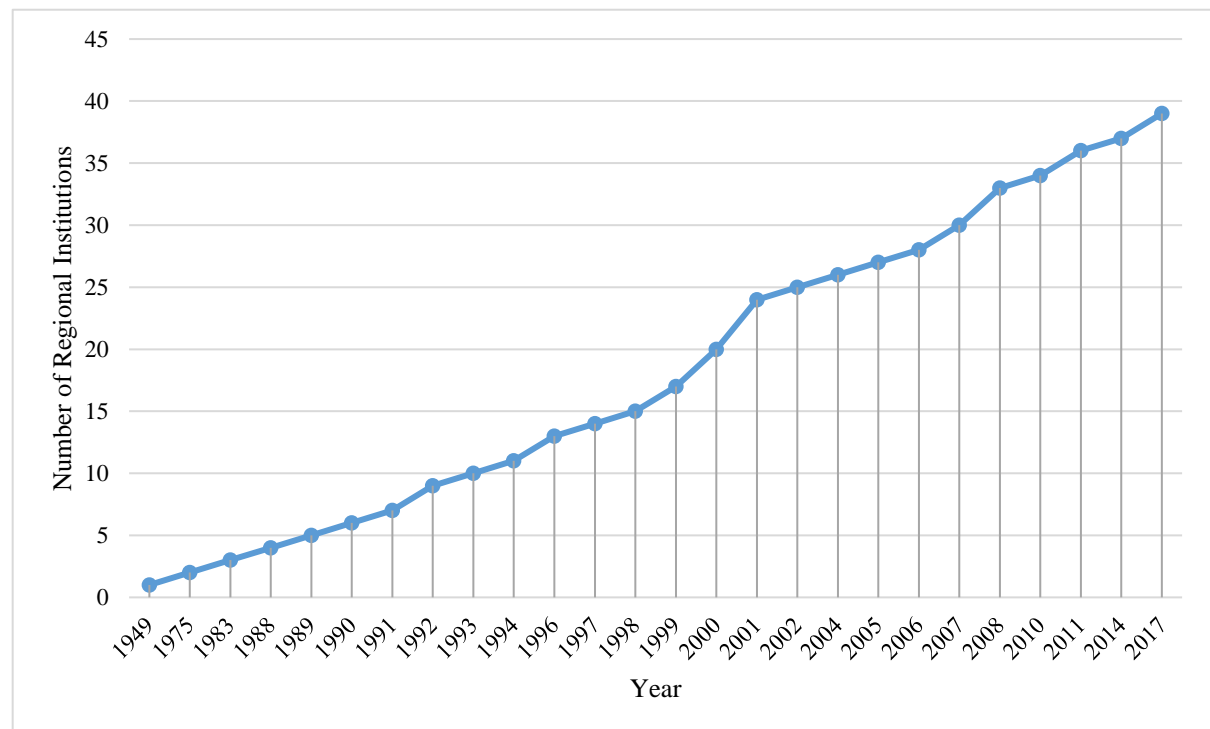
⁴⁵ This is, of course, not the only reference to democratic reference by CoE . See Stapel 2022, 124).

⁴⁶ Stapel (2022,124) notes that OAS is also the early adopter of democratic principle in the context of regional cooperation with the adoption of non-binding document called the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man in April 1948. This non-binding document is considered informality of institutions, within institutions according to Oliver Westerwinter. Thus, I exclude this from the dataset.

⁴⁷ Soren Stapel (2022,138) identifies a similar pattern from his data set of regional (formal) organizations that promote and protect democracy from 1945-2020, although he uses a different coding rule to construct his data set.

Figure 3.1

Cumulative number of regional democracy institutions from 1949-2017



As discussed in the previous chapter, we lack research on elite opinion toward these bodies. Existing study of the role of external factors such as regional organizations on democracy suggests that membership in regional democracy organizations can have a positive effect on the people in a country experiencing a transition to democracy and democratic consolidation. The membership in regional democracy institutions serves as a credible signal that the pro-democracy government intends to continue reform. It will, in turn, lower the probability that either the masses or elite will turn against democracy and encourage their participation in the transition or consolidation process (Pevehouse 2005, 36,123,153).

The argument above assumes that the masses or elite believe that regional democracy institutions are important international actors in democratization or democratic consolidation. Whether elites or masses view these regional bodies

positively is an empirical question. Thus, the empirical study of the legitimacy of these regional institutions is important if they want to make a difference in the domestic politics of their member states.

What causes the global movement to include democratic principles at the regional level? Literature on international democracy governance notes that after World War II, human rights or democracy institutions were supposed to be universal, such as the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN treaty system. In other words, it is the UN and its associated organizations that should have provided a universal approach to the promotion and protection of human rights (Pevehouse 2016, 639)

Explaining the determinant of the rise of the adoption of democratic governance at the regional level is beyond the scope of this project. Before moving to the benefits of regional cooperation on democracy, it is worth noting that the existing literature on regional democracy and human rights governance has proposed several explanations for the global movement to incorporate democratic principles at the regional level.

Pevehouse (2016, 643-648), for example, suggests a couple of possible factors that have given rise to the regional institutions' engagement on the question of democracy and human rights. He points out several possible explanations for the increase in regional engagement on the question of democracy. They can be divided into two major categories: the supply and demand side of the explanation. The supply causes are located at the international or regional level, while the demand causes are often found within the state and focus on key domestic actors.

According to the supply-side explanations, factors such as delay in the United Nations human rights negotiations motivated states to cooperate on advancing democratic principles at the regional level. Meanwhile, some legal scholars have

suggested that the main driving force behind regional democracy governance is related to the political and cultural homogeneity at the regional level (Pevehouse 2016, 643). The combination of the slow progress in the UN human rights negotiation and the homogeneity of states at the regional level provide opportunities for like-minded states to adopt shared pro-democratic governance standards.

Another possible explanation for the rise of adoption of pro-democracy standards in various regions is related to the preference of some states at the global level. According to this theory, international norms of human rights and democracy have become the preference of some states. These states become the promoters of the “global script” in other regions. Adopting pro-democracy standards in various regions may also be a product of positive or negative incentives these promoters offer to the other regions (Pevehouse 2016,644).⁴⁸

The diffusion literature also offers some insight into the determinant of the proliferation of regional democratic institutions. One point is worth considering as we move to the demand side. If diffusion refers to the processes of ‘uncoordinated’ interdependence, then the demonstration effect can be categorized as a supply-side explanation (Elkins and Simmons 2005; Christian Houle et al. 2016,694, and Covadonga Meseguer 2005).⁴⁹

⁴⁸ The most recent scholarly work that seek to examine the cause of the spread of democracy governance at the regional time across time and space is by Soren Stapel (2002). His work also offers an explanation about the evolution of the institutional design of regional democracy institutions, particularly the increasing level of precision and broadening of the scope of regional institutions all over the world. The term precision refers to specific reference to the democratic standards and includes operationalization of the standards. The breadth of regional scope and range from narrow to broad. A broad scope at an abstract level would include all three abstract standards of democracy, human rights, and rule of law, whereas a narrow scope of one precise rule of law would only focus on the transfer of power.

⁴⁹ Thus, coercion, learning, and emulation processes that are facilitated by international organizations or non-governmental organization or that involves ‘explicit’ coordination do not qualify as diffusion. Coercion, learning, and emulation processes that are facilitated by epistemic communities, international (non) governmental organizations are qualified as diffusion. Here, these institutions offer or teach targeted states best practices model (Simmons et al. 2008, 7-8, 30). Some scholars in the field of Public

Based on this conceptualization of diffusion, therefore, learning, mimicry, and emulation fall under demand-side explanation. The proliferation of regional democracy institutions might occur when the would-be regional democracy governance observes and adopt the policy that is highly successful in other regions (learning from the pioneers) or adopt the policy when the trend to develop regional democracy governance becomes irresistible or considered the right thing to do (emulating the pioneers).

Another demand-side explanation relates to material externalities from the non-cooperation of democracy or human rights. This explanation is located at the regional level. The adoption of regional democracy institutions can be motivated by geographic proximity or the direct costs stemming from the violation of human rights or democratic norms, such as refugees or instability (Pevehouse 2016, 646-647).

The desire to establish a regional mechanism to advance democracy might also be related to domestic factors. States in particular regions may adopt democracy standards although they are not interested in doing something about improving the democracy or human rights in their own country. They do this out of the need to shield themselves from criticism from other countries outside the region (Poole 2019).

3.3 Mechanisms to Influence Domestic Politics and Expected Benefits of Regional Intergovernmental Democracy Institutions

The previous sections discuss the trends in the development of regional democracy institutions. Before moving into the theory section, I would like to end this

Policy such as Fibrizio Gilardi and Fabio Wasserfallen (2018), Craig Volden et al. (2008) adopt this definition.

chapter with some discussion about the mechanisms through which regional democracy institutions influence democracy and the expected advantages of regional interstate cooperation in democracy.

How do regional democracy institutions influence the internal political dynamics of their member states? ⁵⁰ Scholarship on this topic suggests several mechanisms that regional institutions use to increase the likelihood of democratization and democratic consolidation. First, regional institutions can exert pressure through sanctions or other punishments such as membership suspension for their member states to reinstall the democratic regime. In this case, regional pressure is a common method that regional institutions use when their member states are experiencing a democracy breakdown (Pevehouse 2005, 19).

Second, regional institutions can assist young democratic regimes in their consolidation by making membership in regional institutions conditional upon democratic institutions. This conditionality can influence the cost and benefits calculation of the masses and elites in nascent democratic countries. Adherence to democratic standards can bring economic and political benefits.

Consistent with Pevehouse's study, Poast and Urpelainen's (2018) research finds that international organizations influence democratic consolidation by providing new democratic countries with technical assistance and public goods. The technical expertise and the provision of public goods can prevent coups or other forceful collapses of the democratic regime. Political public goods include organizing and

⁵⁰ Democracy can be promoted unilaterally, bilaterally, or multilaterally (Huber 2015, 28) and through diverse methods. The common methods are social pressure/diplomacy (praising or encouraging political change, naming or shaming), economic carrots and sticks (manipulation of the incentive structure of a regime through negative and positive conditionality which would then build democratic structures by itself or a democracy promoter might also directly invest into building democracy through democracy assistance), conditionality (non-economic rewards and punishment, e.g., suspension of membership), coercion (e.g., military intervention) (Bush 2015, 6-7; Huber 2015,22; Heine and Weiffen 2015, 14; Borzel and Hullen 2015, 6).

monitoring elections, providing civic education, and supporting programs that build an independent judiciary to safeguard the rule of law. Economic public goods include market access, infrastructure investment, technical assistance with economic reform, and new technology. (Poast and Urpelainen 2019, 63, 92).⁵¹

In contrast, violation of the conditions of the membership can incur significant political and economic benefits and costs. When the international democracy club accepts a nascent democratic regime, it signals to the masses and elites that the new regime is committed to democracy. Such external validation should make the masses and elites commit to democracy and disincentivize them to support anti-democracy actors since the latter can incur punishment from the regional bodies.

The membership in regional democracy institutions can also disincentivize spoilers of the democratic consolidation process from reversing democracy. The membership of regional democracy institutions should deter anti-democratic actors as any attempt to reverse democracy could result in a suspension of regional membership and loss of external material assistance. Even when anti-democratic actors successfully establish an autocratic regime, they cannot consolidate their power when they do not have access to external trade, economic aid, or military assistance (Pevehouse 2005, 37). Of course, the conditionality is insufficient to stop democratic reversal, and the

⁵¹ Poast and Urpelainen (2018, 2) begin their research from an observation that the growth of the number of democracies coincides with the increase of international organizations worldwide in the 1950s. Their research tackles two main questions: is there a causal relationship between these two variables? If there is, how and which direction? Their work differs from that of Pevehouse in several respects. First, Pevehouse begins from the understanding that regional organizations influence domestic political process, and his statistical analysis addresses the issue of endogeneity where democratic states affect the homogeneity of regional organizations, whereas Poast and Urpelainen are interested in an observation that the growth of IO and democratic states go together. Second, Pevehouse's independent variable focuses on the density of democratic states within exclusively regional organization, whereas Poast and Urpelainen focus on the growth of regional and international organizations, including the United Nations. Third, Pevehouse studies multiple stages of democratization, starting from liberalization, completion of transition, and democratic consolidation, whereas Poast and Urpelainen are more interested in democratic consolidation within new democracies. Fourth, Poast and Urpelainen argue that international organizations can contribute to consolidation possibly through learning mechanism, while Pevehouse proposes multiple paths to consolidation.

young democratic country can withdraw from these regional bodies. However, it still can increase the likelihood of regime survival.

Third, membership in regional democracy institutions can socialize nondemocratic or young democratic countries to change their behavior to be more supportive of democratic ideas. For example, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has helped to socialize military commanders to accept civilian supremacy, a hallmark of liberal democracy. Domestic elites can also use regional institutions to socialize with other elite groups, not to intervene in the democratic process by changing their attitudes toward democracy.

The socialization process occurs through repeated interactions between the more established democratic countries and non or young democratic countries. The more interactions with a more established democratic actor occur, the more likely the transmission of values and norms about the democratic process is (Pevehouse 2005, 49).

Fourth, regional institutions can influence domestic political reform through the psychological legitimization process that membership in these bodies grants to the leaders of the democratic leaders. Membership in regional democracy institutions increases the likelihood of democratization and democratic consolidation through two main things. It signals to the masses and elites that the newly democratic regime or transitioning regime is serious about reform. It will encourage the masses and elites in transitioning states or young democratic states to stay committed to the democratic process. It also provides some seal of approval to the pro-democracy regime. The external validation can legitimize the democratic regime, suggesting that the democratic regime is willing to play by the rules of the “society” of democratic states and making citizens’ support for anti-democratic actors less likely.

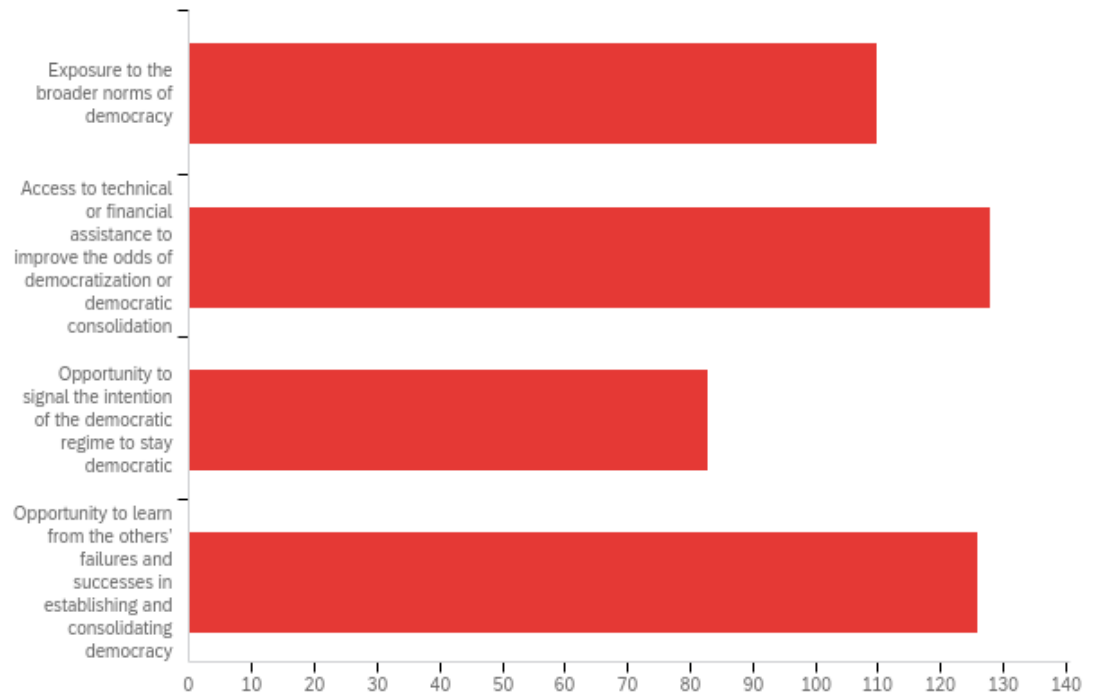
As a consequence, it will increase the probability that the people will commit to the democratic process (Pevehouse 2005). This argument implies that the elites and masses trust regional democracy institutions. It assumes that people believe they play a vital role in democratization or democratic consolidation, and therefore a stamp of approval from them has merit.

While this project's primary purpose is to explore elites' perception of regional democracy institutions, I also asked about the benefits of regional or international interstate cooperation on democracy. Based on the survey using a convenience sampling method, 28.64% of the respondents think that access to technical or financial assistance to improve the odds of democratization or democratic consolidation is one of the main benefits of international cooperation on democracy.

The second most significant benefit of international cooperation on democracy is the opportunity to learn from the others' failures and successes in establishing and consolidating democracy, with 28.19 percent of respondents picking this answer. Meanwhile, exposure to the broader norms of democracy comes third, with 24.61 percent of elite respondents selecting this option. And 18.57 percent of the respondents think that regional interstate cooperation on democracy can provide an opportunity for democratic regimes to signal their intention to stay democratic.

Figure 3.2

Benefits of regional intergovernmental cooperation on democracy



Having mapped the list of regional intergovernmental institutions that promote democracy and discussed the mechanisms through which they influence domestic politics, and the expected benefits of these bodies, the next chapter presents the theoretical framework and hypotheses of the elites' perception of these bodies.

Chapter 4

THEORY & HYPOTHESES

4.1 Theory and Hypotheses

The previous study on international or regional intergovernmental institutions has evaluated the sources of perceived legitimacy of these bodies.⁵² Audiences such as elites or the public evaluate legitimacy by assessing how a global organization meets procedural (input or throughput) or performance (output) standards (Tallberg and Zurn 2019, 591-592; Brandi 2019, 690; Neuner 2020).

The specific procedural and performance standards are multiple, ranging from fairness, inclusiveness in decision-making design, level of authority, delegation, and pooling of authority, to the effectiveness of an organization in meeting shared goals. In the existing literature on the legitimacy of an international organization, the perception of legitimacy among elites or the public towards an international organization is usually associated with its authority level (Anderson et al., 2018).

In this project, I will look at an input factor that has not been studied empirically, which is a perception of the degree of formality as a factor potentially shaping elite opinion toward regional bodies.

⁵² However, there is little work on the relative legitimacy of formal versus informal design of regional organization and forum. The existing research on the legitimacy of international institutions study these two different arrangements separately (Kleine; Tallberg and Zurn 2019; Cooper and Momani 2014; Anderson et al., 2018; Brandi 2019; Kirton 2015). When scholars discuss the legitimacy of informal forum, it is typically from the normative point of view. From this perspective, informal institution is evaluated against a set of normative criteria, where a failure to fulfil particular input, throughput, or output criteria leads to legitimacy deficit (Cooper 2012; Cooper and Momani 2014; Anderson et al., 2018; Brandi 2019).

There is, unfortunately, little work on the implications of different types of institutional design, i.e., formal and informal institutional design, on the legitimacy beliefs about international or regional intergovernmental institutions. Much of this literature relates to some prominent regional interstate institutions such as the European Union or EU (formal organization) and Asia European Meeting or ASEM (informal institution).

The existing research on the nexus between democracy and international or regional organizations suggests two things. First, the probability of democratizing states or new democracies to achieve consolidation is linked to the role of regional and/or international organizations (Pevehouse 2005; Mansfield and Pevehouse 2006; Poast and Urpelainen 2018). Secondly, the effect of regional organizations on democratization and democratic consolidation is positive. The more democratically dense the regional organizations are, the more likely it increases the likelihood of democratization and democratic survival (Pevehouse 2005; Poast and Urpelainen 2018).

International/regional intergovernmental bodies do so in several ways. First, the conditions imposed by an organization on its members. Regarding conditionality, Pevehouse argues that democratization creates new winners and losers who can threaten democracy (Pevehouse 2005,30-37). Regional organizations can deter anti-democracy behavior by the losers to enhance the longevity of new democracies. Membership in a regional organization can be made conditional upon the continuity of the democratic system, for example.⁵³ In other words, if new democratic countries fail to abide by their

⁵³Scholars, however, disagree about when, how, and why international and/or regional intergovernmental bodies increase the likelihood of democratic consolidation. Poast and Urpelainen (2018) argue that the mechanism responsible for creating democratic consolidation is not so much through conditionality as Pevehouse and Mansfield think. Rather, the organizations work through the provision of technical

commitment and ideals to consolidate democracy, they will lose access to material resources such as economic, military assistance, and other benefits from participation in the organizations.

The second mechanism is the reputational cost. Mansfield and Pevehouse (2008) argue that even if the conditionality policy of an international organization is unclear or the international organization cannot enforce its rules and standards, a state that violates international agreements will face reputational costs. In other words, violating international obligations can lower a state's credibility. It will lead to a lower domestic population's confidence in the government and damage the government's reputation at the international level. The violators of international agreements will be seen as untrustworthy members of the international community (Pevehouse 2005,154-155,173; Mansfield and Pevehouse 2006,141,144; Mansfield and Pevehouse 2008, 272-274).⁵⁴

Concerning credibility, Poast and Urpelainen (2018,8) further contend that credibility or credentials matter for new democracies because the leaders of the newly democratic countries hope that the transition from an authoritarian system to democracy can induce economic and military assistance from major Western power. Third, they affect the chance of democratic consolidation through the provision of public goods (Poast and Urpelainen 2018).

assistance. The type of regional organizations that contribute to democratization and democratic consolidation in Pevehouse 2005 is a democratically dense one.

⁵⁴ In the case of Greece, Pevehouse notes that the breakdown of democracy could result in international sanctions from the European Community or European Union. Greece is highly dependent on EU member states for trade and markets, and therefore it makes violations of the EU/EC conditions costly to Greece. Poast and Urpelainen (2018,11) slightly disagree with Pevehouse about the ability of an international organization to impose conditions that increase the cost of reversing reform. They think that the ability to impose conditions is conditioned by the type and the ability of countries to join the existing organizations. Only high-profile international organizations such as NATO, EU, OAS can enhance the credibility of new democracies because these organizations are equipped with the ability to impose sanctions when new democratic countries revert back to authoritarianism.

For international organizations to incur the costs mentioned above to the violators of commitment to consolidate democracy, the participants of international cooperation need to bind themselves in an agreement or treaty. An international treaty is used when states wish to signal their intention with particular intensity and gravity.

In international relations/diplomacy, a treaty is the most formal and explicit form of public agreement, which incurs higher reputational costs of noncompliance compared to alternatives such as joint communique, oral agreement, or international declarations (Lipson 1990,508). All international organizations are established by an international treaty/formal mandate, while the less informal or pure informal institutions are established without an international treaty.⁵⁵

A formal intergovernmental institution bears the following hallmark: it is an entity based on a treaty that endows at least one unit with some power to monitor and implement a shared interstate agenda or agreement. The treaty represents an explicit binding public commitment to a specific cause that encourages compliance. At the same time, the headquarter provides administrative support to ensure the members comply with the shared norms or goals the regional body embodies in the treaty (Lipson 1991). Thus, regional bodies that seek to promote democracy can instill a more profound commitment to consolidate democracy among its participants when this institution is highly formalized. By formal, it means that the institution is characterized by

⁵⁵ For my research, I will use the more general term of international institutions as it can include informal and formal regional interstate cooperation and reserve the word organization for formal institution or intergovernmental international cooperation that have attained a higher degree of institutionalization than others. This is in line with the existing practice in the field of International Relations. For example, the Correlates of War dataset, and some existing research on the role of regional or international organizations in the context of democratization and democratic consolidation (Pevehouse 2005, Poast and Urpelainen 2018; Pevehouse et al., 2020; Hooghe et al., 2019) use the term international or regional organization for formalized interstate international cooperation. Some scholars such as Felicity Vabulas and Duncan Snidal (2013, 2020) use the term informal international organization to denote informal institutions. However, if we refer to international organizations as more or less formal as the word organization will lose its meaning. If an entity becomes too informal, then it ceases to be an organization.

international cooperation in the area of democracy is encoded in a treaty and coordinated by a permanent secretariat and staff (Acharya and Johnston 2007; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 895; Voeten 2019; Vabulas and Snidal 2020; Westerwinter et al. 2020).⁵⁶

In contrast, a less rigid form of cooperation, the regional cooperation on democracy, will be less effective in deepening a commitment to democratic values among the participants of this multilateral cooperation.⁵⁷ This type of cooperation is established without a treaty and/or not equipped with a permanent secretariat. Unlike the more formal kind of regional cooperation, the absence of an explicit written target, reward and punishment, and administrative support to ensure adherence to shared norms in informal intergovernmental institutions discourages the members from taking international cooperation seriously.⁵⁸

From the literature on public and elite opinion on the European Union, we learn that people outside of Europe consider it a model of regionalism. Minh et al. (2009) find that based on a survey of the Vietnamese public and elites, they perceive the EU, as one of the formal organizations in the world, as a model of regionalism.

⁵⁶ The term formal and informal institution are defined differently by International Relations and Comparative Politics scholars. In this project, I focus on a stand-alone informal institution or a regional intergovernmental body that adopts an informal cooperation framework as the overarching design of interstate interaction (Vabulas and Snidal 2020; Westerwinter et al. 2020). Although both formal and informal institutions interact within a single international intergovernmental body, my research does not concern with informal arrangements, practices, understandings, norms operating within a formal international governmental organization such as an informal decision-making process within the United Nations Security Council (Stone 2013; Conzelmann 2012). For a discussion about the study of institutions in the field of Comparative Politics please see Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, *Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda*. in *Perspective on Politics*, 2 (4), December 2004, 726-40. The study of informal institutions in comparative politics focuses on practices outside officially sanctioned channels or extra-legal frameworks, and the players of such practices such as mafias, clans.

⁵⁷Democratic consolidation is the deep formal institutionalization and public legitimation of democratic political competition (Poast and Urpelainen 2018,45,47).

⁵⁸This argument has been advanced by some scholars and pundits and tested using a case study (Acharya and Johnston 2007)

Meanwhile, scholars who explore the relationship between the formal and informal international organizations and forums and the perception of their legitimacy find that the public or elites accord higher legitimacy to a more formal organization. Lai and Chaban (2009,220-224) find that the absence of a permanent coordinating body within the Asia-Europe Meeting or ASEM, one of the characteristics of an informal intergovernmental forum, has created the impression that it is merely a talking shop. Thus, I anticipate that the more formal the cooperation on democracy, the more elites will perceive a regional institution promoting democracy to be legitimate.

Earlier work on a stand-alone regional informal forum such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) suggests that some elites sometimes contest international forums on procedural grounds such as the level of formality (Peters 2013, 203-218). Here, the evaluation of the OSCE's legitimacy varies across the government officials of the participating states. To some policymakers, the absence of a formal treaty or charter containing its primary goals, principles, commitments, and the structure of its central decision-making bodies compromises OSCE's effectiveness in solving problems and erodes their trust in this body.⁵⁹

The argument above rests on the assumption that the elites and people in the newly democratic countries view the regional organizations favorably or believe that these organizations have a right to influence the domestic influence domestic politics.

Taken together, this previous work generates the following hypotheses:

⁵⁹Some members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, for example, think that the inefficiency of the OSCE in solving several regional issues is tied to the form of the regional cooperation and legitimacy of the organization, i.e., the lack of formal status of this body. The legitimacy deficit of the OSCE leads some of its member to call for an institutional reform such as upgrading the status of the OSCE from an informal to a formal organization. Formalization is achieved through the adoption of a charter containing basic goals, principles, commitment, and a structure of decision-making bodies

Hypothesis 1: *Respondents who receive information on the formal type of regional interstate organizations in the area of democracy are more likely to perceive these bodies as legitimate.*

Hypothesis 2: *Respondents who receive information on informal types of regional interstate organizations in the area of democracy are less likely to perceive that these bodies are legitimate.*

Hence, I would expect a positive and significant coefficient for the *Formal* condition and a negative and significant coefficient for the *Informal* condition.

In the first hypothesis, the perceived legitimacy of regional institutions in promoting democratic consolidation should vary with the institutional structure. And a highly formal regional intergovernmental institution/organization should be most capable of stimulating a high level of support for this body. In contrast, the less formal the regional interstate cooperation on democracy is, the more likely elites will bestow lower legitimacy on it. Regional institutions' feature influences individuals' perception through the ability or inability of different regional institutions to incentivize their member states to adhere to shared regional agendas or agreements.

There are competing hypotheses, however, which I try to control in my study. Demographic variables such as age, education, and gender shape the legitimacy belief towards regional intergovernmental bodies promoting democratic values. The previous studies on the elite perception of legitimacy in global governance include age and gender (Dellmuth et al., 2021, 5). Verhaegen et al. (2021, 636,640) note that older male has more confidence in global institutions such as the IMF or the UNFCCC than female respondents.

Past research also indicates that women have shown less supportive attitudes toward international institutions (Dellmuth and Chalmers 2017). Younger people may be more cosmopolitan and, therefore, more likely to perceive international institutions as good (Torgler 2008, 79; Dellmuth and Chalmers 2017).

Chapter 5

METHODOLOGY

5.1 Methodology

To test my hypotheses, I employ a survey experiment approach. The experimental method helps understand whether elites can understand variation in the institutional design of the regional interstate institutions and if such understanding affects the perceived legitimacy of these institutions (Anderson et al., 2019,665; Mutz, 2011,9).⁶⁰ Furthermore, a survey experiment method is effective in understanding the attitude of elites towards or what they think about different forms of regional cooperation on democracy (Hyde 2015, 412-416).⁶¹

The use of a purposive (non-population-based) sampling method, as opposed to a population-based/random sampling method, is driven by several considerations.⁶² The first is the absence of a sampling frame.⁶³ As Druckam et al. (2011,17) explain, a survey experiment is broadly defined as an experimental intervention within an opinion survey.

⁶⁰ In experiment, the researcher controls the random assignment of relevant units in the study to treatment and control groups (Hyde 2015, 405).

⁶¹ I ran three survey experiment. The first one was in 2020. I ran this survey experiment at the School of Politics and Global Studies Experimental Laboratory in 2020 with a purpose to check potential problems with my questionnaire. The other two was the elite survey experiment, and another lab experiment at SPGS Experimental Laboratory following the elite survey experiment to get a larger sample size.

⁶² Unlike a population-based sampling where members of some target population have an equal probability of being drawn into a sample, in the convenience sample participants are selected due to the ease of access. In a non-population-based sample/convenience sample, participant are invited to fill out a survey because they are physically near the experimental site, or can be recruited at a low transaction cost (Krupnikov et al., 2021, 166). In purposive sampling subjects are selected because of some characteristics, which I predetermine before the study. This sampling method is useful in situations where researchers need information for a specific target group, such as expert. In this study, the people who are invited to participate in this survey is easily reached via social media or email. Furthermore, I rely on my professional network to recruit the participants. The people in my professional network help me to recruit participants. The difference between convenience and purposive sampling is the first rely on readily available and easy-to-recruit participants (Stockemer 2019,63).

⁶³ Sampling frame consists of all units from which the sample will be drawn. It should be identical to the population or at least closely resemble it (Stockemer 2019, 57).

It involves randomly assigning survey-takers to treatments to examine causal relationships. Meanwhile, the survey consists of incorporating the interventions into the representative survey.

Ideally, a survey experiment involves inviting randomly chosen participants from the population. The population of this study is all political elites in newly democratic countries. The survey experiment, therefore, allows us to simultaneously achieve internal and external validity (Krupnikov and Findley (2018, 483). The use of population-based survey experiments depends on several things, such as whether the list of the population from which we draw the sample is available and whether generalizing the research finding is the goal (Krupnikov and Findley 2018, 489).

Currently, there are no complete lists of political elites and their email addresses of the population I want to study within which a sample can be drawn (Fowler Jr. 2014,14-16; Adhikari and Bryant 156,159). Given the absence of this list, I resort to purposive sampling (Stockemer 2019, 63). This brings me to the second motivating factor of using this purposive sampling subjects. The absence of a complete list of political elites is related to the theory and definition of the elite in this study. The theory that I am trying to test concerns the legitimacy beliefs of political elites towards regional institutions that seek to promote democracy (Kertzer and Renshon 2022, 9-11).

Political scientists have used the term political elite to refer to anyone from a business executive, military officers, think-tankers, scholars, elected politicians, leaders, or bureaucrats in key organizations that strive to be politically influential (Scholte et al. 2021; Kertzer and Renshon 2022). Some of them hold formal positions

in government, such as past or current heads of government, ministers, diplomats, members of parliaments, and party leaders.⁶⁴

Some elites do not hold official positions in government. Still, they advance some political causes, lobby for influence, and provide relevant research. They include political journalists, academics (political scientists or international relations experts), think-tankers, national representatives at international institutions, foreign policy opinion leaders, and democracy or human rights activists (BDF 2020; Media Indonesia 2020, Ichihara 2021). These elites can influence the beliefs and behavior of average citizens (Arana Araya 2018, 923-925; Hoffman-Lange 2008, 53-54; Chaban et al. 2013,434; Verhaegen et al. 2021, 626,631).⁶⁵

The latest work on experiments and surveys on political elites and their attitudes towards global governance includes six elite sectors in their study (business, civil society, government bureaucracy, media, political parties, and research). Scholte et al. (2021)⁶⁶ and Verhaegen et al. (2021), for example, examines both political elites and societal elites. Senior officials operate the institutions of governance, and the politicians who decide upon the policies that the bureaucratic machine elaborates and implements. Societal elites include senior academics, civil society organizers, business executives,

⁶⁴ Another definition of elite can be found in Chaban et al.'s piece. They conceptualize it as individuals who 'have gained their knowledge by virtue of their position and experience in the community, their established networks of relationships, their ability to express themselves orally, and their broad understanding of their community (2013, 434)

⁶⁵ <https://bdf.kemlu.go.id/bdf-xii> ; <https://mediaindonesia.com/internasional/367621/bali-democracy-forum-2020-bahas-kaitan-demokrasi-dan-pandemi-covid> . The involvement of civil society and think tank in regional cooperation on democracy varies from one forum and/or organization to another and across time. Prominent think tanks and NGOs engaged during the formulation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, for example. However, for some time the engagement of think tanks and NGOs were absent in the dialogue on democracy (Ichihara 2021). The involvement of NGOs, academics, think tanks in regional intergovernmental meetings on democracy does not mean that they are equal partner of the government. These actors can be coopted or ignored by the government officials. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/expanding-multilateral-frameworks-for-democracy-in-asia-and-the-necessity-of-track-1-5-approaches/>

⁶⁶ <https://www.statsvet.su.se/leggov/leggov-elite-survey>

media commentators, and journalists. The societal elites influence policy deliberations or participate directly in governance processes (Scholte 2021,11).

This study seeks to test a theory of the legitimacy beliefs of elites towards different types of regional intergovernmental institutions that promote democracy. The theory I am testing is about political elites' perception of different kinds of interstate cooperation on democracy through a multilateral framework at the regional level. Such cooperation encompasses initiatives that focus on the electoral or non-electoral process. The actors in theory are political elites who actively observe, shape, or participate in foreign policymaking and/or implementation of international agreements related to establishing or consolidating democracy at the national level.

Thus, I invited the following people to participate in the survey: current or past diplomats, government officials who are involved in foreign policymaking and implementation of foreign policy, minister of foreign affairs, members of parliament who are assigned to the committee of foreign affairs and their advisors. I also invited parliament members who advocate improved civil society participation, a more genuine and competitive political process, more transparent and accountable government institutions, and strengthening the rule of law (Bush 2015, 55). The other respondents are democracy or human rights activists, political journalists covering domestic and foreign affairs or issues related to democratization or democratic consolidation efforts, think-tankers, international relations scholars, political scientists, and government officials from outside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

To test my theory, I examine the elite's perception of regional democracy institutions in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. This selection allows me to explore their perceptions under diverse societal conditions (Dellmuth et al., 2021). I

selected these three countries because they vary in their experiences of regional cooperation on democracy. They are all part of the collective efforts to advocate democracy at the international and international levels. These three countries are members of ASEAN (formal regional organization), ASEM, and BDF (semi-formal regional institution). The Philippines was once part of the APDP and Community of Democracies, a global intergovernmental organization (Weatherbee 2013,29). Indonesia, however, has been taking a leadership position in multilateral efforts to promote democracy at the regional level, unlike the other two countries.

These countries also exhibit variation in experience with democracy. Indonesia and the Philippines are the two largest democracies in Southeast Asia.⁶⁷ Malaysia was an electoral authoritarian country and currently transitioning to democracy in 2018. In May 2018, the Malaysian opposition coalition Pakatan Harapan or Hope Alliance won the federal elections for the first time in the country's history. This is the first time in Malaysian history that the opposition got more votes than the ruling coalition in the 2013 elections. The 2018 election marks the transition to democracy as the electoral authoritarian regime is challenged by increasingly competitive elections (Ufen 2020).

My decision to examine these three countries was also driven by practical consideration. Access to respondents was an important consideration. I had already established contacts in these three countries.

To test my hypotheses, I built a sample of the political elites through my professional contacts in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. I sent approximately 300 invitations to foreign policy/international relations or political experts working in three countries' major universities and think tanks. I also invited members of

⁶⁷ It is counted from the year of the first democratic elections that followed the most recent authoritarian regime. In the Philippines it was 1986, Indonesia 1999, and Malaysia 2018 (Dosch, 2006).

parliaments, democracy and human rights activists, and political journalists in those three countries.

I also expanded the sample through a snowballing sampling technique to get to the target participants (Stockemer 2019, 63). This technique is straightforward. I first identified one or several individuals in the group I wanted to study. For example, I contacted my acquaintance, a former member of the first commission of the House of Representatives of Indonesia, Andreas Hugo Pareira. The first commission on overseas defense and foreign affairs of Indonesia. He distributed the invitation through a Whatsapp group of former first commission members.

I also asked the current head of the Indonesian Association for International Relations, The Philippine Political Science Association, and the convenor of the Philippine Strategic Forum to circulate the survey invitation. I reached out to the Indonesia Programme and the Malaysia Programme at my alma mater, Nanyang Technological University, to share the invitation through a Whatsapp group or mailing list. In addition, I extended invitations to current and former members of parliaments in Malaysia and Indonesia and Filipino senators. I also contacted political journalists, political science and international relations professors, and political activists in these three countries.⁶⁸

I then asked some of them if they knew others in the same group. By doing this, I slowly expanded my sample of respondents. So, some of the people considered the

⁶⁸ I also thank Aries Arugay, Dennis Coronacion, Julio Amador III, Allan Hicken, Sol Iglesias who helped me sharing the invitation to their acquaintances in the Philippines. Tricia Yeoh, and Ariel Tan helped me distribute the survey link to the respondents in Malaysia, meanwhile Alex Arifianto helped me with the respondents in Indonesia.

seed people in these three countries circulated the invitation to their networks via Whatsapp, Facebook, LinkedIn, and email. In total, I invited close to 1,000 invitations.

Given the difficulty in getting elites to respond to surveys, one recommendation for researchers who study elites is to follow up with their elite respondents multiple times to increase the likelihood of busy elites participating in the study (Kertzer and Renshon 2022, 15). I followed this practice and sent multiple reminders to the invitees once a week for the survey duration, emphasizing the study's purpose and importance and the incentives for this survey. Some respondents did not complete the response. I deleted the incomplete answers, such as responses that were not submitted. In the end, the survey yielded 204 responses.

In addition to the theoretical consideration, my decision to use the broad definition of political elites is also driven by practical consideration.⁶⁹ Regarding the practical constraints, Kertzer and Renshon (2022) note that elite samples are smaller than mass samples and more challenging to access. Consequently, to mitigate concerns about statistical power and response rate, scholars of elites' opinion often adopt a broad definition of political elites, combine different categories of elites, or adopt a general conception of elites to allow for larger samples.

I follow that approach and use a snowball sampling technique that depends on referrals from initially known subjects to recruit additional issues into the sample. I rely on a peer-to-peer recruitment process to reach the targeted population using this technique. One limitation of the convenience sample and snowball technique is that the

⁶⁹ In the absence of exhaustive database of political elites from which random samples could be drawn, the existing elite survey in the field of International Relations have used the alternative non-population-based method such as quota sampling method. Given the non-random selection of participants, the result of this survey experiment cannot be generalized beyond the sample (Scholte et al (2021) and Verhaegen et al., (2021). <https://www.statsvet.su.se/leggov/leggov-elite-survey>

findings are not generalizable to the population and only to the network studied (Adhikari and Bryant 2015, 159-160). Internal validity, however, is crucial as it is a precondition of external validity (Rauhut and Winter 2012, 227)

As previously mentioned, one of the main challenges in conducting an elite survey is the low response rates (Kertzer and Renshon 2022, 10). Previous studies address this issue by either broadening the definition of elites to permit larger samples or pairing the elite survey with laboratory survey experiments to mitigate concerns about statistical power and response rates from the elite survey (Hafner-Burton et al., 2014). My research thus includes a large convenience sample of university students to address the low response rate and the statistical power of the elite survey.

By studying the student and elites sample using the same experimental instruments, I explore whether specific institutional design relates to policy preference for international cooperation on democracy. This strategy also helps me reveal the difference in political attitude between non-elites and people with experience in democratization or democratic consolidation.

While the elite survey experiment allows me to evaluate the perception of people who promote democratic values for a living, the sample size is small. Therefore, I turn to a convenience sample of undergraduate students to see if the patterns observed with elites are also evident in the university student sample.

I conducted my university study during Spring 2022 at the School of Politics and Global Studies laboratory on the ASU Tempe campus. I take advantage of the large pool of political science undergraduate students at Arizona State University for the laboratory survey experiment. The total number of students who participated was 514 people.

I ran the online survey through the Qualtrics system. I conducted two survey experiments using a convenience sample of 204 political elites who observe or participate in democracy-related activities in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines and 526 political science undergraduates at Arizona State University. The laboratory survey experiment at Arizona State University was administered as part of a larger activity where subjects participated in several short survey experiment studies contributed by different faculty members and/or students.⁷⁰

Students' participations were voluntary, and those who participated were compensated for participating in the study by receiving extra credit in the class from which they were recruited. Meanwhile, the elite respondents had a chance to win monetary rewards from a raffle. Both the lab survey experiment and the political elites survey experiment were fielded through the Qualtrics survey software. The ASU IRB approved the entire activities.

I embedded an experiment in this survey because it is suitable to test a theory and offers high internal validity (institutional property /level of formality alone, not other factors, causes the level of commitment towards democratic consolidation) (Kittel and Morton, 2012; Hooghe et al., 2012; Brader&Tucker 2012). In this survey experiment, I randomly assigned each subject to either an experimental/treatment or control group (the Qualtrics system will randomly assign respondents to either treatment or control group). Each participant completed a questionnaire containing a series of questions, with the experimental manipulation midway through. Respondents

⁷⁰ I tested my survey experiment to some graduate students at Arizona State, and Political Scientists to see if the survey as a whole and individual questions make sense and easily understood by the respondents in the early Fall semester 2021 (Stockemer 2019, 67). Based on the test, I changed the order of the demographic questions, find out that there are variance in the responses to the post-test questions about the legitimacy of the regional institutions, the word legitimacy yields multiple interpretation. Regarding the operationalization of the dependent variable, I decided to use "confidence" in addition to "legitimate" when measuring their perception of the legitimacy of regional institutions.

were instructed not to look at cellphones or other electronic devices, not to wear earbuds, and work individually during the experiment (Druckman et al., 2011).

Sample: 200-300 selected elite participating in democracy promotion-related activities in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines (Saris and Gallhofer 2014, 9). 400-500 selected political science undergraduate students at Arizona State University.

Length of the Study: Approximately 15 minutes, including check-in introduction and instructions.

Date of Study: The study date in the Fall semester (October or November 2021) for the elites' survey experiment and Spring 2022 for the laboratory survey experiment. The survey was available for one and a half months, from December 15, 2021- to February 7, 2022. I sent multiple reminders to the participants.

Appendix A details the proposed questionnaire flow that each participant would fill out. The questionnaire aimed to collect data for potential control variables—questions about demographic characteristics. At the end of the survey, the participants were thanked.

Only 20 percent of the respondents were assigned to the control group for the elite survey experiment. I did this to ensure I still have a baseline group when working with small elite sample size. For the student sample, the respondents are equally distributed across the three conditions (control, informal, and formal group).

5.2 Variables and Measures

There are three experimental conditions for my independent variable: one control group and two treatment groups (informal and formal institutional design). The

control participants read a text about international relations and democracy. By asking the control group to read a brief text about these topics, I ensure that all groups are exposed to a comparable environment. The participants in the control group receive the following information:

Text for the Control Group

*Please read the following information **carefully**, as I will be asking questions at the end.*

When states cooperate, they **can choose from a wide variety of forms** to express their commitments, obligations, and expectations.

Stimuli for the treatment group

To elicit attitude under a range of institutional contexts, each participant in the treatment group was presented with an institutional scenario that alters the degree of binding explicit public commitment/codified procedure of collective action (absence of a binding contract that compels individual to take action to the presence of binding public contract), as well as the extensiveness of administrative organs (ranging from no or little apparatus to very interventionist apparatus that can monitor, reward, and punish individual behavior).

There were two treatment groups. The first group read a text about formal regional cooperation on democracy, while the second one read a text about informal regional cooperation on democracy.

These scenarios represent a manipulation of institutional context that alters the level of institutionalization or collective agreement among people seeking to contribute

to certain ideals, particularly democratic values. Thus, the treatment groups read the same text that the respondents in the Basic condition read with some additional detail about the nature of international cooperation on democracy.

First treatment group (formal organization)

*Please read the following information **carefully**, as I will be asking questions about the text at the end.⁷¹*

When countries/states cooperate, they **can choose from a wide variety of forms** to express their commitments, obligations, and expectations.

Some countries seeking to establish and strengthen democratic systems of government collectively pledge to respect democratic norms and hold each other accountable for any violations of these norms.

These countries **choose to use a formal cooperative mechanism** to express their commitments, obligations, and expectations. It is the **most rigid** form of cooperation among countries.

Formal cooperation among countries bears the following characteristics:

- It consists of a **written agreement signed** by the heads of state. The agreement outlines **common goals, obligations, and penalties** for violations of democratic principles in their home countries.
- It represents **explicit promises** to the international and domestic public to establish and strengthen the democratic systems in their own countries. This

⁷¹ Bolded words varied across conditions (Mize and Manago 2018).

international agreement is **intended to be a binding contract between them.**

- It is equipped with **permanent and independent headquarters/secretariats** to **monitor** the **implementation** of the agreement.

The **rigidity** of formal agreements encourages countries to **take their commitments** to uphold democratic values **seriously**. It also means that formal agreements **cannot easily be abandoned** by the member countries.

Thus, a **violation** of the agreement can result in international **sanctions and/or condemnations**. They will also **lose their credibility** by being perceived as **untrustworthy** members of the international community.

Second treatment group (informal organization)

*Please read the following information **carefully**, as I will be asking questions about the text at the end.*

When countries/states cooperate, they **can choose from a wide variety of forms** to express their commitments, obligations, and expectations.

Some countries seeking to establish and strengthen democratic systems of government collectively pledge to respect democratic norms and hold each other accountable for any violations of these norms.

These countries choose to use **an informal cooperative arrangement** to express their commitments, obligations, and expectations. It is the **most flexible** form of cooperation among countries.

Informal cooperation among countries bears the following characteristics:

- It does **not** have a **written agreement signed** by heads of state that outlines **shared targets and obligations** to promote and protect democracy. It **does not specify penalties** for violations of democratic principles in their home countries.
- It represents a public promise by states to establish and strengthen the democratic system in their own countries. However, this promise is **not intended** to be a **binding** contract between them.
- It is **not** equipped with **permanent and independent headquarters/secretariat** to **monitor the implementation** of the agreement.

Thus, the **flexibility** of informal agreements means that states' **promises** to respect democratic values are **ambiguous**. The members of this informal cooperation **can easily break** their promises.

Furthermore, a **violation** of the agreement **cannot be penalized** through international **sanctions and/or condemnations**. The violators will also **lose their credibility** by being perceived as **untrustworthy** members of the international community.

I have all three treatments as a one-factor variable for my statistical analysis. The basic or control condition is coded "0", the informal condition (first treatment) is coded "1", and the formal condition (second treatment) is coded "2". The lowest value "0," is treated as the omitted category by default. Each level, "1" and "2," is then compared to this baseline.

My dependent variable is the perceived legitimacy of regional democracy institutions. As I pointed out in chapter 2, I created an additive index of four dependent variables (*confidence*, *legitimacy*, *important_rolesoc*, *right_abide*). Since I already

discussed the operationalization and measurement of each of these four dependent variables in chapter 2, I will provide a more detailed explanation of the additive index (*legitimacy_ro02*) in this section.

The index variable is called *legitimacy_ro02*. I created this index because there are varying measures of legitimacy. Thus, this index variable is a more comprehensive variable that measures an added score of the different dependent variables listed in table 5.1 below.

The advantage of the index variable is that measurement error in the four variables cancels out, and I get a better measure of the legitimacy concept I am interested in. So, by combining and adding several questions and answers, I can get a more comprehensive picture of the respondents' perception of regional intergovernmental institutions promoting democracy.⁷²

One standard measure of the reliability of the index or how well all the variables in the index go together is Cronbach's alpha. It ranges from 0 to 1. The higher the value, the more all the variables in the index correlate or go together. The commonly used threshold is 0.7. Based on the reliability test, combining the four variables into a single additive measure produces a reliable scale (α 0.76) for my elite sample and a slightly lower reliable scale (α 0.59) for my student sample.

⁷² See https://www.stathelp.se/en/recodeindex_en.html . The downside of adding the variables is that I get less observations on the index because this method only includes observations or questions that are answered by a respondents. In other words, a respondent that has a missing value on a single variable or question is excluded. The upside of this method is that I get a fair comparison between respondents. The alternative to this method is to take the average of all variables. I did not take the average of all variables that the respondent has values on because I am more interested in fair comparison between respondents instead of wide coverage. Although the average method offers a wide coverage or larger N the index can mean slightly different things for different people.

Table 5.1

Variables and Measures

Dependent Variable (I combined all four dependent variables and created an added index called <i>legitimacy_RO02</i>)	confidence	“Based on the information you read, how much confidence do you have in this interstate cooperation that focused on facilitating democratic transition and consolidation in their own countries?”
	legitimacy	“Based on the information you read, to what extent do you believe that the international mechanism that these countries use for improving the quality of democracy in their own countries is legitimate?”
	important_rolesoc	“Based on the information you read, to what extent do you think this interstate cooperation on democracy serves an important role in society?”
	right_abide	“Based on the information you read, to what extent do you agree that this international cooperation has the right to make decisions about democracy that their members must abide by?”
Independent Variable	treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control condition • Informal condition • Formal condition

Note that I loaded four dependent variables into a single additive measure called *legitimacy_RO02*.⁷³ Given the nature of this variable, I check the distribution of the elites' and students' attitudes towards regional democracy intergovernmental institutions of this aggregate dependent variable as well as the constituent parts.

First, I look at the distribution of the outcome variable *legitimacy_RO02*, a combination of four different dependent variables, to see if there is a variation in the

⁷³ I cannot provide some descriptive statistics for each country in the elite sample because I disabled the IP address in the Qualtrics system, and I created one survey for the respondents in the three countries.

outcome. Based on my data, I can conclude that there is variation in the outcome before treatment is accounted for. As table 5.2 shows below, 39.47 percent of my elite respondents in the control conditions tend or strongly believe that regional organizations promoting democracy are legitimate. In contrast, 18.41 strongly think or tend to believe that regional democracy institutions are not legitimate. Meanwhile, the remaining elite respondents in the control conditions are indifferent.

Next, I examine the distribution of the elites' view of regional democracy institutions in the control conditions to check if there is variation in the constituent parts. Based on my data, overall, the outcome distributions in the four constituent parts (legitimacy, confidence, important_rolesoc, and right_abide) are consistent with the aggregate DV. In other words, there is a variation in the outcome, as table 5.2 below shows.

Table 5.2
Distribution of the outcome in the elite sample

Variable	Strongly or tend to believe regional democracy institutions are legitimate	Neutral	Strongly or tend to believe regional democracy institutions are not legitimate
legitimacy	81.58 %	18.42 %	0 %
confidence	57.89 %	13.16 %	28.95 %
important_rolesoc	44.73 %	42.11 %	13.16 %
right_abide	55.26 %	21.05 %	23.69 %
legitimacy_RO02	39.47 %	42.12 %	18.41 %

Turning to the student sample, I find a variation in the outcome when I examine the aggregate dependent variable (*legitimate_RO02*) and its constituent parts (*legitimacy*, *confidence*, *important_rolesoc*, and *right_abide*). As table 5.3 suggests,

there is variation in the outcome before the treatment is accounted for. The variation is observed in the aggregate dependent variable and its constituent parts.

Table 5.3

Distribution of the outcome in the student sample

Variable	Strongly or tend to believe regional democracy institutions is legitimate	Neutral	Strongly or tend to believe regional democracy institutions is not legitimate
legitimacy	37.79 %	42.51 %	19.17 %
confidence	36.31 %	32.29 %	24.41 %
important_rolesoc	37.95 %	43.37 %	18.67 %
right_abide	46.39 %	30.72 %	22.89 %
legitimacy_RO02	15.05 %	59.06 %	25.89 %

Chapter 6

EVIDENCE FROM THE ELITE SURVEY EXPERIMENT

6.1 Result for the Elite Sample

Before examining the experimental results, I would like to start by discussing a descriptive question of whether political elites perceive regional intergovernmental bodies that seek to advance democratic values as legitimate or not. I will then discuss statistics for the key demographic variables, randomization checks/balance test results, the manipulation check, and then the experimental results of my elite sample.

Descriptively, 39.47 percent of my elite respondents in the control conditions perceive regional organizations promoting democracy as legitimate. In contrast, 18.41 percent of them perceive these bodies as illegitimate. The other 42.12 percent of them are indifferent to regional democracy institutions. Overall, more political elites in the control group have a favorable opinion of regional democracy institutions than those who do not.

Moving on, I present the descriptive statistic of key demographic variables. These variables are important from a theoretical standpoint because previous studies on individuals' perceptions of international organizations consider them control variables. I will include these variables in the balance test. Suppose I find an imbalance in the distribution of any of these variables across the three experimental conditions. In that case, I will include that variable in the regression analysis as the control variable.

Tables 6.1-6.3 display the descriptive statistics of demographic variables within the elite sample, such as gender, age group, and educational background. Meanwhile,

the bar graphs below visualize the gender, age, and education distribution of the elite sample. My data suggests that almost all select respondents hold a bachelor's degree, or there are not many variations in this variable. Therefore, I exclude this variable from the balance test.

Table 6.1

The number of female and male respondents within the elite sample

gender	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Male	124	60.78	60.78
Female	80	39.22	100.00
Total	204	100.00	

Figure 6.1

The distributions of the gender of the elite respondents

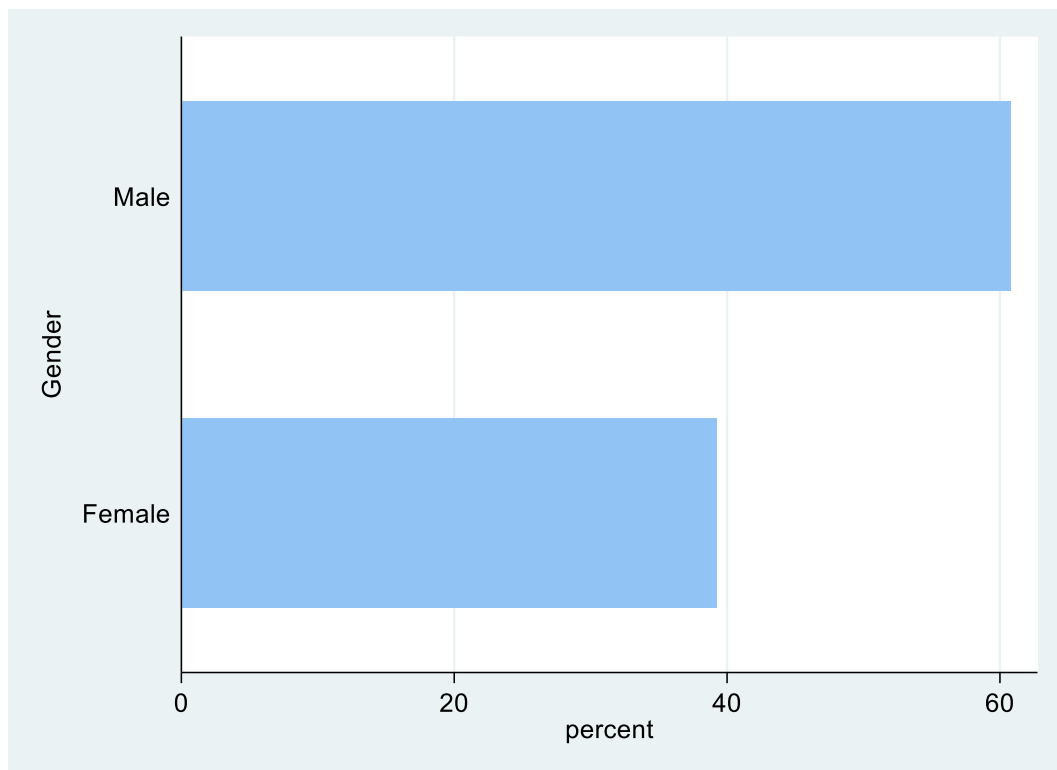


Table 6.2

The number of elite respondents with and without bachelor's degree

dummy_bachelored	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
No degree	1	0.49	0.49
Bachelor's degree	203	99.51	100.00
Total	204	100.00	

Figure 6.2

The distributions of the educational background of the elite respondents

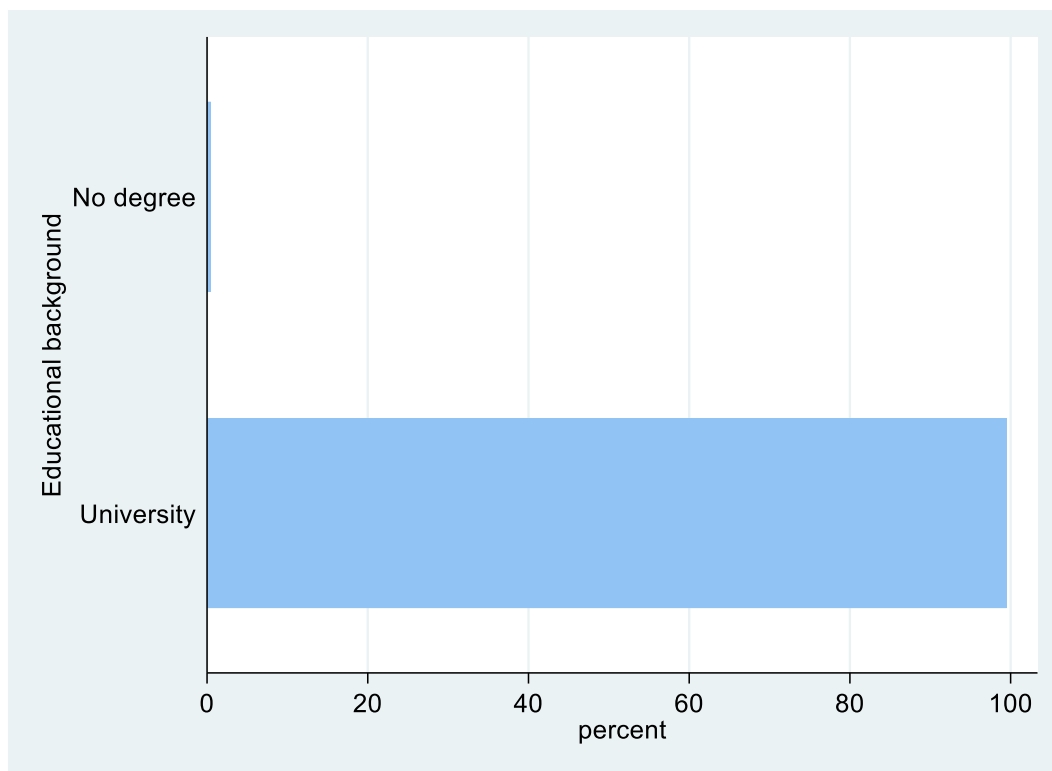


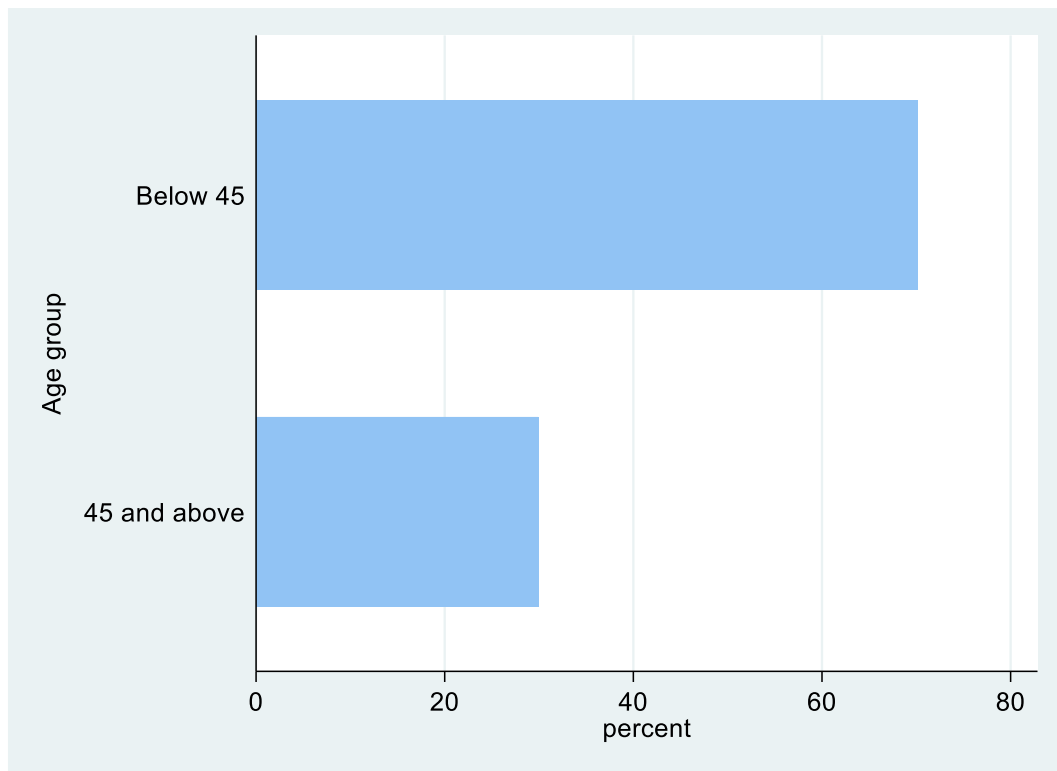
Table 6.3

The distribution of elite respondents in different age groups

dummy_age45	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
below 45	143	70.10	70.10
45 and above	61	29.90	100.00
Total	204	100.00	

Figure 6.3

The distributions of age among the elite respondents



Turning to the balance test, scholars hold different opinions about the need for a balance test/randomization check. The current practice in many fields is to perform a randomization check. As Diana C. Mutz et al. (2017) note, balance testing is a common practice in flagship political science journals. The imbalance covariate could be a possible explanation for a spurious relationship. If any relevant demographic variables are not equally distributed, I will include this variable in the statistical analysis.

Despite the balance test's popularity, they believe it is not helpful when one already knows that the experimental studies are randomly assigned. They further argue that randomization checks should be done only when randomization is compromised or the randomization mechanism is faulty. When an experiment is compromised, the data should be treated as observational rather than experimental data. Nowadays,

randomizing applications on computers has nearly addressed this problem. To detect the randomization problem, a description of the randomization procedure is sufficient (Mutz et al., 2017, 5-6).

I agree with Mutz et al.'s argument that the randomization test is unnecessary under the above conditions. I did my experiment's randomization through the Qualtrics system by using the randomizer option in Qualtrics and by nesting the vignettes under the randomizer. For my elite survey experiment, I copied the formal and informal treatment blocks four times respectively and copied the control blocks two times. This way, 20 percent of the respondents are in the control group, and the rest are evenly split between the two treatment groups (see Appendix B for the flow of the elite survey experiment).

Even though I follow the randomization procedures in Qualtrics, it may be informative for the readers to see if several covariates are imbalanced between the treatment and control groups. One thing I would like to highlight about my elite survey experiment is that I intentionally designed the experiment such that participants were unevenly distributed across three conditions. So, 20 percent of the participants were assigned to the control group, while the remaining 80 percent were equally split between the formal and informal treatment groups.

The unequal allocation of the elite participants to the control and the treatment groups was motivated by practical considerations to ensure that I still have a reference group despite the expected low sample size. Thus, I expect a significant difference across the control and treatment groups in the respondents' age and gender due to the planned imbalance in my elite survey.

I perform a cross-tabulation analysis on the key demographic composition of the subjects assigned to the three experimental conditions because these variables are categorical variables.⁷⁴ The cross-tabulations (tables 6.4 and 6.5) suggest that the observed variables “gender” and “dummy_age45” were about equally distributed across treatment conditions but not across the control and treatment groups.

As I pointed out earlier, I intentionally designed the experiment such that participants were unevenly distributed across three conditions: I assigned 20 percent of the participants to the control group. In contrast, I equally split the remaining 80 percent between the formal and informal treatment groups.

Table 6.4

Cross-tabulation of the gender of the treatment and control groups for the elite sample

gender	treatment			total
	control	informal	formal	
male	22	49	53	124
female	16	34	30	80
Total	38	83	83	204

74

Figure 6.4

The distributions of gender in the treatment and control groups for the elite sample

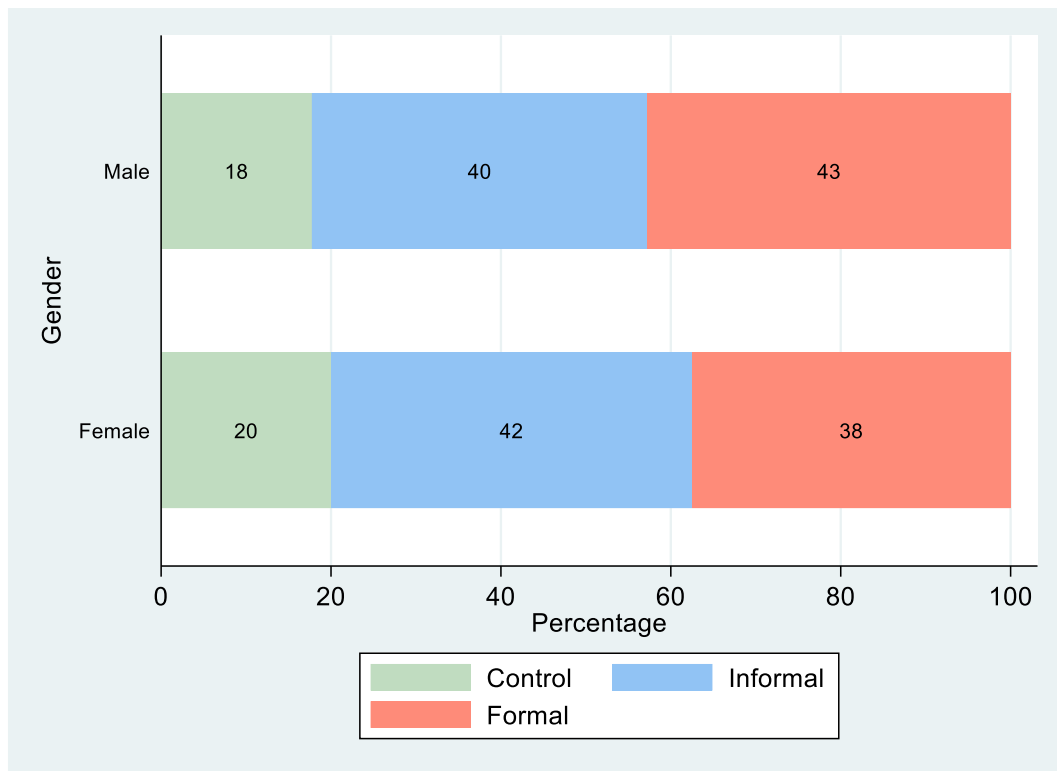


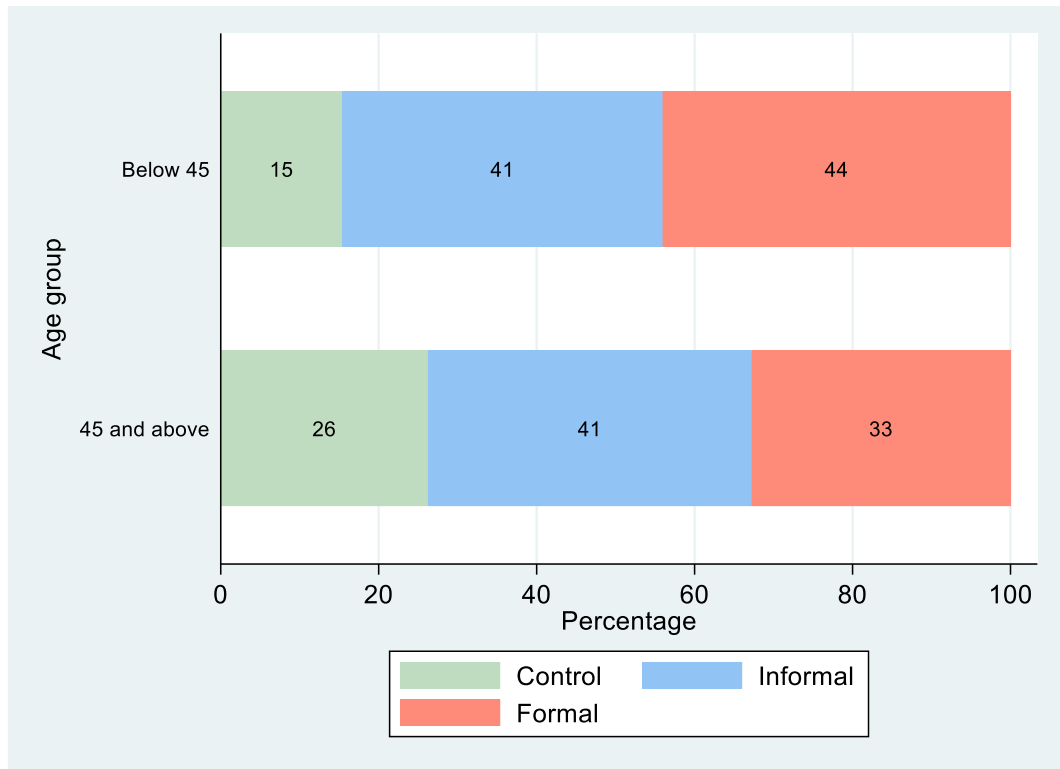
Table 6.5

Cross-tabulation of age across the treatment and control groups for the elite sample

Age	Treatment			Total
	Control	Informal	Formal	
Below 45 years old	22	58	63	143
45 years old & above	16	25	20	61
Total	38	83	83	204

Figure 6.5

Distribution of age across the treatment and control groups for the elite sample



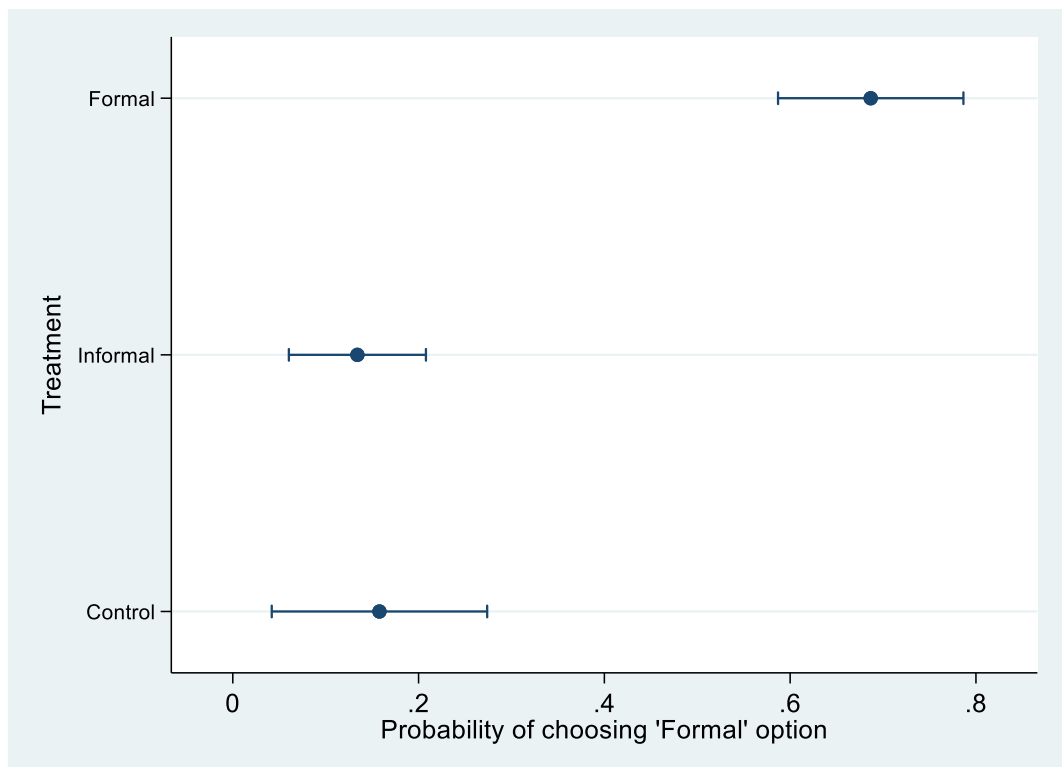
I included a manipulation check question to help me understand if the treatment conditions effectively manipulated participants' perceptions of the institutional design of regional organizations that promote democracy. I asked the participants the following question: "Thinking back about the text, do you recall whether you read about formal or informal types of interstate cooperation, or was that not specified?" (Formal, Informal, Not Specified, I did not remember).

I then conducted a logistic regression analysis using the manipulation check as the dependent variable and the treatment as the independent variable. I created a dummy variable for my dependent variable (1= Formal, 0=other options). I estimated the odds of selecting the *Formal* option under two treatment conditions which are the formal and non-formal conditions. I then estimated the marginal predictions of my model.

The result suggests that the predicted probability of choosing the *Formal* option for someone exposed to information about formal types of intergovernmental cooperation is .686747 ($p < 0.01$ level) compared to those in the reference or control group. Meanwhile, the predicted probability of choosing the *Formal* option for someone exposed to information about informal types of intergovernmental cooperation compared to those in the control group is .1341463 ($p < 0.01$ level).

In other words, those in the informal condition are slightly less likely than those in the reference group to pick the 'formal' option. The marginal effect is the largest for elite respondents in the formal condition, with a difference in expected probabilities of .686747 compared to the reference group. Overall, the result indicates that elite respondents understand the manipulation.

Figure 6.6
Probability of choosing the 'Formal' option



Having established the random assignment of experimental conditions and manipulation check, I need only perform a regression analysis of my primary independent variable and alternative variable to test my hypotheses. I exclude the control variables in the regression because the demographic variables are randomly distributed between the three experimental conditions.⁷⁵ I use the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method to estimate the effect of control and treatments on attitude towards regional intergovernmental institutions promoting democracy because the dependent variable is continuous.

Table 6.6 shows the statistical analysis result of the elite sample. When looking at the direct effect of (experimentally manipulated formalization levels) on perceived legitimacy, I observed a significant difference between one of the treatment groups and the control group. The result shows that overall, elites find regional intergovernmental institutions promoting democracy illegitimate or have a negative opinion about these organizations/institutions.

I find moderate evidence (at $p < 0.05$ level) that elites who are exposed to information about the informal type of regional intergovernmental cooperation that promotes democratic values accord lower legitimacy compared to the control group. The reference group or control group is left out of the output table. This finding is consistent with the second hypothesis / H2.

My second hypothesis states that respondents who received information about informal intergovernmental bodies promoting democracy will perceive them as illegitimate compared to those who did not receive information about the institutional design of regional organizations. Figure 6.7 shows that elites in the informal treatment group are 9.81 more likely than those in the control group to view regional

⁷⁵ See <https://www.reed.edu/data-at-reed/resources/Stata/missing-values.html>

intergovernmental bodies promoting democracy as illegitimate.

Next, I do not find any support for my first hypothesis. My first hypothesis states that respondents who receive information on the formal type of regional interstate organizations in the area of democracy are more likely to perceive these bodies as legitimate. Contrary to the first hypothesis, information about formal intergovernmental bodies that promote democracy decreases the perception that they are legitimate. The formal treatment negatively affects the elites' legitimacy perceptions towards the regional organizations or institutions promoting democracy compared to elites in the control group, and it is significant at $p < 0.1$.

In other words, compared to political elites who did not receive any information about the institutional design of regional democracy institutions, political elites in the formal condition see these bodies as illegitimate. Political elites in the formal treatment group are 10.11 less likely to see these regional bodies that promote democratic values as legitimate than those in the control group.

Table 6.6

Ordinary Least Square regression of the elite sample

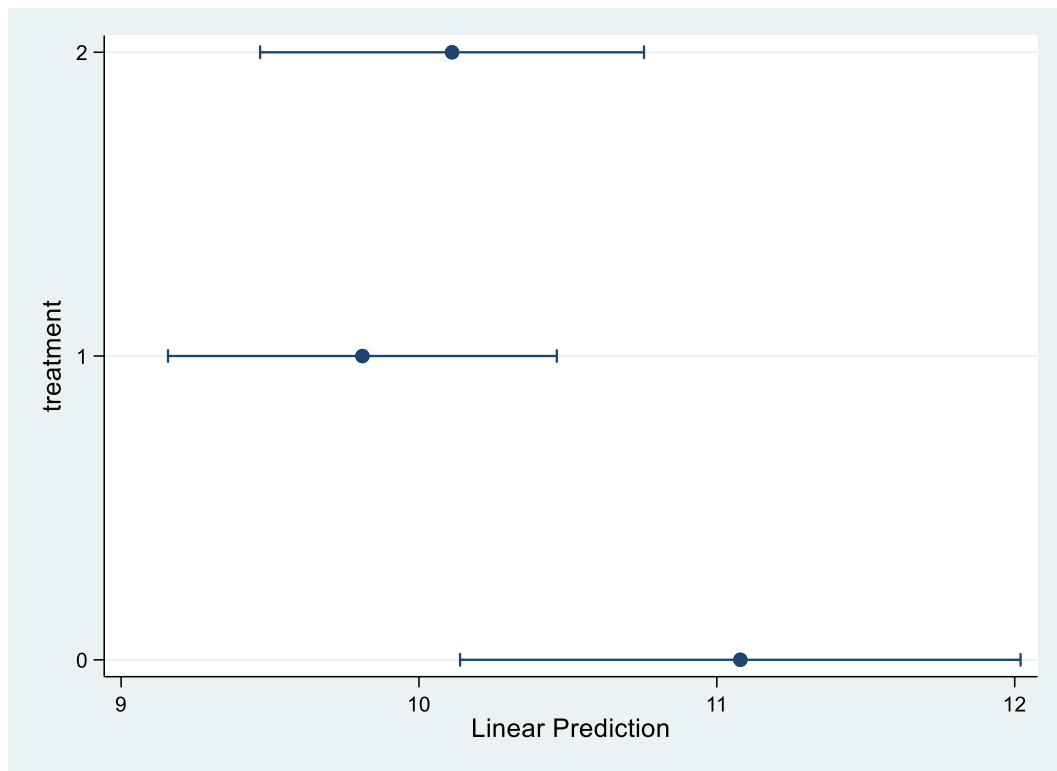
	Elite sample Legitimacy
Experimental conditions	
Informal design	-1.269** (0.581)
Formal design	-0.968* (0.578)
Constant	11.079*** (0.477)
<i>N</i>	198
R-squared	0.024

Standard errors in parentheses. Baseline category: Control condition.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Figure 6.7

Effect of institutional design on elites' legitimacy beliefs



6.2 Discussion

The evidence from the elite survey experiment demonstrates that overall political elites tend to think critically about regional intergovernmental organizations' role in facilitating democratic consolidation. Political elites do not favorably perceive regional intergovernmental cooperation in a democracy that adopts an informal institutional design.

This result is consistent with the existing research suggesting that people perceive a less rigid form of cooperation negatively. This type of cooperation is established without a treaty and/or not equipped with a permanent secretariat. Unlike the more formal style of regional cooperation, the absence of an explicit written target, reward and punishment, and administrative support to ensure adherence to shared

norms in informal intergovernmental institutions discourages the members from taking international cooperation seriously.

Regional cooperation on democracy that happens under an informal framework can contribute to implementing democratic standards. It can raise awareness of the importance of democracy at the regional level through the habit of dialogue and consultation. It can also help states improve their knowledge about implementing democratic standards in their own countries. At the same time, the absence of codified shared agreement, reward, and punishment mean that there is little pressure for the participating states to take concrete steps related to democratization or democratic consolidation.

A previous study by Lai and Chaban (2009,220-224) conclude that people tend express no confidence in informal regional institution. They find that the absence of a permanent coordinating body within the Asia-Europe Meeting or ASEM, which is one of the characteristics of an informal intergovernmental forum, has created the impression that it is merely a talking shop. As a talking shop, an informal intergovernmental forum tends to be big on words but small on concrete actions.

Another study on a stand-alone regional informal forum such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) suggests that some elites sometimes contest international forums on procedural grounds such as the level of formality (Peters 2013, 203-218). Here, the evaluation of the OSCE's legitimacy varies across the government officials of the participating states. To some policymakers, the absence of a formal treaty or charter containing its basic goals, principles, commitments, and the structure of its central decision-making bodies compromises OSCE's effectiveness in solving problems and erodes their trust toward this body.

Some members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, for example, think that the inefficiency of the OSCE in solving several regional issues is tied to the form of the regional cooperation and legitimacy of the organization, i.e., the lack of formal status of this body. The legitimacy deficit of the OSCE leads some of its members to call for an institutional reform such as upgrading the status of the OSCE from an informal to a formal organization. Formalization is achieved by adopting a charter containing basic goals, principles, commitment, and a structure of decision-making bodies.

Even though informal types of international cooperation negatively affect the perception of political elites on regional democracy institutions, a higher level of formalization does not automatically improve their perceptions of these bodies. My finding suggests that, on average, actual political elites with experience in democratization and democratic consolidation do not have a favorable view of a formal regional body that seeks to promote democracy. Formalizing interstate cooperation does not produce a higher legitimacy belief towards regional organizations promoting democracy.

The lack of confidence among elites in regional intergovernmental bodies that seek to advance democratic values challenges the past study about the non-European perception of the European Union. Minh et al. (2009) find that based on a survey of the Vietnamese public and elites, they perceive the EU, as one of the formal organizations in the world, as a model of regionalism.

Why does the formalization of regional cooperation on democracy not translate into a higher legitimacy belief among political elites? One possible explanation is that

political elites might believe that while a more formal form of interstate cooperation on democracy is a good start, it only serves as lip service or political imagery.

One regional intergovernmental institution that adopted a regional agreement on democracy or formalized cooperation on democracy is ASEAN. The ASEAN Charter came into force in December 2008. It has sought to establish ASEAN's values and norms, including the rule of law, democracy, and good governance. Article 1 (7) of the Charter established that promoting and protecting human rights is one of the purposes of ASEAN. It has been ratified by all member states and has become a legally binding agreement among the 10 ASEAN members. The signatories are obligated to implement the provisions of the Charter.⁷⁶

One common criticism of the ASEAN Charter is that it only contains a general mandate for promoting human rights. To help ASEAN promote and protect people's human rights and fundamental freedoms, it established the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). In reality, the AICHR has been operating on a promotion first, protection later approaches regarding human rights in ASEAN. Further, the responsibility to protect and promote human rights ultimately lies with the ASEAN member states, making it a state-centric approach to human rights. As a result, ASEAN Charter and AICHR have faced much criticism from observers. They believe that the codification of cooperation on democracy in Southeast Asia merely serves as a shield for the government against criticism (Davies 2021, SIIA 2014).

Past research on the international human rights regime finds paradoxical human rights practices. On the one hand, most governments bind themselves to an international regime designed to protect the fundamental rights that lead to a near-universal

⁷⁶ See <https://asean.org/about-asean/asean-charter/>

acceptance of international human rights law. On the other hand, the percentage of governments that repress human rights has grown over time. In other words, the international human rights treaties have little impact on actual human rights practices (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui, 2005).

Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui (2005,1384) argue that global human rights treaties are a double-edged sword. On the one hand, international human rights treaties, a formal type of institution, offer governments a mechanism to monitor or enforce regime norms and human rights advocates to mobilize around these treaties to improve human rights practices. On the other hand, international agreements on human rights may also act as a shield against repressive behaviors after the ratification. The ratification of the treaties allows repressive governments to hide behind the veil of international law.

The cross-national longitudinal study of human rights practices from 1976-to 1999 finds that states that ratify human rights legal regimes or join formal types of international cooperation on human rights do not automatically translate into better human rights protection (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2005,1395-1397). In other words, formal institutions, i.e., international agreements or treaties, are powerless to improve human rights practices at the national level. Although they serve as a forum for governments to exchange information about human rights violations and disseminate this information at the international level, they cannot directly punish violators or lack a formal enforcement mechanism. Therefore, international treaties on human rights only exacerbate human rights violations after ratification.

They may also know from firsthand experience that codifying shared goals, targets, and sanction mechanisms to help states democratize or consolidate democracy is insufficient to address a series of challenges associated with interstate cooperation on

democracy. My elite survey experiment included a question about the challenges in international cooperation on democracy. I asked them to select one of four challenges in international cooperation on democracy. 44.25 percent of the respondents believe that the lack of institutional capacity and human capital to implement democratic-related programs at the national level is the most pressing challenge in translating international commitment to national programs. The lack of knowledge about the source of democratization and democratic consolidation to guide implementation at the national level comes second, with 21.68 percent of the respondents choosing this option.

21.68 percent of the respondents think that the lack of financial resources to implement programs related to democratization and democratic consolidation is one of the most pressing challenges to international cooperation and democracy. 7.52 percent of them cited other types of challenges, such as the lack of political will of leaders to implement democracy-related programs at the national level or lack of interest from respected countries to engage in international cooperation on democracy, especially when such cooperation does not have direct benefits for countries or political leaders. One of the respondents mentioned that political leaders who engage in international cooperation actually: “lack a political will to BE democratic (and therefore no interest in doing more than lip service if at all) to international cooperation for democracy.”

I have explained the determinants of the elites’ perceptions of regional democracy institutions. Overall, I found that the absence of a codification of regional cooperation negatively affects elites’ perception of regional efforts to promote democracy. However, a codification of regional cooperation on democracy does not necessarily lead to a more positive appraisal of these bodies. I will discuss the key

implication of my work for policymakers in the last chapter. In the next chapter, I will discuss my findings from the laboratory survey experiment.

Chapter 7

EVIDENCE FROM THE LABORATORY SURVEY EXPERIMENT

7.1 Result for the Student Sample

How do university students perceive regional intergovernmental bodies that promote democracy? Based on my data, 15.05 percent of my respondents in the control condition grant high legitimacy to these bodies, compared to 25.89 percent who either strongly or tend to think these bodies are illegitimate. Meanwhile, 59.66 of them are indifferent. The takeaway is that more non-elite respondents have a negative opinion than those with a favorable view of these bodies in the control condition.

Table 7.1 presents the result of the balance/randomization test on the student samples from the laboratory experiment. Unlike my elite survey experiment, I worked with a larger sample size for my laboratory survey experiment. The larger sample size allows me to equally and randomly distributed the respondents to three conditions.

Results show that the observed variable “gender” is equally distributed across the three conditions. Given the lack of variation in the “age” variable in my student sample (456 out of 517 respondents are between 18-24 years old), I only performed crosstabulation analysis on my gender variable. I, therefore, exclude key demographic variables such as age and gender from my regression in my regression analysis of my student sample.

Table 7.1

Tabulation of age_group

age_group	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
18-24	456	87.02	87.02
25-34	48	9.16	96.18
35-44	11	2.10	98.28
45-54	7	1.34	99.62
65-above	2	0.38	100.00
Total	524	100.00	

Figure 7. 1

Distribution of age among the student respondents

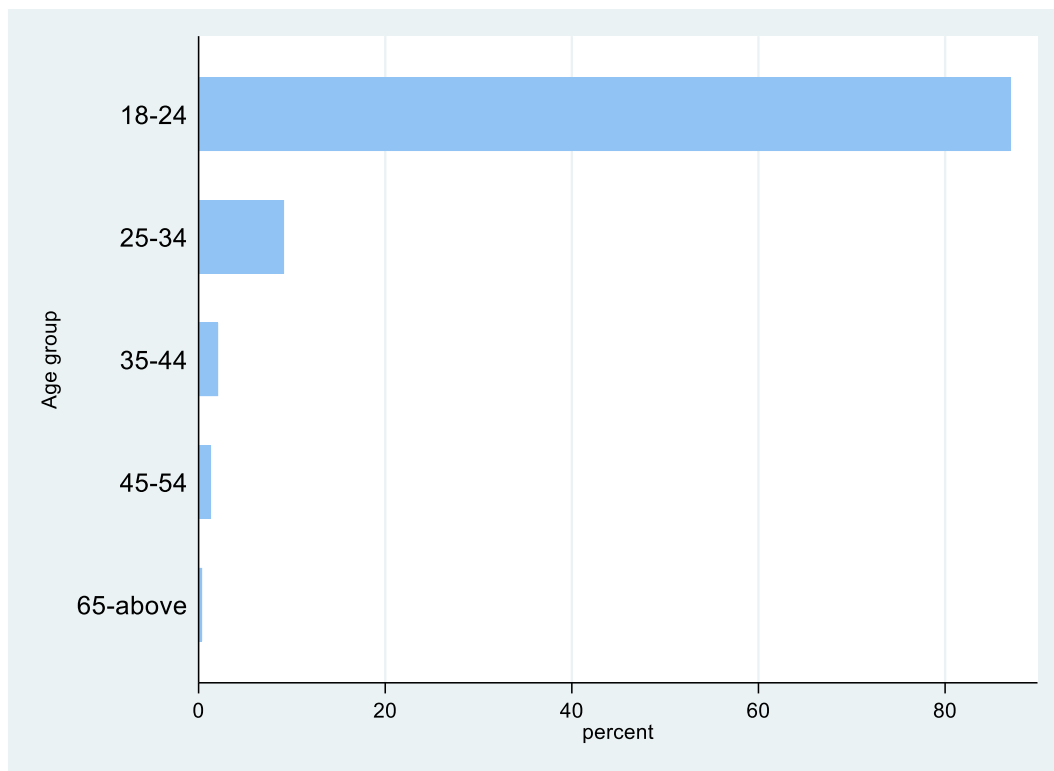


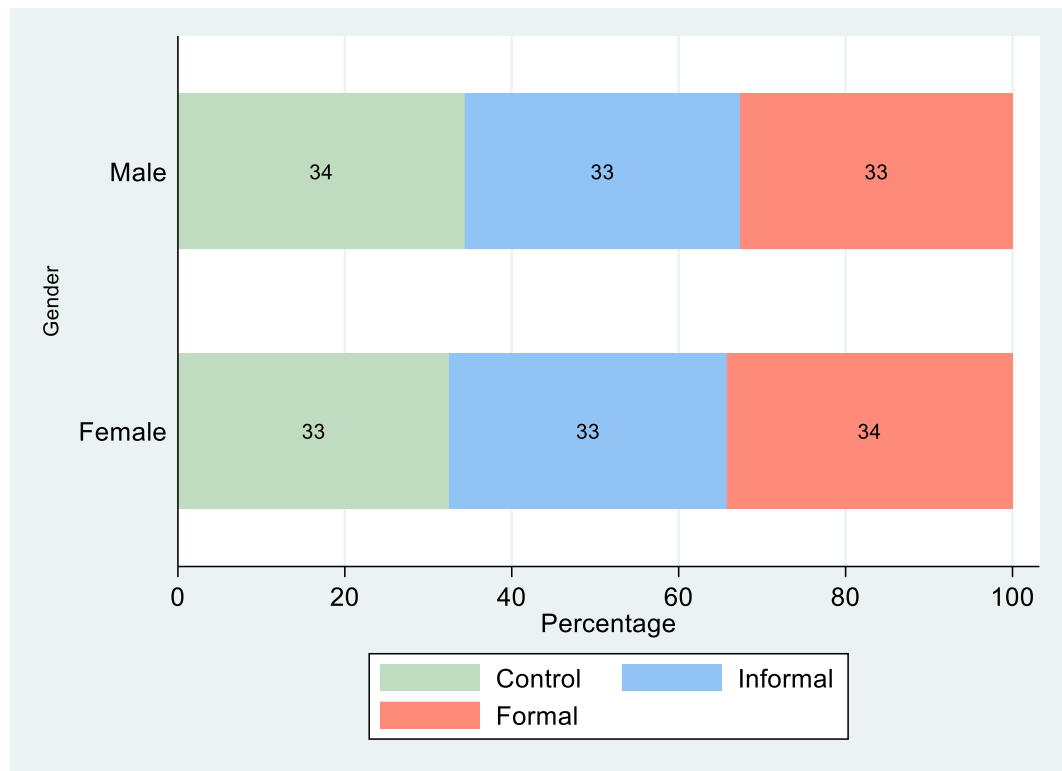
Table 7.2

Cross-tabulation of gender across the treatment and control groups for the student samples.

gender	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Male	228	43.76	43.76
Female	293	56.24	100.00
Total	521	100.00	

Figure 7.2

Distribution of gender across the treatment and control groups for the student samples.

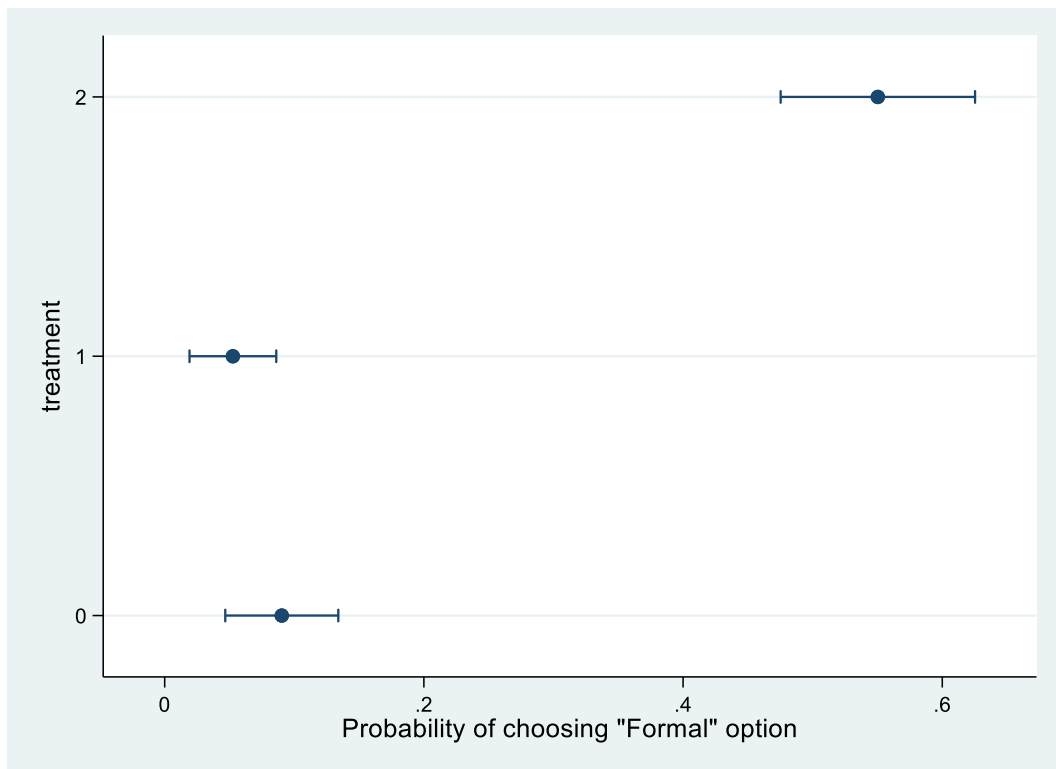


The manipulation check shows that the student respondents understand the stimuli, i.e., different types of institutional design of regional intergovernmental organizations. As Figure 7.3 shows, the marginal effect is the largest for students in the formal conditions, with a difference in expected probabilities of 0.55 compared to the reference group (at $p < 0.01$ level).

In other words, the student respondents in the formal condition are 0.55 more likely to pick the ‘formal’ option in the manipulation check question. And compared to the reference group, those in the informal condition are slightly less likely than those in the reference group (at $p < 0.01$ level) to pick the ‘formal’ option in the manipulation check question. I can conclude that the participants of the lab survey experiment understand the stimuli.

Figure 7.3

Probability of choosing the ‘Formal’ option



Moving on to the statistical analysis of the relationship between different types of regional institutions and legitimacy beliefs. My first hypothesis posited that the participants in the *Informal* condition would accord a lower level of legitimacy to regional intergovernmental institutions promoting democracy compared to the

participants in the *Control* condition. The latter did not receive any information about the specific institutional design of regional intergovernmental cooperation on democracy. Hence, I expect a negative and significant coefficient for this condition. The data from the student sample support this hypothesis, as the difference between the Informal and Control conditions is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ level.

My other hypothesis about how a formal type of cooperation should lead to a positive assessment of the legitimacy of intergovernmental institutions promoting democracy receives strong support from the student sample. The laboratory experiment, as shown in table 7.3, shows that respondents in the formal condition think regional organizations promoting democracy as legitimate compared to those in the control condition (at $p < 0.01$ level).

Table 7.3

Ordinary Least Square regression of the elite and student sample

	Elite sample	Student sample
	Legitimacy	Legitimacy
Experimental conditions		
Informal design	-1.269** (0.581)	-0.627** (0.260)
Formal design	-0.968* (0.578)	1.086*** (0.261)
Constant	11.079*** (0.477)	9.831*** (0.185)
<i>N</i>	198	506
R-squared	0.024	0.082

Standard errors in parentheses. Baseline category: Control condition.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

7.2 Discussion

The statistical analysis of the elite and student sample reveals that political elites are, on average, more critical of regional intergovernmental institutions or organizations promoting democracy than university students. Furthermore, the relationship between the types of institutional design, i.e., formal and informal institutional structure, with legitimacy beliefs is not entirely consistent across samples, as table 7.3 shows.

Both political elites and university students' respondents tend to perceive informal regional intergovernmental bodies that seek to spread democratic values in a negative light or illegitimate. This type of cooperation is established without a treaty and/or not equipped with a permanent secretariat. Unlike the more formal style of regional cooperation, the absence of an explicit written target, reward and punishment, and administrative support to ensure adherence to shared norms in informal intergovernmental institutions discourages the members from taking international cooperation seriously.

Even though informal types of international cooperation between political elites and university students have a similar effect on political elites and university students, the same cannot be said about the impact of formal institutional design. My finding suggests that, on average, actual political elites with experience in democratization and democratic consolidation do not have a favorable view of a formal regional body that seeks to promote democracy. Formalizing interstate cooperation does not produce a higher legitimacy belief towards regional organizations promoting democracy.

Why does the formalization of regional cooperation on democracy not translate into a higher legitimacy belief among political elites? Or what might explain the elite and non-elite gaps in political attitudes towards regional institutions promoting democracy? I have already proposed two possible reasons why political elites view regional democratic institutions negatively despite the formalization of regional cooperation. In this chapter, I will offer some explanations as to why students think the way they do.

It is important to note that my student sample comprises undergraduate students in the United States who study political science. One way college undergraduate

students differ from older adults is that undergraduates typically comprise a narrow age range in late adolescence and early adulthood. In my study, about 87 percent of the student respondents are between 18 and 24 years old. Meanwhile, only 1.47 percent of elite respondents are in this age group. Existing study on convenience samples in political sciences experiments notes that many people develop an interest in politics in their late teens or early twenties. This development process suggests that college students are still developing their political preferences. These individuals in this period are impressionable or not very critical when it comes to political attitudes. (Krupnikov et al., 2021, 169).

When I present them with information about the informal type of cooperation in democracy, they tend to show negative feelings toward these bodies. They believe that the absence of a binding contract among the states that agree to promote and protect democracy means that their promise to advance democracy is empty. However, when I present them with information about formal cooperation mechanisms among states on democracy, they tend to show positive feelings toward regional democracy institutions. They are feeling hopeful that states will take international democracy cooperation seriously with the codification of shared goals, obligations, and penalties. They may believe that by signing a written agreement, the signing parties cannot easily abandon this international or regional cooperation since any agreement violations can result in international sanctions and/or condemnations. They will also lose their credibility by being perceived as untrustworthy members of the international community. The student respondents may also believe that even though states can still break the binding contract or withdraw from the international agreement, the formal institutional design offers a good incentive for states to take cooperation on democracy seriously.

Unlike undergraduate students, political elites tend to be more critical of politics. Based on my data, 30.39 percent of my elite respondents are 25-34. 38.24 percent are between 35-44, while 20.10 percent are between the ages of 45-54. The political elites may not only focus on the positive aspects of formal regional cooperation on democracy or positive outcomes of democracy promotion as they judge regional democracy institutions. I already discussed in the previous chapter some of the challenges facing states in translating international or regional commitment into actions at the domestic level

Given this more realistic view of international politics, political elites are more likely to consider the instruments/mechanisms (the how) when evaluating regional democracy institutions. Further, they are more likely than the undergraduate students to think about the substance or content of regional democracy cooperation (what), such as whether the international treaty makes only a vague or broad reference to democracy promotion and protection when forming an opinion about regional democracy institutions. A broad scope of regional democracy cooperation would only include abstract standards of democracy, human rights, or the rule of law, for example. A more precise scope of regional democracy cooperation would consist of a specific reference such as the prohibition of torture, prohibition of unconstitutional changes of government, and so on (Stapel 2022).

Another possible explanation for the elite-citizen gap in regional democracy institutions' legitimacy is the university context. However, I do not think that this factor can explain the elite-citizen perception gap in this research.

The laboratory survey experiment was conducted in a public university in the United States. A previous study on personality, culture, and political opinion suggests

that Americans stand out from other countries for their distinctive optimism (Stapleton et al. 2021). While some students who study and participate in the laboratory survey experiments are international students, they may share this sense of optimism (Keller 2015).

Optimists generally expect things to turn out well or good things for themselves. Optimists, therefore, should express more positive views of the government, national symbols, and politics in general. They are supposed to look at the bright side of things and not worry about what might go wrong.

If this argument is true, we should expect American or international students who study in America to give positive evaluations to regional democracy institutions even when they are presented with information about the informal type of cooperation. They should grant legitimacy to these bodies even when they know that leaders can easily abandon the shared commitment to promote and protect democracy given the absence of a binding contract. However, the finding of my research shows that this is not the case. Non-elite samples regard regional democracy institutions as more legitimate when they adopt a formal framework. In the next chapter, I will discuss what these findings mean for democracy promotion.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE STUDIES

8.1 Conclusion and Policy Implications

I conclude by looking at four implications for studying elites' perceptions of regional organizations promoting democracy. First, one of the objectives of this research was to test the assumption in the literature about the role of regional organizations on democracy. This assumption says that membership in regional democracy organizations offers an opportunity for the transitional regime or pro-democratic government to signal to its people its intention to establish democracy. Membership in regional democracy bodies, therefore, should motivate people in democratizing or newly democratic countries to support the democratization or democratic consolidation process. It also should dissuade spoilers from undermining the transition and encourage ordinary people to support the democratization or democratic consolidation efforts. This argument assumes that the domestic audience trusts this organization and believes it plays a vital role in society.

The empirical evidence from this study reveals that political elites do not think regional organizations that promote democracy as legitimate external actors. This finding, therefore, challenges the assumption in the literature of the nexus between the regional organization and democracy.

The second objective of this project is to examine if elites hold a different opinion about different types of regional democracy institutions. My research, therefore, offers a systematic analysis of the effect of the level of formality in regional democracy cooperation on the legitimacy perceptions of elites. Research on this topic

is still lacking, despite the unfavorable opinions of some international relations observers and political elites towards informal forums on democracy. For example, there has been some criticism of the ability of international forums on democracy, such as the Summit for Democracy or Bali Democracy Forum, to impact the internal dynamics of democracies. The results from the elite survey experiment show that political elites have negative views toward formal intergovernmental democracy forums and formal intergovernmental organizations.

Secondly, we should be cautious in generalizing the findings beyond my targeted sample. I tested my hypotheses using a non-population-based survey experiment in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia. Given the small sample size of the elite survey experiment, I conduct a laboratory survey experiment at Arizona State University.

By studying both elite and non-elite samples using identical experimental instruments, I get a larger sample size and explore how the level of formality in international cooperation relates to legitimacy beliefs towards regional organizations promoting democracy. Furthermore, studying these two samples helps to reveal how non-elite samples differ from the actual policy elites.

Like the elite sample, the laboratory experiment relies on a convenience sample. Therefore, I cannot say that the perspective of political elites and students represent all political elites engaged in democratic consolidation efforts and non-elites, respectively. My elite sample is smaller than my university sample because they are busier than the university students and more difficult to contact and convince. It is, thus, more challenging to recruit political elites in large numbers. Out of nearly 1,000 invited to participate in the survey, only 204 completed the study.

Thirdly, the evidence from my study suggests that elites and non-elites hold a slightly different view of the legitimacy of regional intergovernmental bodies promoting democracy. I find that a particular type of institutional design (formal type of cooperation) positively impacts the legitimacy of regional democracy institutions among the non-elite respondents.

Contrary to the student respondents, political elites are more skeptical of regional organizations regardless of the nature of institutional design that structures regional cooperation. The institutional features of these bodies, such as the absence of a written target that specifies shared targets, punishment mechanisms for violators of the shared agreement, and lack of permanence secretariate, shape their negative opinion. However, the codification of international commitment to establish or consolidate democracy does not produce higher support for them. Similarly, the codification of punishment mechanisms for any participants who violate this shared commitment through an international treaty does not increase the legitimacy of these bodies. Formalizing these bodies decreases such regional organizations' legitimacy.

The drivers of the elite-non-elite gap in regional democracy legitimacy may be located at the individual or societal level, as I discussed in the previous two chapters. For now, these findings indicate that the political elite has an ambivalent attitude towards regional democracy promotion. On the one hand, they actively participate in multilateral efforts to promote and protect democracy. In some cases, they even bind themselves in a binding contract. On the other hand, they hold a negative view of multilateral, regional cooperation on democracy.

Last but not least, these results have a broader implication for policy. As I already pointed out, informal international cooperation such as the recent Summit for

Democracy initiated by the United States or Bali Democracy Forum has received some criticism. Some critics think that these international forums lack institutional features that force the participants to commit to democratization or democratic consolidation can punish the participants that fail to fulfill these commitments in a written document and force them to review the stated obligations or targets from time to time (Thomson 2021). Some human rights and democracy activists in Indonesia have also highlighted the limitation of the Bali Democracy Forum as an example of an informal democracy forum at the regional level. The Commission for Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS) thinks the BDF should move from a discussion platform to an action-oriented plan. Its member should take concrete actions to implement democratic values, such as making its member states revoke domestic regulations that are not in accordance with democratic values or end mistreatment of human rights and democracy defenders, for example.⁷⁷ One of the Southeast Asia regionalism experts points out that this forum's inability to move from a discussion platform to incorporate an action-oriented agenda is related to the absence of an institutional or procedural mechanism to facilitate democratization in the region (Chinyong 2014).

The institutional mechanism here can mean different things. However, let's look at the classified document published by WikiLeaks. The institution may refer to the absence of a binding international contract or treaty that needs to be in place to encourage states to commit themselves to pursuing specific goals.⁷⁸ The WikiLeaks

⁷⁷See <https://kontras.org/en/2021/12/09/the-indonesian-government-immediately-stops-the-practice-of-tokenism-against-democracy-through-the-bali-democracy-forum-and-immediately-implements-democratic-values-in-reality/>

⁷⁸ The treaty represents an explicit binding public commitment to a specific cause that encourages the signing parties to implement shared agreements. Lipson (1991) suggests that the absence of an explicit written target, reward and punishment, and administrative support to ensure adherence to shared norms in informal intergovernmental institutions discourages the members from taking international cooperation seriously. Thus, without the binding treaty the forum is better suited to serve as a platform for the participating states to talk about democracy.

document reveals that the government of Indonesia, as the founder of the BDF, talked about how this initiative will be a "forum" rather than an organization.⁷⁹ While the BDF made it clear from the outset that it would be a forum, not an advocacy group or an organization, this kind of criticism speaks to the weakness of informal regional institutions. However, the evidence in this research shows that these bodies' formalization might be unnecessary or insufficient to increase the legitimacy of regional organizations promoting democracy.

Regarding the mechanism that links external factors with domestic politics, this research shows that pro-democracy politicians or activists should rely on other mechanisms to influence democratization or democratic consolidation. Conditionality might induce democratization or democratic consolidation more effectively. Another mechanism to induce political reform is financial or economic assistance to buy acceptance of democratic politics of certain actors in society (bribery).

My findings indicate that there is a divergence between elite and non-elite views. Elites conducting domestic and international politics accord less legitimacy to regional institutions than non-elites. This may result in practical problems of regional cooperation on democracy. Research on the legitimacy of international institutions argues that the more an international organization is perceived as legitimate, the more likely it will obtain resources, attract participation, take a decision, secure compliance, and ultimately solve problems. Legitimacy is also helpful if regional or international intergovernmental bodies pursue ambitious policy goals or comply with international rules and norms. Low legitimacy will hurt the respect for international rules and norms (Keohane 2006, 57; Sommerer and Agne 2018; Zelli 2018; Tallberg and Zurn 2019, 581-

⁷⁹ http://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08JAKARTA2072_a.html

2; Verhaegen et al., 2021).⁸⁰ Thus, the negative views of regional democracy bodies may hinder states from pursuing more ambitious international democracy promotion and protection policies.

8.2. Limitations and Future Studies

As with every other study, this study has had certain limitations. Additional theoretical and empirical puzzles have arisen during the course of this analysis. This section will outline several additional directions that could add to this body of knowledge.

First, the samples were collected using a non-population-based sampling technique due to the absence of a sampling frame of political elites in all newly democratic countries. This sampling technique limits the generalizability of the findings of this study.

Due to this limitation, further research could be conducted with larger samples to bring different insights into the elites' perception of regional democracy institutions. One issue preventing this study from using a population-based sampling technique is the absence of a sampling frame. There is no complete list of past and current political elites, including political activists, journalists, and observers, in democratizing or newly democratic countries. Without this list, I cannot draw respondents randomly from the population.

One way to address this issue is to work with political elites or leaders attending global leadership or public policy courses. For example, future studies can survey

⁸⁰ Rules are prescriptions that serve as constraints on action (North 1990).

leaders who participate in the international executive education program at Harvard Kennedy School. The participants of this program come from around the world (165 countries). The sampling frame allows us to draw samples randomly from the population of political elites and then randomly assign those people to different experimental conditions.

Second, this study examines the elite's perception of regional democracy institutions in three Southeast Asian countries. Future studies can incorporate more states that are transitioning into democracy or consolidating democracy, such as Brazil, Tunisia, and Georgia.

Third, this study tested only three conditions. Other factors may influence regional intergovernmental institutions' legitimacy to promote and protect democracy. Perhaps the utilitarian calculation or how much the regional bodies benefit the respondents' country influences the legitimacy beliefs of elites. Future studies can invite more participants and include this as one of the experimental conditions.

Fourth, this study reveals a gap in the perceived legitimacy of regional organizations that advance democracy between elites and non-elites. This research offers some possible explanations for the elites' and non-elites gap in political attitudes toward regional intergovernmental democracy institutions. Future studies can test these propositions about the cause of the divergence by including some follow-up questions in a survey, survey experiment, or interview about the expected benefits of formalizing regional or interstate cooperation on democracy.

Fifth, this study is focused on regional democracy organizations. As I mentioned in the introduction, there are international informal and formal democratic institutions with a global membership, such as the Summit for Democracy and the Community of

Democracies. Studying the public perception of regional versus international intergovernmental democracy institutions would be interesting.

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APPENDIX A
SURVEY DESIGN

The student samples only answer questions 1-16, while the elite samples answer all the questions. Question numbers 17-25 are not intended to test a particular hypothesis. I included them to collect information about the elites' perception of major regional intergovernmental institutions in the Asia Pacific.

Outline of Questionnaire Flow and questionnaire

1. Consent statement, brief overall instructions.
2. Questions about socio and demographic status, which include educational attainment, background, age, gender, and employment status (Dellmuth and Tallberg 2020,323)
3. The experimental manipulation:

The experiment will consist of three conditions.

The control group (basic condition) will be asked to read the exact text about the role of international cooperation in safeguarding democracy, including maintaining the survival and stability of democratic practices (democratic consolidation) at the regional level. By doing this, I ensure that all groups are being exposed to a comparable environment. This activity also serves as a distraction task requiring them to spend the same amount of time.

The experiment group will be asked to read a short news text. It describes the role of international cooperation in safeguarding democracy, including maintaining the survival and stability of democratic practices (democratic consolidation). These scenarios represent a manipulation of institutional context that alters the level of institutionalization or collective agreement among people seeking to contribute to certain ideals, particularly democratic values.

The second treatment group will be presented with a news article that describes regional cooperation on democracy among states. The article will further note that these leaders have an option to make a binding commitment through an international agreement. However, they choose not to outline their promise to uphold democratic values at the domestic or national level in a written binding contract.

4. After that, they will be asked to answer a question about the effect of the institutional design of regional organizations promoting democracy on democratization and democratic consolidation.
5. Manipulation check for both treatment groups to see if they picked up the formal and informal distinction and pay attention to the instructions (Berinsky et al., 2014).
6. Question about utilitarian calculation for the non-survey experiment purpose (for elite respondents only).
7. Questions about employment status.
8. Probe for suspicion about the purpose of the study.
9. Question about raffle (for the elite participants only).
10. End of survey.

Sample of the survey experiment

I will start with a consent form such as the following:

The Role of An External Factor on Domestic Politics

I am a Ph.D. candidate under the supervision of Dr. Fabian G. Neuner in the School of Politics and Global Studies at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to understand the perceptions of key actors involved in shaping policies about international and domestic issues.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve completing an online survey. Your participation in this study is expected to take approximately 10 minutes.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

All information obtained in this survey is strictly anonymous; your identity will never be connected to the responses. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but the research will not identify you. The result of this survey will only be made available in aggregate form (combined with all other answers).

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team Angguntari C. Sari at asari1@asu.edu or Dr. Fabian Guy Neuner at fneuner@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

If you agree to participate, please select “I consent” below and continue to the study.

Questions related to demographic factors

Personal attributes: age, gender, education level

1. How do you describe yourself?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

2. What is your age?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-above

3. What is the highest level of education that you obtained?

- Complete High school graduate, or vocational school

- Some college credit, no degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate degree

Experiment⁸¹

The control participants will read a text about international relations and democracy. By asking the control group to read a brief text about these topics, I ensure that all groups are being exposed to a comparable environment.

Assignment (News Text) for the Control Group⁸²

*Please read the following information **carefully**, as I will be asking questions at the end.*

When states cooperate, they **can choose from a wide variety of forms** to express their commitments, obligations, and expectations.

Stimuli for the treatment group

To elicit attitude under a range of institutional contexts, each participant in the treatment group will be presented with an institutional scenario that alters the degree of binding explicit public commitment/codified procedure of collective action (absence of a binding contract that compels individual to take action to the presence of binding public contract), as well as the extensiveness of administrative organs (ranging from no or little apparatus to very interventionist apparatus that can monitor, reward, and punish individual behavior).

There will be two treatment groups. The first group will read a text about formal regional cooperation on democracy, while the second one will read a text about informal regional cooperation on democracy.

These scenarios represent a manipulation of institutional context that alters the level of institutionalization or collective agreement among people seeking to contribute to certain ideals particularly democratic values. Thus, the treatment groups will read the same text that the respondents in the Basic condition read with some additional detail about the nature of international cooperation on democracy.

⁸¹ One of the most common designs of survey experiments for causal inference are vignette and factorial designs (Auspurg and Hinz 2014; Sniderman et al. 1991). In a vignette/factorial experiment, the researcher provides the respondent with a hypothetical scenario to read, varying key components of the scenario. In a typical vignette, the researcher varies only one component of the scenario. In a typical factorial experiment, the researcher varies several components of the scenario. <https://egap.org/resource/10-things-to-know-about-survey-experiments/> ; I assigned 1/10 of the respondents to the control group, since my most interesting comparisons for this experiment is across different treatment groups. The control is there simply to serve as a benchmark. So, I randomly assign respondents to different conditions with different probabilities. [How to Do Unequal Randomization in Qualtrics Surveys](https://community.qualtrics.com/XMcommunity/discussion/1275/randomizing-blocks-with-non-identical-probabilities) | Peter Licari ; <https://community.qualtrics.com/XMcommunity/discussion/1275/randomizing-blocks-with-non-identical-probabilities>

⁸² Quote Anderson et al, and buttler volden on the use of basic general information. This is done to be realistic. Other alternative is to not give information.

First treatment group (formal organization)

*Please read the following information **carefully**, as I will be asking questions about the text at the end.*⁸³

When countries/states cooperate, they **can choose from a wide variety of forms** to express their commitments, obligations, and expectations.

Some countries seeking to establish and strengthen democratic systems of government collectively pledge to respect democratic norms and hold each other accountable for any violations of these norms.

These countries **choose to use a formal cooperative mechanism** to express their commitments, obligations, and expectations. It is the **most rigid** form of cooperation among countries.

Formal cooperation among countries bears the following characteristics:

- It consists of a **written agreement signed** by the heads of state. The agreement outlines **common goals, obligations, and penalties** for violations of democratic principles in their home countries.
- It represents **explicit promises** to the international and domestic public to establish and strengthen the democratic systems in their own countries. This international agreement is **intended to be a binding contract between them**.
- It is equipped with **permanent and independent headquarters/secretariats** to **monitor** the **implementation** of the agreement.

The **rigidity** of formal agreements encourages countries to **take their commitments** to uphold democratic values **seriously**. It also means that formal agreements **cannot easily be abandoned** by the member countries.

Thus, a **violation** of the agreement can result in international **sanctions and/or condemnations**. They will also **lose their credibility** by being perceived as **untrustworthy** members of the international community.

Second treatment group (informal organization)

*Please read the following information **carefully**, as I will be asking questions about the text at the end.*

When countries/states cooperate, they **can choose from a wide variety of forms** to express their commitments, obligations, and expectations.

Some countries seeking to establish and strengthen democratic systems of government collectively pledge to respect democratic norms and hold each other accountable for any violations of these norms.

These countries choose to use **an informal cooperative arrangement** to express their commitments, obligations, and expectations. It is the **most flexible** form of cooperation among countries.

⁸³ Bolded words varied across conditions (Mize and Manago 2018).

Informal cooperation among countries bears the following characteristics:

- It does **not** have a **written agreement signed** by heads of state that outlines **shared targets and obligations** to promote and protect democracy. It **does not specify penalties** for violations of democratic principles in their home countries.
- It represents a public promise by states to establish and strengthen the democratic system in their own countries. However, this promise is **not intended** to be a **binding** contract between them.
- It is **not** equipped with **permanent and independent headquarters/secretariat** to **monitor the implementation** of the agreement.

Thus, the **flexibility** of informal agreements means that states' **promises** to respect democratic values are **ambiguous**. The members of this informal cooperation **can easily break** their promises.

Furthermore, a **violation** of the agreement **cannot be penalized** through international **sanctions and/or condemnations**. The violators will also **lose their credibility** by being perceived as **untrustworthy** members of the international community.

Post-test questionnaire (main dependent variable, which is measured by several questions)⁸⁴

There are no right or wrong answers. Please give us your honest opinions.⁸⁵

4. Based on the information you read, how much confidence do you have in this interstate cooperation that focused on facilitating democratic transition and consolidation in their own countries?
 - A great deal of confidence
 - Some confidence
 - Neutral
 - Not very much of confidence
 - No confidence at all
5. Based on the information you read, to what extent do you believe that the international mechanism that these countries use for improving the quality of democracy in their own countries is legitimate?
 - Strongly believe the mechanism is legitimate
 - Tend to believe the mechanism is legitimate
 - Not sure whether the mechanism is legitimate or not
 - Tend to believe the mechanism is not legitimate
 - Strongly believe the mechanism is not legitimate

⁸⁴ I rotate response order to prevent the order of the response options from coloring response. See Pasek and Krosnick (2012), 40-41. I do not rotate the order of questions because doing so may create an impression that topics of questions seem to jump around and tax respondents' memories. Rotating question order also does not make question order effects disappear. Satisficing occurs when respondents put in minimal effort to understand and answer a survey question (Krosnick 1991; Simon and March 2006); The Mobile friendly option makes sure the question is always in the vertical view in mobile [Matrix Table Question \(qualtrics.com\)](https://qualtrics.com)

⁸⁵ I tested this survey between October-November 2022 and adjust the wording in some of the questions, and in the vignettes. For example, I found out that people tend to have an easier time understanding the word confidence as opposed to legitimate. The test was also conducted to make sure that the manipulation is effective or easy to understand, and there are variation on my dependent variables.

6. Country A's leader is looking for reliable international partners to improve its democracy. How important it is that country A is part of this interstate cooperation on democracy?
 - Very important
 - Important
 - Neither important nor unimportant
 - Unimportant
 - Very unimportant
7. Based on the information you read, how much of an impact do you think membership in this interstate cooperation has on the quality of democracy in its member countries? ⁸⁶
 - To a very small extent
 - To a small extent
 - To a moderate extent
 - To a large extent
 - To a very large extent
8. Based on the information you read, to what extent do you think this interstate cooperation on democracy serves an important role in society?
 - To a very small extent
 - To a small extent
 - To a moderate extent
 - To a large extent
 - To a very large extent
9. Based on the information you read, how effective do you think this international cooperation is at addressing threats to democratic systems? ⁸⁷
 - Very effective
 - Effective
 - Somewhat effective
 - Slightly effective
 - Not effective at all
10. Based on the information you read, how much confidence do you have in leaders' pledge to support each other in strengthening their own democracy?
 - No confidence at all
 - Not very much of confidence
 - Neutral
 - Some confidence
 - A great deal of confidence
11. Based on the information you read, to what extent do you agree that this international cooperation has the right to make decisions about democracy that their members must abide by? ⁸⁸

⁸⁶ This is related to the argument that design affect legitimacy through perceived effectiveness of regional bodies. This question helps to identify if institutional designs affect legitimacy beliefs through perceived effectiveness of the regional institution.

⁸⁷ I cannot find a five point scale for the effectiveness that include a neutral option. <https://datagame.io/likert-question-best-practices/>

⁸⁸ These questions are the alternative measures of legitimacy beliefs. Anderson et al., (2019, 673) argue that measure of legitimacy beliefs that use confidence or trust as proxies for legitimacy are necessary conditions of legitimacy but not sufficient. For example, they argue that it is possible for someone to be

- Totally agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neutral
- Somewhat disagree
- Totally disagree

12. Country A's leader is looking for reliable international partners to improve its democracy. Which type of international cooperation do you think that country A will prefer to achieve its goal? ⁸⁹

- Formal type of interstate cooperation
- Informal/less formal type of interstate cooperation
- Unsure

Manipulation check⁹⁰

13. Thinking back about the text, do you recall whether you read about formal or informal types of interstate cooperation, or was that not specified?

- Formal
- Informal
- Not specified
- I did not remember

Questions about perception of the procedural quality (the role of sovereignty)

14. No country should be pressured into adopting a democratic political system if it does not want to.⁹¹

- Strongly agree ⁹²
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

15. It is important for associations between countries which seek to advance democratic values to include the participation of a broad range of societal actors beyond government officials.

- Not at all important

confident in an institution to perform its duties, but not view its authority as being appropriately exercised or legitimate. Questions number 19-20 ask the extent to which the respondents think that an institution is justified and has the right to make decisions people abide by, whereas question number 21 seeks to capture an individual's social affinity with an institution.

⁸⁹ This is a follow up question for number 6 and 5.

⁹⁰ I ask this after the dependent variable because manipulation checks are inherently suspicion inducing (Berinsky et al., 2014). Manipulation check is done to ensure that treatments are received or understood by the participants.

⁹¹ See Anderson et al., 2019, 668, and Verhegen et al., 2021, 627. IOs might be considered less legitimate because of their perceived subversion of democratic governance, for example, when global economic institutions are viewed to dictate member-state policies

⁹² Survey Scales Go from Bad to Good – Versta Research

- Slightly important
- Neither important nor unimportant
- Moderately important
- Very important

16. In your opinion, to what extent is it generally possible to trust people?

(One means most people cannot be trusted, seven means most people can be trusted)

Questions about the utilitarian calculation (perceived country benefit).⁹³

17. To what extent do you think the Bali Democracy Forum promotes democracy?

- To a very small extent
- To a small extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a large extent
- To a very large extent

18. To what extent do you think the ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) promotes democracy?

- To a very small extent
- To a small extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a large extent
- To a very large extent

19. To what extent do you think the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nation), including the AICHR (ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights) promotes democracy?

- To a very small extent
- To a small extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a large extent
- To a very large extent

20. How much do you think your country benefits from the decisions made in the Bali Democracy Forum?

- Major benefit
- Some benefit
- Low benefit
- No benefit at all

21. How much do you think your country benefits from the decisions made in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nation), including the AICHR (ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights)?

- Major benefit
- Some benefit

⁹³ Question 17-25 are only included in the elite survey not student survey experiment. See <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/1354066121994320>

- Low benefit
- No benefit at all

22. How much do you think your country benefits from the decisions made in the ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting)?

- Major benefit
- Some benefit
- Low benefit
- No benefit at all

23. If the respondents selected “A little, Somewhat, or To a great extent” in the previous question, and if they selected “Low, Some, or Major Benefit” in the previous question.

In your opinion, what are the benefits of cooperation among states on the issue of democracy? You can select all that apply.

- Exposure to the broader norms of democracy
- Access to technical or financial assistance to improve the odds of democratization or democratic consolidation
- Opportunity to signal the intention of the new democratic regime to stay democratic
- Opportunity to learn from the others’ failures and successes in establishing and consolidating democracy

24. Among the following things, which one do you think is the most pressing challenge in international cooperation on democracy among countries? (choose one)

- The lack of institutional capacity and human capital to implement democratic related programs at the national level
- The lack of financial resources to implement programs related to democratization and democratic consolidation
- The lack of knowledge about the source of democratization and democratic consolidation to guide implementation at the national level
- Other

25. You selected others in the previous question. Please enter below what you think is the key challenge facing international cooperation among states to encourage democratization and democratic consolidation?

Demographic part 2: employment

26. What is your current employment status?

- Unemployed
- Full-time undergraduate student
- Full-time graduate student
- Employed
- On leave but still employed

For those who choose “employed or on leave but still employed”

27. If you are employed or on leave but still employed, what is your current primary occupation?

- Private sector employee
- Government employee
- Civil society organization activist
- Military officer
- Police officer
- Undergraduate or post-graduate student
- Researcher or lecturer in an academic institution
- Others

If question 28 “others”

28. You select “others” in the previous question. Please enter your current primary occupation.....

Probe for suspicion about the purpose of the study.

29. Tell me what the study is about....

Raffle

Would you like to enter the raffle to win a prize? Your response will still remain anonymous.

- Yes
- No

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX B

FLOW OF ELITE SURVEY EXPERIMENT

Survey flow Published

- Show Block: Language (1 Question) [Add Below](#) [Move](#) [Duplicate](#) [Delete](#)
- Show Block: Consent (1 Question) [Add Below](#) [Move](#) [Duplicate](#) [Delete](#)
- Show Block: Demographic Part 1 (3 Questions) [Add Below](#) [Move](#) [Duplicate](#) [Delete](#)
- Randomizer**
Randomly present of the following elements Evenly Present Elements [Edit Count](#)
[Add Below](#) [Move](#) [Duplicate](#) [Collapse](#) [Delete](#)

- Show Block: Control (1 Question) [Add Below](#) [Move](#) [Duplicate](#) [Delete](#)
- Show Block: Control (1 Question) [Add Below](#) [Move](#) [Duplicate](#) [Delete](#)
- Show Block: Treatment Group: Formal (1 Question) [Add Below](#) [Move](#) [Duplicate](#) [Delete](#)
- Show Block: Treatment Group: Informal (1 Question) [Add Below](#) [Move](#) [Duplicate](#) [Delete](#)
- Show Block: Treatment Group: Formal (1 Question) [Add Below](#) [Move](#) [Duplicate](#) [Delete](#)
- Show Block: Treatment Group: Informal (1 Question) [Add Below](#) [Move](#) [Duplicate](#) [Delete](#)
- Show Block: Treatment Group: Formal (1 Question) [Add Below](#) [Move](#) [Duplicate](#) [Delete](#)
- Show Block: Treatment Group: Informal (1 Question) [Add Below](#) [Move](#) [Duplicate](#) [Delete](#)
- Show Block: Treatment Group: Formal (1 Question) [Add Below](#) [Move](#) [Duplicate](#) [Delete](#)
- Show Block: Treatment Group: Informal (1 Question) [Add Below](#) [Move](#) [Duplicate](#) [Delete](#)
- [+ Add a New Element Here](#)

- Show Block: Post-test Questionnaire-Legitimacy, effectiveness** (9 Questions)

[Add Below](#)
[Move](#)
[Duplicate](#)
[Delete](#)
- Show Block: Manipulation Check** (1 Question)

[Add Below](#)
[Move](#)
[Duplicate](#)
[Delete](#)
- Show Block: Alternative IVs:sovereignty, democracy IO** (2 Questions)

[Add Below](#)
[Move](#)
[Duplicate](#)
[Delete](#)
- Show Block: Alternative IVs Social Trust** (1 Question)

[Add Below](#)
[Move](#)
[Duplicate](#)
[Delete](#)
- Show Block: Alternative IV: intro to utilitarian calculation** (6 Questions)

[Add Below](#)
[Move](#)
[Duplicate](#)
[Delete](#)
- Show Block: Alternative IV Utilitarian Calculation** (3 Questions)

[Add Below](#)
[Move](#)
[Duplicate](#)
[Delete](#)
- Show Block: Demographic Part 2** (3 Questions)

[Add Below](#)
[Move](#)
[Duplicate](#)
[Delete](#)
- Show Block: Suspicion check** (1 Question)

[Add Below](#)
[Move](#)
[Duplicate](#)
[Delete](#)
- Show Block: Raffle** (1 Question)

[Add Below](#)
[Move](#)
[Duplicate](#)
[Delete](#)
- Then Branch If:**
 If Would you like to enter the raffle to win a prize? Your response will still remain anonymous. **Yes** Is Selected [Edit Condition](#)

[Move](#)
[Duplicate](#)
[Options](#)
[Collapse](#)
[Delete](#)
- End of Survey**

[Move](#)
[Duplicate](#)
[Customize](#)
[Delete](#)

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL – ELITE AND LABORATORY SURVEY EXPERIMENT



EXEMPTION GRANTED

[Fabian Neuner](#)
[CLAS-SS: Politics and Global Studies, School of \(SPGS\)](#)
-
fabian.neuner@asu.edu

Dear [Fabian Neuner](#):

On 10/15/2021 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Elites Perceptions of the Legitimacy in Formal and Informal Intergovernmental Regional Organizations Promoting Democratic Values
Investigator:	Fabian Neuner
IRB ID:	STUDY00014246
Funding:	Name: Arizona State University (ASU)
Grant Title:	
Grant ID:	
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SARI Consent Form Survey , Category: Consent Form;• SARI Grant application Effect of Institutional Designs on Individual's Support for Democratic Consolidation 2021, Category: Sponsor Attachment;• SARI Protocol Survey Experiment 2021, Category: IRB Protocol;• SARI Recruitment Material Survey 2021, Category: Recruitment Materials;• SARI Survey Material 2021, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 10/15/2021.



EXEMPTION GRANTED

[Fabian Neuner](#)

[CLAS-SS: Politics and Global Studies, School of \(SPGS\)](#)

-

fabian.neuner@asu.edu

Dear [Fabian Neuner](#):

On 12/7/2021 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Modification / Update
Title:	Elites Perceptions of the Legitimacy in Formal and Informal Intergovernmental Regional Organizations Promoting Democratic Values
Investigator:	Fabian Neuner
IRB ID:	STUDY00014246
Funding:	Name: Arizona State University (ASU)
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SARI Form Translation 2021, Category: Translations;• SARI Survey translation in Indonesian, Category: Translations;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 12/7/2021.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.



EXEMPTION GRANTED

[Henry Thomson](#)
[CLAS-SS: Politics and Global Studies, School of \(SPGS\)](#)

Henry.Thomson@asu.edu

Dear [Henry Thomson](#):

On 1/26/2022 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Individual Legitimacy Beliefs in International Organizations or Forums that Promotes Democracy
Investigator:	Henry Thomson
IRB ID:	STUDY00015287
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SARI recruitment material 2022, Category: Recruitment Materials;• SARI revised consent form 2022, Category: Consent Form;• SARI Revised Protocol Survey Experiment 2022, Category: IRB Protocol;• SARI Revised supporting docs survey material 2022, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 1/26/2022.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required.