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ABOUT US

WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal provided dedicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

The Role Of International Organizations In Strengthening Democracy And Rule Of Law

Authored By - Paridhi Gupta¹ & Dr. Avantika Madhesiya²

When it comes to promoting democracy and the rule of law, international organizations are playing an essential role in making the world a better and more peaceful place by supporting diplomacy, policy guidance, technical assistance and financial assistance. Monitoring of elections, support to judicial reforms, and strengthening of governance frameworks is made by the UN, EU, OAS and AU.

In addition, bodies such as the UN and OSCE intervene to monitor elections and stop the fraud as well as make everyone believe that while the IMF and World Bank ensure financial aid only when their aid comes along with governance reforms. Plus, these organizations assist in drafting constitutions, they train judicial personnel, help in fighting corruption and exercise and protect judicial independence and legal integrity. The ICC is among institutions charged with prosecuting human rights violations, increase the global accountability.

Political resistance, sovereignty concerns and selective enforcement, however, limit their impacts. Yet international organizations are important vehicles for strengthening democratic resilience, legal accountability, and respect for human rights. To maintain democratic governance worldwide it is crucial to strengthen cooperation between these entities and national government.

Keywords: International organizations, democracy, rule of law, human rights, governance, election monitoring, judicial reform, accountability, corruption, sovereignty.

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INTRODUCTION

It is essential buttressed by democracy and the rule of law in ensuring just, stable, and prosperous societies. They offer the basis for the right of everyone to be governed by the rule of law and to freely have their privileges and immunities recognized both within and beyond their borders. But though these principles often take a beating from authoritarianism, corruption, weak institutions and political instability, they are unforgivingly self-sufficient. In these contexts, international organizations, especially as external guarantors of political and legal stability, are to be found, who promote and protect the democratic governance and the rule of law.

“Democracy building has been a central task of global and regional organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the International Criminal Court (ICC).” They help promote constitutional and legal reforms, democratic elections, promote judicial independence and promote good governance. These organizations prevent democratic backsliding and support nations moving from authoritarian to democratic governance through diplomatic mediation, election monitoring, human rights advocacy and legal enforcement.

International organizations one of the key roles is to give technical and financial assistance to states that cannot acquire strong democratic institutions. This support takes the form of training of both prosecution and law enforcement in the area as well as funding to fight corruption, promote transparency and encourage civic participation. Moreover, these organizations help international treaties and agreement to set up legal benchmarks of democratic governance and for how states should act in order to conform with universal principles of justice, fairness and human dignity.

In addition, international organizations form a platform for the exchange of opinion and cooperation between countries, in order to solve those conflicts that represent a threat to democratic stability. For example, they impose sanctions on regimes that do not uphold democratic norms; they investigate and prosecute human rights violations and promote policies to protect press freedom, judicial independence and civil liberties. They are deterrents against authoritarianism and legal abuses by trying to make governments held accountable for their

actions.

It is undeniable that international organizations have highly imperative roles to play, however, they regularly find themselves in a compromising position: from political partiality claims to sovereign governments' resistance and lack of enforcement. Due to the fact that many of these states are authoritarian leaning, many authoritarian-leaning states reject external interventions as a violation of their sovereignty, and it is difficult to effectuate these reforms. Furthermore, they lack the ability to act decisively due to financial constraints, bureaucratic inefficiencies or geopolitical rivalries.

Despite this, there is an indispensable role for international organizations in enhancing democracy and the rule of law. Many of these democracies were democratized by their efforts, and pursued prosecution of war criminals and the establishment of legal norms that promote the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms. Second, this paper analyses the range of functions in which international organizations serve to help facilitate democratic resilience across a variety of success and obstacles in an emerging global order. Then, rather than reading it, we can assess the effectiveness of international cooperation in shaping a world where democracy and the rule of law prevail as universal principles only if we know the impact of these things.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Having drawn upon the Democratic Peace Theory and Rational Institutionalism, the theory, which emanates out of this study, focuses on how international organizations strengthen democracy with regard to the rule of law. These theories help to explain how international organizations promote political and legal stability around the world, how democratic states engage in relations with legal norms, and how institutions affect governance.

Democratic Peace Theory

Immanuel Kant is first to outline Democratic Peace Theory (Immanuel Kant, 1795), and later scholars such as Michael Doyle and Bruce Russett develop the theory (Michael Doyle, 1983, Bruce Russett, 1993). According to this theory, democracies have similar habits of behaviour as human rights, transparency, and accountability, leading cooperation and not conflict.

“Democratic Peace Theory has practical significance in the context of international organizations in which it explains why these institutions call for democracy in order to maintain security and legal order in the international community. These organizations like the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU) and the Organization of American States (OAS)” undertake the task of supporting democracy in the regions torn by political instability and authoritarianism because they believe that democratic governance greatly reduces the occurrence of war and internal conflict. These organizations beef up the processes of electoral, constitutional reform and the establishment of frameworks that supports democratic institution on a global scale.

Moreover, international organizations embrace the part they play in conflict prevention and resolution under Democratic Peace Theory. Yet because democracies are bound by legal and institutional constraints, diplomatic means are often used to consummate disputes and disputes are often settled by international organizations as platforms for negotiations or peacebuilding. Organizations that promote dialogue, monitor elections and enforce legal norms in these countries are helping them move towards democratic governance, thus decreasing the probable risk of violence or instability.

Institutionalism

Institutionalism uses this theoretical perspective to bring focus to institutions—again, domestic and international—in determining political behaviour, governance structure, and legal norms. According to institutionalists, strong institutions produce stability, guarantee compliance with legal frameworks, and good governance. The role that international organization, as institutions, can play in reinforcing democracy and the rule of law also includes abetting, monitoring of compliance and accountability of states.

Among them, there are three main institutions under this kind of theory, which can qualify the roles of international organizations:

- 1. Rational Choice Institutionalism** – In this sense, institutions set incentives and limits to state action. Governments make commitments, rules, norms, and accountability mechanisms that states follow when engaging with democracy and the rule of law. For example, European Union states have to provide evidence of being democratic and abiding by the rule of law to be accepted to join, and the process of doing so encourages political reform in the aspirant states.

2. **Historical Institutionalism** – The second perspective emphasizes how the present political and legal facets are formed in line with the institutional developments that have previously taken place. Support of historical paths of governance reforms is played by international organizations in reinforcing long term democratic transitions. For instance, establishment of the United Nations and the creation of the European Union after World War II constitute historical responses to establish the stable institutions that avoid the authoritarianism and war.
3. **Sociological Institutionalism** – This argues that state behavior is not only influenced by formal rules and institutions but by shared norms and identities. By supporting the promotion of democracy as a global standard, international organization are also contributing to norm setting. For instance, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations has significantly contributed to the formation of legal and political identity of democratic nations across the world.

Application of These Theories to International Organizations

In order to explore better the impact that international organizations have on the governance systems and the rule of law, this paper explores the functions of the institutions as viewed through the lenses of Institutionalism and Democratic Peace Theory. Theoretically, international organisations facilitate democratizing forms of government by doing the following.

- Through diplomatic and financial means to carry out the promotion of democratically transitioned countries and the consolidation of democracies.
- The creation and enforcement of legal standards will advance and promote human rights, openness and accountability.
- To offer employment of appropriate institutional structures that facilitate peaceful collaboration and dispute settlement among states.
- Guarantee that democratic values, independence of the judiciary, international treaties are followed up and that all is supervised.

Although both the Democratic Peace Theory and Institutionalist emphasize the positive sides of international organizations like they also point to the difficulties such institutions may confront, for example, political resistance of authoritarian regimes, limitations in the enforcement and accusations of the institutional bias. “Yet these theories provide the framework for all aspects of how international organizations shape democracy and rule of law, and the overall point that democracy and the rule of the law are integral to global stability.

KEY INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS PROMOTING DEMOCRACY AND RULE OF LAW

International organisations are key for building up democracy and the rule of law on an international level.” Using legislative frameworks, training programs, diplomatic engagement, election monitoring they work to keep democratic values and governed institutions. These groups perform well in transparency, accountability and the strengthening of democratic institutions. These are examples of some of the leading world groups that are clashing to have more democratic governments and better legal protections for all of its citizens.

The United Nations (UN)³

“The United Nations (UN) is a leading international organization by its increasing efforts in promoting democracy, human rights and the stability of law. The many organizations of the United Nations (UN) provide monetary aid, technical assistance and policy recommendations to member states that seek to establish democratic governments. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)³ is an important institution in enhancing governance structures, bolstering election procedures, fostering transparency and so on. The UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF) also provides funding to projects to strengthen civil society participation, improve election integrity and promote judicial independence. The United Nations Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) closely monitor human rights abuses and seek legal accountability. The United Nations' goals include having strong and responsive democratic institutions through its governance programs, judicial reforms and election monitoring.

The European Union (EU)⁴

The European Union (EU) is a regional organisation aimed at creating prosperous nations with democratic governance and values of the rule of law, domestic as well as internationally. Having established democratic standards as Copenhagen Criteria to those countries which wish to attain EU membership, they need to exhibit stable democratic institutions, human rights protection and legal accountability in place. It may be established that if the European Court of Justice (ECJ) protects the EU laws, the European Commission for Democracy through Law

³ United Nations, “United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF),” accessed March 2025, <https://www.un.org/democracyfund>

⁴ European Union, “Copenhagen Criteria and Democratic Governance,” European Commission, accessed March 2025, https://ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/criteria-accession_en.

(popularly called the Venice Commission) guides its experts to provide expert solution in constitutional and legislative matters.” The EU also uses diplomatic and financial means to assist democratic transitions in non-EU countries, mainly its eastern neighbors, the Balkan states and Africa. It also puts in place sanctions against governments that violate democratic principles and guarantees, which reflects the Organization’s constant commitment to promoting and protecting democracy and the rule of law.

“The Organization of American States (OAS)⁵

The Organization of American States (OAS) is a regional organization working to strengthen democracy, promote and protect human rights, and generate conditions of security in the Americas. The Inter American Democratic Charter, adopted in 2001 as a guiding text, protects the OAS’s membership from having to abide with any form of governance that doesn’t abide with the constitution, as well allowing for collective action should such changes in government occur. The contribution made by the Organization of American States (OAS) in ensuring that elections are honest and open is vital—it sends out impartial observer missions. In addition, it works closely with the Commission on Human Rights of the IACHR and the IACHR itself in examining human rights violations and promoting change in the law.” Still, the OAS is an important institution in its ongoing effort to promote democratic stability in Latin America and the Caribbean, providing legal aid, mediating in political conflicts and assisting in the construction of governments.

The African Union (AU)

The African Union (AU) is a regional organization seeking the spread of democracy, stability and legality in Africa. The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance is an important legal tool in condemning illegal changes of government and outlining principles for democratic governance. The African Union (AU) is often called when nations that are used to hostilities, military coups or disputes about elections find themselves at political crisis. For efficient government, it also backs judiciary change and the creation of new constitutions. The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights can also address human rights violations and ensure accountability. The AU advances political stability and legal integrity throughout Africa by broadcasting democratic principles and the strengthening of governance systems.

⁵ The Organization of American States, accessed March 2025 <https://www.cfr.org/background/organization-american-states>

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Furthermore, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are active in promoting democracy and the rule of law in the entire Globe. Research is undertaken, governance trends monitored and advocacy carried out for legal and institutional reform in the country by independent organizations including Freedom House, Transparency International and International IDEA.

Freedom House⁶ publishes annual reports assessing political freedoms and civil liberties across different countries, while Transparency International focuses on combating corruption and promoting government transparency. International IDEA has expertise in electoral procedures, democratic administration and constitutional reforms. These NGO's duty to check the governments helps keep the rule of law and democracy. Their efforts to promote democracy, to do research, to shape policy, have a large influence on a worldwide scale.

MECHANISMS USED TO STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY AND RULE OF LAW

“It would require comprehensive strategy based on human rights, openness to human rights issues, the adoption of human rights legislation, and legal context to support democracy and the rule of law. International organizations, regional authorities and NGOs use multiple techniques to make sure democratic governance and the integrity of the law, and protection of civil rights.” These systems aim at election integrity, judicial independence, anti-corruption, government accountabilities for human rights abuses.

Election Monitoring and Support

The core of democracy is free and fair election because it is a means for citizens to exercise choice among their leaders. Electoral processes, however, can be manipulated, fraudulent, and will always have an external factor interfering. These risks are mitigated by international organizations which deploy election observation missions for these purposes—i.e., for monitoring electoral processes and compliance with democratic standards. Institutions such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union (EU), and the Carter Center⁷ send trained observers to oversee voting, ballot counting, and the overall

⁶ Freedom House, “Democracy Scores and Global Freedom Report 2024,” Freedom House, 2024, accessed March 2025, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>.

⁷ Carter Center, “Election Monitoring and Democratic Transitions,” Carter Center Publications, accessed March 2025, <https://www.cartercenter.org>.

conduct of elections. The aim of these missions is to detect and help identify irregularities that may include voter suppression, voter intimidation and voting fraud, in order to enhance electoral transparency. Additionally, other international bodies support electoral commissions with technical expertise and finances which it can use for application of modern voting technologies, improving voter registration systems, and enhancing election security. These efforts support election integrity and engender public trust in the democratic process and peaceful political transitions.

Judicial and Legal Reforms

A strong and impartial judiciary is necessary to the rule of law and to the fairness and efficacy of legal systems. Many of these nations have to reform judicial institutions to avoid political meddling and corruption, particularly those moving out of autocracy or war. In the areas of constitutional writing, training of the judiciary and the founding of the legal institutions there are international organisations that excel, such as UNDP and Venice commission. These changes help establishing a separate and distinct division of powers, a guarantee of an independent judiciary, and protection of the rights of the individual. Equal access to justice is of utmost importance and legal aid programs are crucial in this regard in particular as it relates to underprivileged groups who may have difficulty affording legal representation. “Two examples of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) include Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, that help victims of judicial prejudice, striving for fair trials and providing free legal assistance. These reforms uphold the rule of law, democratic principles, strengthen legal institutions and support a fair judiciary.”

Anti-Corruption Initiatives

Corruption hollows out democratic institutions, disempowers governance, diminishes the compatibility of the public to government. The international organizations and watchdog groups have some anti-corruption mechanisms to counter this problem; for instance, such mechanisms are built to improve transparency, to view corrupted practices, and to pursue accountability for the officials. The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is published by an international organization Transparency International, a leading global body in this sphere, and reviews the countries with a given corruption level, and urges to do reforms. Measures of opportunity for corruption include financial disclosure requirements for the full range of public officials, electronic procurement systems throughout the public sector, and open data initiatives that lead to more opportunities for citizens' participation. Additionally, institutions such as the

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)⁸ assist in investigating money laundering, illicit financial flows, and bribery cases. Many international financial institutions also require approval of aid and development loans to governments' commitment to anti-corruption policies. These initiatives help in increasing the level of government accountability and decreasing financial mismanagement in a democratic system which further enhances the level of transparency and credibility of the system.

Human Rights Protections

The bedrock respect for human rights is what the rule of law and democratic institutions are built upon. Governments guilty of human rights violations weaken the people's trust in democracy and fan political unrest. Large organizations monitor, advocate and take legal action against abusers around the world to try and put a stop to these atrocities. International human rights bodies, such as the ECHR, UNHRC, and IACHR, examine allegations of human rights abuses, find the outcome and provide recommendations to the relevant government, as well as disseminate this information to the public. These groups can be relied upon by victims for legal representation and for giving victims the means to have their cases heard in international tribunals. In addition, the UPR and similar processes by the UNHRC examine the human rights records of all member states and makes recommendations for improvement wherever needed. The International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutes those who commit serious sexual assaults when human rights violations amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity. International organisations defend civil freedoms, promote a fair and democratic society and force legal accountability through so doing.

CHALLENGES FACED BY INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN PROMOTING DEMOCRACY AND RULE OF LAW

International organizations are indispensable both to promoting democracy and to the maintenance of the rule of law on a global level. But these are very often confronted by formidable obstacles that have an adverse effect on the utility and impact of their efforts. These difficulties are due to the political opposition (if any), limited resources available to the country as the democratically weak, uneven application of democratic norms to some contexts, and the

⁸ International Monetary Fund (IMF), "Governance and Economic Stability: Linking Financial Aid to Democratic Reforms," IMF Working Papers, 2023 accessed March 2025.

impact of foreign geopolitics. In order to overcome these issues, required attention should be shifted, a tighter enforcement should be exercised, and more collaborative efforts should be made with national governments and NGOs. Below, I expand more on the principal obstacles which global organizations face in reaching to promote democracy and the rule of law.

1. Political Resistance

Promoting democracy and legal accountability is one of the continuing challenges that international organizations have been confronted with and that often resist in the face of political resistance by some of their national governments. There are many states, deemed authoritarian or with fragile political systems, who do not want external interventions attempting to change its governance.

- **Sovereignty Concerns Leading to Rejection of External Intervention:** International organizations' efforts to promote democracy are claimed by many governments to violate their national sovereignty. For them, involvement in their domestic affairs by external actors (in particular election monitoring, reform of the judiciary, or even advocacy on human rights) is an improper interference in internal governance. Consequently, they oppose receiving foreign aid or refuse to work with organizations that want to impose democratic reforms.
- **Governments Refusing to Comply with International Democratic Standards:** Additionally, some authoritarian or semi authoritarian regimes actively work to remove democratic norms and behave as if they are democratic. They may hold elections but they may rig them, stifle opponents or have control of the judiciary to ensure nothing else changes. Even at the most extreme, when international organizations put pressure on them or impose sanctions on them, their governments often find ways around accountability measures that render the enforcement mechanisms ineffective.

International organizations face difficulties in the process of democratic reforms despite political resistance, specifically in countries where ruling elites try to keep power in a non-democratic way.

2. Resource Limitations

A second impediment to international efforts at democracy promotion is that international organizations are simply drowning in a lack of resources to provide sufficient support to democracy promotion. They lack the sufficient funding, personnel and capacity to support democratic transition and legal reforms in various parts of the world.

- **Insufficient Funding for Democracy-Promotion Initiatives:** Many international organizations depend on the financial support of member governments, private contributors, and others development agencies for their operations. When the size of the problems those initiatives seek to solve are measured against their budget for money, they often are not enough. Unfortunately, these groups can't offer the long-term assistance that is so much needed to continue offering election monitoring, judicial training, and capacity building programs for democratic institutions, and they can't afford to continue to do so.
- **Lack of Personnel and Technical Expertise in Certain Regions:** To be effective in promoting democracy, there is need for legal experts, governance specialists, election observers and conflict resolution experts among others. Many times, limited funding or logistical problems prevent the deployment of skilled personnel to areas that are caught up in the phenomena of democratic backsliding by international organizations. Cultural and language barriers also hinder international experts to interact easily with local institutions and civil society organizations.

A democratic foreign policy aimed at institutional change, however, requires sufficient financial and human resources for such efforts, without which they are inconsistent and sometimes ineffective.

3. Selective Enforcement

In international organizations, due to allegations of bias, selective enforcement, double standards and inconsistency in applying democratic principles, they always come under fire from the critics. They weaken their legitimacy and effectiveness in promoting democracy and the rule of law, mainly because the perception of unfair treatment.

- **Accusations of Bias in Addressing Democratic Backsliding:** The argument is that international organizations tend to be tougher when it comes to violations of democracy in weaker states than in powerful or geopolitically significant ones. So, it brings discredit to those organizations, which are supposed to be impartial in upholding democratic values.
- **Unequal Application of Democratic Principles:** There are political as well as economic considerations when it comes to scrutinizing some states for democratic violations harsher than others. For instance, if there is discourse among an international organization of imposing steep sanctions on a small developing country for electoral fraud, whereas disregard of similar actions in another, more powerful nation will not

be even contemplated because of strategic alliances or economic links. Such inconsistency weakens trust about organization impartiality and dedication to democratic values.

It is important that international organizations ensure fairness and consistency in the enforcement of the democratic standards: the publically agreed upon universal principles and measures for respecting the masses. Geopolitical realities and diplomatic concerns, however, often intervene to make it difficult to apply these principles consistently.

4. Geopolitical Influences

Global power dynamics, and in particular the interests of the most powerful member nations generally steer the ship of multinational institutions in any pursuit for democracy. Economic, political alliances as well as disputes often influence the economics of such decisions and can act to compromise the efficacy of undertakings meant to support the process of democratization.

- **Power Struggles Affecting Decision-Making Processes:** As for international institutions, powerful states often have an excessive impact on their agendas, which are shaped in conformity with their strategic goals. For instance, United Nations Security Council has been an essential body of global government and it is composed of a few permanent members who can veto a motion if they think it does not comply with the interests of their country. Delay could be caused in situations when urgent action is required to respond to the abuses of democracy and the rule of law.
- **Dominance of Powerful States in Shaping Democracy-Promotion Agendas:** The decisions on the objectives and strategies of the international organizations are guided more by the interests of powerful states than a consensus on how to involve in promoting democracy. Certain nations engage in playing political or economic strong card to facilitate certain democratic causes while often look the blind eye with regards to human rights in locations of their vital interests. An in earnest commitment to the democracy-promotion initiatives may be perceived by some developing nations as a tool to push their own political interests further into the depths of Western political needs. Therefore, they may ask themselves questions, and resist.

Geopolitical interests and the promotion of democracy combine to inhibit the international organizations' ability to be clearly neutral and impartial as defenders of democratic governance and legal accountability.

Conclusion

International organizations are important when it comes to monitoring elections, strengthening the rule of law, improving the rule of law and protect human rights. Their work greatly contributed to progress toward more democratic regimes, more stringently enforced legal standards and more personal and governmental accountability. Institutionalism and Democratic Peace Theory both provide different theoretical perspectives that find these institutions to be important for having effective governing systems.

Clearly, there are a number of obstacles to overcome by these groups, ranging from political opposition to a lack of resources, biased enforcement and geopolitical pressures. The fact that sovereignty concerns or bias claims can hurt their trust does not mean they play an unimportant role in strengthening democratic resilience. International organizations and national governments should, more closely, work together in order to improve their capacity of promoting democratic governance globally, and solve problems of politics and finances to consistently implement democratic values.

In spite of the setbacks, international organizations have had an indisputable effect in the integrity of the legal system and democracy all over the world. Their adaptability, dedication to democratic principles and participation will ensure that government will stay on track to keep democracy and the rule of law at the core of fair and equitable societies that inspire future leaders.

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