

Self-Determination, Dependency, and Authority

Exploring imposition in international relations

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Abstract. Self-determination has historically been an important goal of sovereign states, but it is one that has been under-recognized in international relations theory. In this article, I explore the importance of self-determination for understanding and explaining state behavior at the international level. This article proceeds in two parts. I first expand the concept of self-determination to incorporate self-determination over international rules and authority. I discuss how this captures the difference between voluntarily cooperating, delegating, and accepting external authority versus having external authority imposed. I explore Jamaica's relations with the United States and the IMF in the 1970s as a case of a democratic, dependent state's self-determination being undermined. Second, I develop my argument that self-determination is a political goal of leaders, elites, and citizens, independent of the content of policies or the expected outcomes of cooperation. Focusing on post-colonial states, I discuss the range of political projects that states have undertaken to realize self-determination. Overall, this discussion suggests that much of what has appeared to be consensus, voluntary compliance, and legitimation of authority in the post-Cold War era is, instead, the imposition of external authority through the weaponization of dependence, the rational anticipation of punishment and retaliation, and the absence of viable exit options. The constraints that their dependence has placed on the agency of states may help explain recent backlash against the international liberal order.

I. Introduction

In 1977, U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance announced to a meeting of the Organization of American States that the U.S. government was planning to tie economic assistance and trade to Latin American states' human rights records.¹ Shortly after, Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez criticized this proposed policy as being counter to regional norms of “self-determination, nonintervention [sic], and mutual respect.”² This was in spite of the fact that Venezuela was, at the time, a strong democracy with a good domestic human rights record, as well as a proponent of human rights enforcement, supporting efforts in both the United Nations and the Organization of American States to investigate and condemn human rights violations by Latin American governments.³ Yet, speaking about the U.S. sanctions, Andrés Pérez asserted that “no individual country has the right to say at what point a certain norm is being violated or...what corrections should be made.”⁴ These same policies also elicited popular backlash in the region. That year, the U.S. government's decision to cut aid to Argentina's brutal military dictatorship was met with widespread criticism within Argentina, including from opponents of the military regime.⁵

Similar objections, coming from unlikely sources and focusing on the inappropriateness of international responses to norm violations, have occurred more recently. In 2011, British Prime Minister David Cameron announced that the United Kingdom was considering linking economic assistance to domestic respect for LGBT rights. In response, domestic LGBT advocacy groups in aid recipient countries issued a collective statement criticizing this threat,

¹ U.S. House of Representatives 1977: 4

² Andrés Pérez 1977

³ Peeler 2014

⁴ Andrés Pérez 1977

⁵ Benham 1977

characterizing the proposed sanctions as “coercive.”⁶ In 2018, following heavily criticized elections in Venezuela, a group of Commonwealth Caribbean states spoke out against international sanctions against Venezuela despite the fact that this group of Caribbean states is among the most consistently democratic in the Global South.⁷ Ralph Gonsalves, the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, denounced international sanctions as an “unacceptable, coordinated and intense external economic assault” against the government of Venezuela.⁸ Caribbean countries also opposed side-taking against the Venezuelan government within the Organization of American States as counter to the rules and norms of the regional organization,⁹ with one prominent diplomat from Antigua and Barbuda noting pointedly that “some states sought to bend the rules of the Organisation [sic] to suit their bilateral purposes.”¹⁰

What accounts for these objections? These criticisms came from groups and individuals that were not themselves being targeted by the policies in question, and in some cases, the objections came from those that the policies were intended to help. In all cases, the criticisms were directed at enforcement of norms that these actors otherwise supported. I argue that one important factor explaining these negative responses is that policies themselves were regarded as external impositions which undermined principle of self-determination. These policies conflicted with a long-standing desire for an international system in which states, and the people within them, are able to fully and equally participate in the creation and implementation of international rules to which they are subject and to meaningfully decide to be bound by the rules. This kind of imposition is distinct from impositions in the form of “cultural imperialism,” in which, for

⁶ “Britain warned of serious backlash over ‘anti-gay’ threat” 2011

⁷ Helfer 2002

⁸ U.N. General Assembly 2018

⁹ Johnson 2019

¹⁰ Sanders 2017

example, Western norms are imposed on non-Western societies. This form of imposition is about the process of how rules are formulated and applied rather than the content of the rules themselves.

The importance of self-determination over international rules and authority, and the ways that self-determination differs from formal sovereign independence, has been under-recognized by international relations scholarship. Yet, it has consistently been an important political goal for states in the Global South. One reason for this has to do with these states' history of imperial and colonial control, which has made self-government an important end in itself. A separate but related reason is the persistence, since their formal independence, of forms of external pressure that have posed ongoing challenges to realizing self-determination in the sense of citizens being able to affirm the laws they live under, participate in their creation, and exercise accountability over their implementation.¹¹ For many states, their material weakness and dependence on external support have undermined their *de facto* sovereignty, leaving them vulnerable to the imposition of international rules and authority over which they retain limited ability to exercise influence or accountability.¹²

This does not mean that states object to all forms of external authority or cooperation, and these same states may accept and even welcome it in other forms. They may delegate extensive authority to international organizations and accept invasive monitoring and sanctions regimes. Instead, what I suggest is that there are important differences between deciding to accept external authority as an expression of a state's sovereign authority, versus having sovereign authority usurped and external authority imposed. This difference matters to states independent of the content of policies and the expected outcomes of cooperation.

¹¹ Getachew 2019; Stilz 2015; Umozurike 1972.

¹² Clapham 1996; Jackson 1990; Krasner 1999; Nkrumah 1965.

This distinction speaks to broader questions that have been asked by scholars of international institutions, in general, and American power, in particular. Why do weak states voluntarily participate in political orders and international institutions created to further the interests of powerful states, and why do they comply with only minimal need for payment or coercion?¹³ Answers to this question tend to view the persistence of institutions or orders, the continuing participation by weak states, and the relatively limited need to use overt carrots and sticks on the part of powerful states, as evidence that an order or institution benefits and is perceived as legitimate by all states. Powerful states have incentives to create political orders and design international institutions in ways that elicit participation and compliance by constraining their own use of power and enhancing the welfare of all states.¹⁴ In the context of American hegemony, these incentives, combined with the U.S.'s own normative commitments, identity, and desire to reduce the costs associated with maintaining a political order, have created a context within which weaker states are willing to accept the U.S.'s power and the international order it upholds as legitimate.¹⁵

By contrast, in this article, I argue that much of what appears to be consensus, voluntary compliance, and legitimation of authority is, instead, the imposition of external authority through the weaponization of dependence,¹⁶ the rational anticipation of punishment and retaliation,¹⁷ and the absence of viable exit options.¹⁸ The costs of imposing rules or authority and enforcing compliance in states with high levels of dependence on external support may be trivial and can consist of simply rescinding or reducing access to resources or benefits that the dependent state

¹³ On U.S. hegemony, see Ikenberry (1998); Ikenberry and Kupchan (1990), Lake (2007, 2009), and Nye (1990, 2004, 2011). On international institutions, see Abbott and Snidal (2000), Koremenos *et al* (2001), and Stone (2008).

¹⁴ Ikenberry 1998; Lake 2009; Nye 1990; Stone 2008

¹⁵ Ikenberry 1998: 45; Lake 2009: Nye 1990

¹⁶ Farrell and Newsome 2019

¹⁷ Pierson 2015: 126

¹⁸ Moe 2005

relies on. These same actions may be devastating for the dependent state, who may accept authority in anticipation of them.¹⁹

Where states accept authority without open contestation or the need for explicit coercion or threats, it can appear on the surface as legitimation of authority or an indication that the arrangement is mutually beneficial, when in fact powerful states are imposing their own preferred policies and beneficial arrangements onto dependent states. Political orders and international institutions need only be satisfying to a sufficient number of states, and more importantly, satisfying to states whose non-compliance would be more costly or challenging to punish. If this is the case, then it may be able to absorb a great deal of dissatisfaction from dependent states.

This article proceeds in four parts. I first discuss how existing theories of international cooperation, delegation, and authority do not fully account for the fact that, for dependent states, external authority is often imposed without open contestation or overt threats coercion. This gives the impression that states view cooperation as legitimate and beneficial. Second, I develop the concept of self-determination. I discuss what it means for international rules and authority to be self-determined and how this is distinct from sovereignty as conceptualized in international relations theory. I examine Jamaica's relations with the United States and the IMF during the 1970s as a case of a state's self-determination being undermined and external authority being imposed as a consequence of high levels of dependence on external support.

Third, I argue that the concept of self-determination is important to international relations scholarship. Realizing self-determination, and avoiding or limiting the imposition of authority, is a political goal of state actors and, because of this, it is an important explanatory factor for the

¹⁹ Pierson 2015

behavior of states. As evidence of this, I discuss the kinds of political projects that dependent, and in particular, post-colonial states have pursued in order to respond to these kinds of pressures and realize their self-determination.

I conclude with a discussion of long-term and policy implications. I suggest that the systematic and prolonged undermining of states' self-determination may be an important cause of backlash to international institutions and the liberal international order. Existing work has identified peripheral states' position in international hierarchies as a source of contestation over the liberal order.²⁰ Where this work has focused on structural conditions that produce dissatisfaction, I focus on state agency within this hierarchical structure, arguing that the constraints these structures place on peripheral states' agency is one cause of recent backlash and contestation. I argue that this may also help to explain openness to cooperation with illiberal powers, including by states that share or have seemingly adopted many of the international liberal order's underlying values. For many states, the attractiveness of no-strings-attached aid and cooperation with illiberal powers may stem not from their desire to violate liberal norms, but because they object to the imposition and control that these conditions represent.

The concept of self-determination, though it is not specific to non-Western states, helps to move international relations beyond Western-centric theorizing by acknowledging the political realities and paying attention to the goals and concerns that have formed an important part of the foreign policies of states outside of the West.²¹ Additionally, theorizing differences in how states come to be subject to international rules and authority can help explain why states would reject forms of authority even when they agree with its underlying content or may stand to benefit from the outcomes it produces. This distinction can inform conversations about paternalism in

²⁰ Adler-Nissen and Zarakol 2020; Zarakol 2017

²¹ Acharya 2011; Acharya and Buzan 2017; Epstein 2016; Shilliam 2010.

international relations.²² Recognizing the limitations that dependent states operate under is key to uncovering their agency in the international system, including how they respond and adapt to structures that limit their freedom of movement but make available other possibilities for action.²³

2. Power, dependence, and the imposition of authority

Existing frameworks for international cooperation, delegation, and authority view these actions as mutually beneficial means to solve collective action problems, with states participating in them because they receive benefits and because they perceive them as legitimate. In this section, I explore how accounting for state weakness and asymmetric dependency alters these frameworks. For states with high levels of dependence on external support, the latent possibility of retaliation for contesting authority and the low cost of enacting discipline can allow powerful states to impose their own preferred policies and beneficial arrangements onto dependent states without the need for overt sanctions, payments, or even threats. As a result, the most unequal relationships may be the most coercive *and* the most devoid of open confrontation, while appearing on the surface to be the most legitimate and cooperative.

According to existing theories of political orders and international institutions, participation is motivated primarily by the expectation of mutual gains. These kinds of arrangements are seen as inherently costly for states. They incur “sovereignty costs,” or the costs of the loss of autonomy²⁴ or national discretion over particular policies leading to outcomes that

²² Barnett 2016: 29-30

²³ For a discussion of the international structures, especially of hierarchy, that weak states operate within, see Adler-Nissen and Zarakol (2020) and Mattern and Zarakol (2016).

²⁴ Bradley and Kelley 2008

diverge from the state's ideal policy point,²⁵ the loss of authority over decision-making in an issue area, and broad encroachments on state sovereignty, more generally.²⁶ In the case of delegating to an international organization, they also incur "agency costs," or the costs of monitoring actors to which authority has been delegated to ensure the actor is not doing less than they have been tasked with, or moving further away from the delegating states' ideal point.²⁷

States make the voluntary decision to incur these costs for the sake of achieving other goals that they value, which include solving commitment problems, lowering transaction costs, and reducing information asymmetries.²⁸ They may also do so in order to engage in cooperation or form communities with similar states,²⁹ or because creating and accepting certain types of international authority, like election monitors or oversight over human rights commitments, are appropriate or expected for actors with their identity.³⁰

These theories tend to emphasize the benefits of cooperation, because, though it is possible to uphold an order or institution through coercion and payments alone, it is typically assumed that doing so would be prohibitively costly, even for the U.S. at the height of its power.³¹ This kind of arrangement is also unlikely to be incentive compatible,³² and the illegitimacy of such an arrangement would undermine it in the long-run.³³ Instead, in order for powerful states to establish and maintain cooperation, weak states must benefit and participate voluntarily.³⁴ Of course, not everyone benefits equally. Powerful states create international

²⁵ Moravcsik 2000: 227. See also Epstein and O'Halloran (2008).

²⁶ Abbott and Snidal 2000: 436-437

²⁷ Hawkins *et al* 2006

²⁸ Abbott and Snidal 2000; Green and Colgan 2013; Koremenos *et al* 2001; Keohane 1984; Moravcsik 2000.

²⁹ Adler *et al* 1998; Deutsch 1961; Lutz and Sikkink 2000

³⁰ Borzel and van Hullen 2015; Hyde 2011; Kelley 2008; McNamara 2002; Meyer and Rowen 1977; Meyer *et al* 1997.

³¹ Nye 1990: 156; Lake 2009: 18-19

³² Koremenos *et al* 2001: 768

³³ Stone 2008

³⁴ Nye 1990, 2004; Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990; Kindleberger 1973; Krasner 1976; Lake 2009; Stone 2008.

institutions and establish international orders or authority relationships primarily to benefit themselves, and they maintain greater influence over them and face weaker sanctions for violating rules.³⁵ Yet, they nevertheless design them in ways that are welfare-improving for all participants. Were this not the case, states would choose not to participate, rescind the delegated authority, or engage in open contestation.³⁶

In addition, powerful states establish orders and institutions as legitimate by accepting constraints on their power in the form of domestic democratic institutions and commitments to rules, multilateralism, and international norms like anti-colonialism.³⁷ They use soft power to elicit compliance through positive attraction.³⁸ Finally, they socialize subordinate states such that elites in these states come to “embrace” the dominant state’s values and to view its authority as legitimate, rendering the use of more coercive methods of ensuring compliance unnecessary.³⁹

As a result, though coercion and payments are used, orders and institutions persist because an equilibrium is reached where all states are sufficiently satisfied to ensure that contestation and non-compliance remain at a manageable level, while powerful states constrain themselves enough to ensure that dependent states do not revolt.⁴⁰ Carrots and sticks, or threats to deploy carrots and sticks, may be used to discipline or enforce the arrangement in individual instances, but both discipline and contestation should be the exception. As David Lake notes, authority, in terms of the acceptance by subordinate states of a dominant state’s right to issue orders and discipline non-compliance, is “strongest where discipline is the least evident,” while the need to employ discipline is “a sign that the relationship is out of equilibrium and is being

³⁵ Abbott and Snidal 2000; Donno 2010; Hawkins *et al* 2006; Krasner 1976; Stone 2008; Thompson 2006

³⁶ Carothers 2006; Lake 2009; Hirschman 1970; Morse and Keohane 2014; Tallberg and Zurn 2019; Terman 2019

³⁷ Ikenberry 1998: 45-46; Lake 2009: 14-15

³⁸ Nye 1990, 2004, 2011

³⁹ Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990

⁴⁰ Koremenos *et al* 2001; Lake 2009; Stone 2008

contested by one or both sides.”⁴¹ As a result, the decision for dependent states to remain in and to not openly contest a cooperative arrangement is taken as *prima facie* evidence that they view it is legitimate and minimally beneficial.⁴²

There are a number of ways that this existing framework does not adequately reflect the strategic and decision-making environment faced by states with high levels of dependence on external support. While this framework looks for dissatisfaction to manifest through observable contestation, resistance, sanctioning, and threats, as power disparities between actors increase, the likelihood of overt contestation and coercion should decrease.⁴³ Instead, relations between powerful and weak states may be more accurately characterized by power dynamics in which “competing interests are recognized (at least by the powerless) but open contestation does not occur because of power asymmetries.”⁴⁴ This dynamic is exacerbated when states are not only much weaker but are also dependent on more powerful actors for external support.

In fact, many theories of both political orders and international institutions greatly overestimate the costs of enforcing compliance in dependent states. When a state has high levels of external dependence, punishing non-compliance may consist of simply rescinding or reducing access to resources or benefits on which the dependent state relies. This may impose only trivial costs on powerful states. At the same time, it may be devastating for the dependent state that relies on them. These dependent states may also lack viable exit options in the form of other actors or institutions that can provide similar resources and benefits.⁴⁵ In light of this set of factors, dependent states may participate not in anticipation of mutual benefits or acceptance of a

⁴¹ Lake 2009: 13

⁴² Koremenos *et al* 2001; Lake 2009; Stone 2008

⁴³ Korpi 1985: 36; Pierson 2015: 128

⁴⁴ Pierson 2015: 126. See also Scott (1985) on the rarity of outright revolts by the weak against the powerful.

⁴⁵ Moe 2005

powerful state's legitimate right to rule, but in the expectation that powerful states will make them much worse off if they do not.⁴⁶

In addition, as Paul Pierson notes, contestation itself is costly for weak actors, utilizing resources and risking retaliation from powerful actors. These same power disparities and dependence also decrease the likelihood that contestation will be successful, further lowering the attractiveness to dependent states of risking retaliation. As a result, dependent states may rationally act in anticipation of the costs of rejecting authority, non-compliance, and engaging in open contestation. "The crucial point," according to Pierson, "is that the decision not to contest takes place in the shadow of power relationships."⁴⁷

When it comes to cooperating, aligning policies, or establishing authority relationships, leaders of dependent states may accept international oversight or aid conditionality or remain in international organizations that demand implementation of certain policies because they rationally anticipate that openly rejecting, contesting, or exiting a particular authority relationship or set of rules will be costly, lead to retaliation, or simply fail.⁴⁸ They may expect immediate forms of punishment or retaliation, or they may be attempting to manage important relationships and long-term access to resources. Given limited budgets for development and foreign assistance, dependent states have to consider their value to donor states vis-à-vis other aid recipients and act in ways that ensure that donor governments view them favorably when making decisions regarding trade decisions or aid allocation.

When dependent states rationally choose to not engage in open contestation, the effects of these power dynamics cannot be directly observed. Indeed, powerful states can often expect that

⁴⁶ Gruber 2000; McNamara 2002; Moe 2005; Pierson 2015.

⁴⁷ Pierson 2015: 126

⁴⁸ Gruber 2000; Moe 2005; Pierson 2015

their preferences will be met without need for payments or the threat or use of sanctions or force, and they do not even need to intend for their actions to be coercive for them to be taken that way by dependent states. For dependent states, rules or authority relationships are imposed through the underlying or implicit threat of punishment. Though they may engage in contestation or resistance, they may do so in less visible ways such as reluctant compliance, appeasement, or telling more powerful states what they want to hear.⁴⁹ As a result, it can be difficult to distinguish between voluntary cooperation and the imposition of authority, where overwhelming power differentials effectively preclude overt resistance to or rejection of external authority by dependent states.

3. Self-determination over international rules and authority

In this section, I expand the concept of self-determination to capture the difference between voluntarily delegating authority and having external authority imposed, and I discuss how self-determination differs from sovereignty as conceptualized in international relations theory. To make this discussion more concrete, I explore a case of a democratic, dependent state's self-determination over international rules and authority being challenged.

3.1. Defining self-determination in the international sphere

Self-determination is defined as self-rule, or “governing oneself under laws of one’s own choosing.”⁵⁰ It refers to the government of a state being constitutive of the people, or alternately, to the rules of the state representing a free and willful expression of consent to be governed by them. Domestically, self-determination is typically associated with a democratic government in

⁴⁹ Bayart 2000; Beall 2021a; Scott 1985, 1990; Tieku 2013; Tussie 2009

⁵⁰ Dahl 1989

which citizens participate in politics by running for office and electing political leaders through representative, free, and fair elections.⁵¹ Conversely, self-determination at the international level is often equated with independence from alien rule through secessionist movements or decolonization. However, self-determination also extends to the ability of sovereign states, and the people that constitute the state, to freely choose to be bound by international rules and authority, to meaningfully participate in the design and implementation of international rules, and to be able to exercise accountability over international authority.

The international side of self-determination refers to self-rule in the sense of governing oneself under *international* laws of one's own choosing. Self-determination over international rules and authority is distinct from sovereign authority defined in terms of independence, national discretion, or ultimate decision-making.⁵² When a state coordinates policies with other states or transfers authority to an international organization or another state,⁵³ it diminishes the delegating state's sovereign authority and independence.⁵⁴ However, this does not necessarily imply a diminishment of self-determination. Self-determination does not require sovereign statehood, and it is not guaranteed by sovereign independence.⁵⁵

In fact, a state can maintain self-determination over international rules even if those rules diminish their sovereign authority or result in interference in their domestic affairs. This would

⁵¹ Franck 1992

⁵² Abbott and Snidal 2000; Bradley and Kelley 2008; Epstein and O'Halloran 2008; Hafner-Burton 2008; Moravcsik 2000.

⁵³ Krasner 2004; Krasner and Risse 2014; Lake 2009; Matanock 2014.

⁵⁴ There is an alternative conception of sovereignty according to which delegating authority or engaging in international cooperation through things like treaty-making is more correctly be seen as an expression of a state's sovereign authority rather than diminishing a state's sovereignty (Hathaway 2008). I employ the definition of sovereignty as independence to be consistent with international relations scholarship, to highlight the contrast between consensual and non-consensual forms of delegation of sovereign authority, to foreground the link between domestic democratic processes and international rule-making, and to recognize the fact that self-determination does not require sovereignty.

⁵⁵ Getachew 2019; Jagmohan 2020; Stilz 2015; Wilder 2015.

be the case if they transfer authority or accept international rules in ways that are a reflection of the collective will of those within the state or if there is genuine domestic support for or agreement with the decision. States can even cede authority in ways that increase their self-determination over international rules if doing so increases their ability to meaningfully participate in the creation and implementation of rules to which they are subject and to limit the extent to which authority is imposed on them.

For example, in Africa and the Caribbean, leaders of independent and soon-to-be independent states initially sought self-determination in the form of a larger, federal state. By pooling their sovereignty, they would be able to transcend their individual weakness, making them collectively less dependent on and vulnerable to interference and the imposition of authority more powerful actors.⁵⁶ This same logic has motivated their use of regional organizations.⁵⁷ Conversely, sovereign states can be subject to forms of pressure and interference that greatly limit their self-determination, in spite of their formal independence.⁵⁸

I identify two conditions that determine the level of self-determination a state has over a particular international rule. The first condition is the degree to which the state is able to effectively participate in the design and implementation of international rules to which it is subject, relative to other states.⁵⁹ This does not mean that the state is able to exert direct, immediate control or get exactly what it wants, but rather that they expect to be able to exert a similar amount of influence relative to other states. This could be the case even if the level of influence over implementation is fairly low for all states, as with an international court.

⁵⁶ Getachew 2019

⁵⁷ Acharya and Johnston 2007; Beall 2021a; Ramphal 2009; Tussie 2009

⁵⁸ Getachew 2019

⁵⁹ Markell 2008

There are both structural and subjective components to this condition. The structural component pertains to the specific structural context (e.g. an international organization, a set of international organizations, an international or regional order) in which rules are designed and implemented, and whether this structure allows the state in question to influence decision-making relative to other states. The subjective component relates to a state's long-term expectations or beliefs regarding their ability to influence rules. These expectations are based on their past experience with whether they have been able to affect particular rules in particular contexts or, alternately, whether they have been largely powerless to shape or alter rules or their implementation. Do they expect, based on past experience, their knowledge about the authority in which the rule is nested, or their beliefs about the larger structure within which a particular rule operates, that an attempt at influencing a rule or implementation of the rule will have an effect relative to the influence of other states?

The second condition is the degree to which the decision to be bound by the rule is subject to domestic decision-making processes. How much does the ongoing decision to accept an international rule reflect some aggregation of domestic interests and beliefs,⁶⁰ versus responding primarily or even exclusively to external pressures or influences?⁶¹ For international rules to be self-determined, decisions to accept international rules, delegate authority to an international organization, or align policies with another state should respond to the interests, values, and preferences of its citizens through some aggregation of domestic interests and beliefs⁶² and be affirmed by the domestic population.⁶³ Using the language of Anna Stilz's associational theory of self-determination, a state can cede or delegate authority in a way that is

⁶⁰ Moravcsik 1997

⁶¹ For an analog, see Moss *et al* (2005) on aid dependency.

⁶² Moravcsik 1997

⁶³ Stilz 2015

self-determined if the domestic population affirms the act of delegation and the international authority that is accepted through delegation.⁶⁴

By contrast, the decision to accept international rules may respond almost exclusively to external pressures or influences, such as threat or even possibility of external punishment or reward, or out of rational anticipation that positive relations with vital donor states, allies, or trading partners may be negatively affected by failing to accept or by openly contesting a rule. Similarly, states that expect that contesting certain international rules will be unsuccessful or result in retaliation may make the decision to delegate based on rational expectation of responses by external actors more than on domestic or internal concerns.⁶⁵ All states make decisions to cooperate or delegate at least partially in response to external factors, and external factors and internal factors are not strictly independent of one another. What matters is the degree to which the state is able to domestically affirm its decision to delegate authority and the specific rules to which it consents.

The more these two conditions are present, the more people in a state that are bound by international rules can still be said to be governed by laws of their own choosing, because their interests and beliefs are accounted for in the rules, and they are able to meaningfully and collectively choose for themselves whether to accept them. Absent these conditions, the state in question, and the citizens of the state, may be powerless to shape or alter the rules or the implementation of rules to which they are subject or to decide to no longer be bound by them.⁶⁶

3.2. Challenges to self-determination in Jamaica

⁶⁴ *Ibid*

⁶⁵ Moss *et al* 2005; Pierson 2015

⁶⁶ See Getachew (2018) on the link between the ruled and international authority.

In this section, I examine a historical case in which external dependency undermined the self-determination of a state and its citizens, limiting their ability to effectively participate in the design and implementation of international rules and their ability to meaningfully choose to be bound by them. The case I look at is Jamaica's relations with the U.S. and the IMF following the election of the People's National Party (PNP) in 1972.

Because Jamaica had been a robust democracy since it gained independence in 1962,⁶⁷ it is a clear case in which the democratic will of a state's citizens can be translated into its international politics. Jamaica is also a prototypical case of a country whose economy is characterized by high levels of dependence on external support, including an economy driven by the export of a small number of raw commodities, namely bauxite and sugar; a heavy reliance on imports; low levels of economic development; and mounting external debt.

However, Jamaica is also an atypical case. During this time, Jamaica was an example of a dependent state demonstrating a somewhat unique willingness to openly contest and defy the wishes of more powerful actors, making it a useful case for being able to actually observe the coercive effects of asymmetric dependence. This was enabled further by the context of the Cold War, within which superpower competition created more opportunities for dependent states to contest international authority and rules. It illustrates the forms of discipline and retaliation that dependent states can anticipate in their relations with powerful actors and which, in typical cases, they act to pre-empt.

I show how Jamaica's domestic and foreign policies, when they went against U.S. preferences, were met with forms of discipline and retaliation which were relatively costless for the United States but extremely damaging to Jamaica. In part because of this pressure from the

⁶⁷ It has received the highest rating by Polity2 (a score of 9 or 10 every year) and has been designated as "free" by Freedom House every year since it became independent.

U.S., and in part because of their high levels of dependence exacerbated by an economic crisis, Jamaica was left with few options but to negotiate agreements with the IMF. The conditions that were attached to these agreements, and the decision to accept and implement them, ran counter to the domestic policies that the government had been elected to pursue and ultimately contributed to the PNP's electoral defeat.

Jamaican policies in the U.S. sphere of influence

In 1972, Michael Manley was elected Prime Minister of Jamaica as the leader of the People's National Party (PNP), one of the country's two main political parties. The PNP came to power on a platform of addressing domestic poverty and expanding social services, a reflection of growing grassroots calls for socialist policies that had emerged since independence.⁶⁸ Following the 1972 election, programs that the PNP enacted included free education, housing and financial support to working people, paid maternity leave, creation of a minimum wage, land reform, and price controls on food and consumer goods.⁶⁹ Implementing these social programs involved expanding the role of the state and major increases in public spending, which was quickly made far more difficult by the 1973 oil shock. The subsequent global recession, spike in the price of imports, and decline in the price of sugar dried up revenues and resulted in a balance of payments crisis.⁷⁰

To compensate for shortfalls and to pay for their domestic programs, in 1974 and 1975, Manley's government imposed new taxes on Jamaica's bauxite reserves, much of which was controlled by American and Canadian aluminum companies; renegotiated the Jamaican

⁶⁸ Bernal 1984: 63; "The U.S. Responds: Derailing 'Democratic Socialism'" 1978: 27 (hereafter, "The U.S. Responds")

⁶⁹ Meeks 2017; Stone 1985: 289; "The U.S. Responds" 1978: 28

⁷⁰ Bernal 1984: 63-64; Brown 1981: 6; "The U.S. Responds" 1978: 31

government's agreements with these foreign companies; and created the International Bauxite Association in order to coordinate bauxite prices with other exporters.⁷¹ In late 1974, Manley announced that Jamaica would follow a program of democratic socialism and publicly rejected capitalist policies, a risky move in a region where, after the Cuban revolution in 1959, the U.S. was on guard against the spread of communism and the emergence of a "second Cuba."⁷² These policies, and Manley himself, were very popular domestically.⁷³

At the same time, internal splits within the PNP between more moderate and radical factions limited the extent to which the economic policies that Jamaica pursued matched Manley's socialist rhetoric.⁷⁴ Brian Meeks, a scholar of Caribbean politics, argues that, while Manley did move to the left in his politics after becoming prime minister, the policies he enacted were far from radical.⁷⁵

During this time, Manley also pursued a number of controversial foreign policies that were in line with his participation and growing leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement. He established closer ties with Cuba, even allowing Cuban planes to stop in Jamaica to refuel between Cuba and Angola, where Cuban forces were supporting the Angolan liberation movement. He did this in open defiance of U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.⁷⁶ Throughout this time, Manley was outspoken about rejecting alignment with the U.S. and loudly critical of imperialism, both of which the U.S. interpreted as anti-Americanism.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Bernal 1984: 69; Brown 1981: 3-4; *Foreign Relations of the United States* 2015, 442 (Hereafter "FRUS", with year of publication of volume and document number. All documents available online at: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments>); Meeks 2017.

⁷² Gleijeses 2006; "The U.S. Responds" 1978: 27

⁷³ "The U.S. Responds" 1978: 27; *FRUS* 2015: 429

⁷⁴ Bernal 1984: 70; Meeks 2017; Stone 1985: 288; "The U.S. Responds" 1978: 28.

⁷⁵ Meeks 2017

⁷⁶ *Ibid*; Bernal 1984: 69

⁷⁷ Stone 1985: 287-288; "The U.S. Responds" 1978: 28

One of many controversial moments in Manley's tenure was his address on September 4, 1979 to the annual Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Havana, Cuba. In the address, Manley applauded the role of Fidel Castro in ending apartheid, supporting liberation movements, and creating a new international economic order. Manley declared that Castro was the "rock" of the anti-imperialist movement in Latin America, saying that "[n]o area of the world has had a more extended exposure to, experience of, nor proximity to imperialism than Latin America and the Caribbean."⁷⁸ In his speech, Manley also reiterated his support for Puerto Rican independence, a sensitive subject for the U.S. government.⁷⁹

These policies were very unpopular with the United States. From early on, the U.S. had become increasingly concerned with Jamaica's "leftward drift," though Manley regularly emphasized, both in private conversations with U.S. officials and in public addresses, that he supported strong democratic institutions and that Jamaica's foreign policy was based on genuine non-alignment and not a turn towards the Soviet Union,⁸⁰ a claim which U.S. intelligence continually confirmed.⁸¹ Nevertheless, opinions regularly surfaced within the U.S. government that Manley and his democratic socialist National Peoples' Party represented a communist threat.⁸² However, Manley remained extremely popular domestically during his first term in office, in spite of the deteriorating economic situation and the political violence which increasingly plagued the country.⁸³ He was re-elected in 1976, with the PNP also winning local elections later that year. In fact, although Jamaican society was quite divided during this time, the adoption of a democratic socialist platform very popular with much of the Jamaican public.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Havana Summit 1980: 334

⁷⁹ *FRUS* 2016: 194

⁸⁰ *FRUS* 2016, 175, 184, 189; Havana Summit 1980: 334-338

⁸¹ *FRUS* 2016, 186, 191

⁸² *FRUS* 2016: 185, 190

⁸³ "The U.S. Responds" 1978: 31

⁸⁴ Bernal 1984: 63; "The U.S. Responds: Derailing 'Democratic Socialism'" 1978: 27

External pressures on Jamaica to shift its policies

Throughout this time, the Jamaican government was met with substantial pressures from the United States, the IMF, and the international business community to alter their policies to reject socialism and to establish freer and more open markets. One of the first manifestations of this was the U.S.'s negative reaction to the PNP's decision, in 1974, to impose taxes on bauxite mining by foreign companies, many of which were American, and to renegotiate the terms of their agreements with these companies. The U.S. attempted to refrain from public acts of pressuring Jamaica out of a concern that overt actions against the Jamaican government would create the appearance of a "David/Goliath confrontation." However, government officials noted internally that "Unless the [government of Jamaica] softens its position, it seems difficult to imagine that the basic relationship with the [United States]...will not be importantly altered," noting in particular that the U.S. "may eventually be obliged to take certain actions affecting [their] bilateral aid program in Jamaica."⁸⁵

In 1974, a loan from USAID for rural education in Jamaica was held up by the State Department because of their displeasure over the bauxite renegotiations.⁸⁶ After a lengthy delay, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger ultimately made the decision that the loan should be proceeded with in order to avoid giving the appearance of "penalizing poor Black children in the interests of rich corporations." However, Kissinger also decided that execution of the loan should be tied to developments in the negotiations to make clear to the Jamaican government that

⁸⁵ *FRUS* 2015, 446

⁸⁶ *FRUS* 2015, 452

“business as usual” would not continue between the two countries in Jamaica continued on this path.⁸⁷

In spite of this, Jamaica did not alter its policies or political rhetoric. In 1975, in response to the creation of an export cartel for bauxite, the International Bauxite Association, the U.S. froze capital lending to Jamaica. That same year, U.S. President Gerald Ford also disapproved of a \$2.5 million assistance program requested by Jamaica under the U.S.’s PL-480 food aid program.⁸⁸ The U.S. refused to loan money to Jamaica until it changed its economic policies,⁸⁹ while U.S. aluminum companies shifted their bauxite imports from Jamaica to Guinea.⁹⁰ Additionally, the U.S. Export-Import Bank downgraded Jamaica’s credit in early 1976. Jamaica was unable to secure any private loans that year, and banks refused to reschedule existing loans.⁹¹ In light of the worsening economic situation and inability to access private credit, Jamaica began to negotiate an agreement with the IMF in December 1976.⁹²

In the midst of these negotiations, there was actually some improvement in relations between the U.S. and Jamaica, following Jimmy Carter’s election in 1977. In part, this was because of administration was less stridently anti-communist. Additionally, one of Carter’s foreign policy priorities was promoting human rights, and Jamaica remained one of the most robust democracies and supporters of human rights in a region that had increasingly become dominated by military dictatorships through the 1970s. Carter’s Ambassador to the U.N. Andrew Young also became an important moderating force on U.S. policy towards Jamaica.⁹³

⁸⁷ *FRUS* 2015, 448

⁸⁸ *FRUS* 2015, 469

⁸⁹ “The U.S. Responds” 1978: 30; Bernal 1984

⁹⁰ “The U.S. Responds” 1978: 29

⁹¹ “The U.S. Responds” 1978: 30-31; Bernal 1984: 68-69

⁹² Bernal 1984: 64

⁹³ Kopka 2003: 126. For an example, see *FRUS* (2016, 199) and *FRUS* (2016, 202).

Nevertheless, the U.S. pushed Jamaica towards accepting the IMF agreement by making its own increases in economic support informally contingent on completing negotiations with the IMF.⁹⁴

This relative warming of relations between the U.S. and Jamaica came to an abrupt halt following Manley's 1979 speech at the Non-Aligned summit in Havana. Both the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government had strongly negative reactions to the speech, and within days, U.S. food aid for Jamaica for the following fiscal year was redirected to Nicaragua. In a telegram sent from the Department of State to the U.S. Embassy in Kingston four days after the speech, the State Department acknowledged that the "intensely negative reaction in Washington to statements by [Manley]...had been a factor" in this decision.⁹⁵ In the days after the speech, a U.S. intelligence report was delivered to U.S. President Jimmy Carter which stated that Manley was "turning to the radical Jamaican Left."⁹⁶

This analysis was in line with similar reports that had been coming out of the CIA for years, and which had been met with skepticism.⁹⁷ However, this time Carter reportedly responded by suggesting that they take actions to strengthen Manley's opposition⁹⁸ and to take measures to "knock the hell out of Manley."⁹⁹ Carter eventually pulled back from this more aggressive stance for fear that it would only push Manley further towards alignment with Cuba.¹⁰⁰ They did, however, move forward with the cut in U.S. food aid, and the legislature refused to approve new economic assistance to Jamaica.¹⁰¹

⁹⁴ *FRUS* 2016, 179

⁹⁵ *FRUS* 2016: 192

⁹⁶ *FRUS* 2016, 195

⁹⁷ For example, see *FRUS* 2016: 185

⁹⁸ *FRUS* 2016, 195, 199

⁹⁹ *FRUS* 2016, 199

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁰¹ *FRUS* 2016, 210; Paarlberg 1982; 232

Jamaican responses to external pressures

In their first few years in office, the PNP remained defiant in the face of pressures from the U.S. and demands from the IMF. They continued with their renegotiations of bauxite and maintained the bauxite tax. Early in negotiations over their first agreement with the IMF, Manley publicly rejected the agreement, declaring that “we are not for sale.”¹⁰² He also asserted privately to the U.S. government that the conditions infringed on Jamaican sovereignty and, in their demands for austerity and privatization, conflicted with important domestic initiatives and were unpopular domestically.¹⁰³ However, economic problems continued to worsen, exacerbated by Jamaica’s inability to access private credit, a sharp decrease in Jamaican tourism, a decline in the price of sugar and decrease in demand for bauxite, and capital flight in response to Jamaica’s economic policies.¹⁰⁴

These worsening problems, combined with U.S. pressure to accept the IMF’s terms, left the Jamaican government with few options but to complete their negotiations of an agreement with the IMF in June 1977¹⁰⁵ alongside a series of demanding conditions for economic reform that directly contravened their domestic social policies.¹⁰⁶ These included a wage freeze, an approximately 40% devaluation of their currency, and substantial cutbacks in public spending, a reversal of the policies that the Manley government was elected and, in 1976, re-elected to enact.¹⁰⁷ When Jamaica narrowly failed to reach the IMF’s targets, the IMF terminated the agreement in December that year.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² “The U.S. Responds” 1978: 32

¹⁰³ *FRUS* 2016, 185

¹⁰⁴ Brown 1981: 24-25

¹⁰⁵ Brown 1981: 37-38

¹⁰⁶ Bernal 1984: 64-66, 70-71; Stone 1985: 291; “The U.S. Responds” 1978: 32

¹⁰⁷ “The U.S. Responds” 1978: 32; Bernal 1984: 64-66

¹⁰⁸ Bernal 1984: 64

At this point, the Jamaican government implemented a number of changes in policy which were aimed at improving their relations with the U.S. and retaining access to IMF funds.¹⁰⁹ These shifts did not go unnoticed by the U.S. government. One State Department memorandum observed that Manley's "rapprochement with the US results...from a reluctant decision to seek improved relations for purely pragmatic economic reasons."¹¹⁰ Jamaica negotiated and accepted a new agreement with the IMF in 1978 that came with more onerous conditions than the earlier agreement,¹¹¹ imposed austerity measures, and removed a number of more leftist members of government and replaced them with moderates, including a more right-wing Minister of Finance to oversee the implementation of the IMF agreement.¹¹² The new IMF-imposed austerity measures cost the PNP support of their base, while the domestic unrest and economic troubles undercut the government's broader support.¹¹³ In October 1980, the more right-leaning, pro-American, and vocally anti-communist opposition, led by Edward Seaga, defeated Manley's party in a national election.

After the Jamaican election, the U.S. took an interest in Seaga remaining in power and dramatically increased its support to Jamaica. In fact, the election of Seaga happened to align with the election in the United States of Ronald Reagan, whose own policies more militantly emphasized free and open markets and anti-communism. An assessment by the CIA immediately following Seaga's election had noted that "substantial Western assistance—fast-disbursing aid for the current fiscal year—will be essential for political stability and economic recovery on the

¹⁰⁹ *FRUS* 2016, 191; Stiles 1990: 965-966

¹¹⁰ *FRUS* 2016: 185

¹¹¹ Brown 1981: 39

¹¹² "The U.S. Responds" 1978: 33; *FRUS* 2016, 191

¹¹³ Bernal 1984: 69, 75-78; Libby 1990: 88-89; Stone 1985: 291

troubled island.” The report registered concern that economic issues might undercut Seaga’s domestic popularity.¹¹⁴

In his first three years in power, Seaga’s government received nearly nine times the amount of U.S. aid that Manley’s government received in the same time period. Per capita U.S. aid to Jamaica under Seaga was exceeded only by Israel.¹¹⁵ Additionally, the IMF approved much larger loans with far less onerous conditions compared to those offered to Manley.¹¹⁶ From their end, Seaga’s government shifted Jamaica’s policies to align closely with the U.S., becoming an important ally to the United States. They strictly applied the economic policies prescribed by the IMF.¹¹⁷ Notably, the Jamaican economy fared no better under Seaga.¹¹⁸ Seaga also severed ties with Cuba,¹¹⁹ and, during this time, Jamaica became an important ally to the United States, including lending their support to the U.S.’s 1983 invasion of Grenada.¹²⁰

Discussion

The policies that Manley enacted during his tenure were unpopular with the United States and ran counter to views within the IMF regarding how to best organize a national economy. Yet, they were policies that were favored by the Jamaican electorate, who elected and re-elected the PNP to implement them. Throughout Manley’s tenure, Jamaican policies increasingly responded to external pressures over domestic opinion. Once a government that was more friendly towards

¹¹⁴ *FRUS* 2016, 216

¹¹⁵ Stone 1985

¹¹⁶ Libby 1990: 93-94; Stiles 1990: 962, 966; This accords with Stone’s (2008) findings on informal governance in the IMF.

¹¹⁷ Henke 2000; Stone 1985: 294

¹¹⁸ Henke 2000

¹¹⁹ Libby 1990: 91

¹²⁰ Henke 2000: 114; Libby 1990: 89; Stone 1985: 291-292

U.S. policies came into power, the United States reversed its policies to support Jamaica, in part, to try to ensure that a friendly government remained in power.

This case highlights how powerful actors like the U.S. can enact discipline and coerce compliance with their own preferred policies in dependent states in ways that are relatively costless for them and that largely avoid, or at least obscure, the public appearance of domination and coercion. I do not suggest here that either the United States or the IMF were single-handedly responsible for Jamaica's economic crisis. However, the U.S. in particular was well-aware of the effects that withholding economic support would have on Jamaica's economy and, they purposely took steps to decrease support, knowing that this would put pressure on the Jamaican government and with the express purpose of doing so.

This case also illustrates the risks that dependent states take when they choose to pursue defiant foreign policies or chart paths that contradict the preferred policies of more powerful actors. Overall, this draws into question whether participation or high levels of compliance indicate that international authority or rules are either beneficial or legitimate, or how this question would even be answered in the absence of a meaningful ability to contest or exit an institution or order. Instead, this suggests that the knowledge that powerful actors can so easily exert costs on states that challenge their authority may have a chilling effect on open contestation or defiance. Rather than the decision to accept forms of external authority or certain international rules being self-determined, they may respond almost exclusively to the shadow of power relations.

Turning to the IMF, it is outside the scope of this article to determine whether or the degree to which the IMF was simply a tool of the U.S. or an autonomous agent.¹²¹ Though this is

¹²¹ Hawkins *et al* 2006; Stone 2008

an important empirical question, what matters for the purposes of this article is that, however the IMF's policies came to be formed, they directly contradicted policies that were democratically and collectively supported by the Jamaican people. In fact, the evidence presented here suggests that Manley and the PNP lost their domestic support in part *because* they accepted and implemented the IMF policies. Yet, the result of the PNP's electoral loss was simply more involvement by the IMF. Jamaica's continued participation in the IMF during Manley's term had little to do with whether the organization was perceived as legitimate or beneficial and more to do with the need to gain access to outside resources, a lack of viable outside options, the presence of external pressures to accept conditions, and the ability of other actors, including the U.S., to make Jamaica worse off for not accepting them. Both the Jamaican government and electorate lacked clear avenues to exercise accountability over the IMF and its prescribed policies.

4. Self-determination as a political goal of states

Ultimately, the concept of self-determination presented in this article is important for international relations theory because it is a distinct political goal of state actors. As a result, pursuing self-determination and attempting to avoid the imposition of authority is an important explanatory factor for state behavior at the international level. The case of Jamaica illustrated the ways dependent states are vulnerable to external pressures that can undermine their self-determination. In this section, I explore why leaders, elites, and citizens of states would object to their self-determination undermined in this way. Focusing on post-colonial states, I then outline political projects that dependent states have pursued in order to realize self-determination.

4.1. Theorizing self-determination as a political goal

Even where they agree with the content of rules or gain materially from them, state actors may nevertheless object in principle to the unwanted imposition of authority or the loss of the ability to participate in their own governance. The nature of this objection is outlined by Patchen Markell, who uses the term usurpation to describe an authority relationship that “deprive[s]” an agent of “involvement in affairs that affect her.”¹²² Markell argues that this absence of involvement or participation in the design and implementation of authority to which an actor is subject is a distinct form of arbitrary domination. From the perspective of the dominated, they are subjected to another’s unaccountable whims.¹²³ Similarly, Stilz, in articulating the wrongs of colonialism, notes its denial of the ability of a population to participate in their own government via collective affirmation.¹²⁴

The issue these scholars draw attention to is whether the actor that is subject to international rules is able to exercise accountability over these rules or to participate in their creation and exercise. This is distinct from concerns over whether the authority is exercised benevolently, whether it is entirely capricious and unconstrained, or whether the way it is exercised happens to align with what the people within a state want.¹²⁵ The problem of accountability cannot be solved by powerful states constraining themselves through their own domestic institutions or through commitments to multilateralism or international norms like anti-colonialism, nor can it be solved by powerful states being constrained by other powerful states.¹²⁶ It is the unaccountability of power to the actors over which power is being exercised

¹²² Markell 2008

¹²³ *Ibid* 2008: 12

¹²⁴ Stilz 2015

¹²⁵ Markell 2008. See also Barnett’s (2016) discussion on paternalism in international politics.

¹²⁶ Ikenberry 1998; Lake 2009.

and the lack of ability to participate in the creation and implementation of rules that leads states to object to the imposition of authority, even when they agree with the content of the policies that are being imposed.

Why would this be something that state actors care about? At both the elite and popular level and in both democratic and authoritarian states, self-determination is something that political actors should be expected to value. Leaders and elites care about their ability to drive decision-making—to set particular goals and to orient the state towards these goals.¹²⁷ At the popular level, people in a democratic society would prefer decision-making to come through domestic political channels, because those are the channels through which they exercise control and ownership, participate in their government, and impose audience costs on leaders.¹²⁸

Even in authoritarian societies, citizens can still influence decision-making through acts of protest or rebellion,¹²⁹ and leaders often make an effort to placate the domestic population, even when they do so in ways that favor certain political or ethnic groups within the state.¹³⁰ Beyond this, in authoritarian states, the nation still may represent a shared “imagined community” for citizens, as in democratic societies.¹³¹ People may prefer democracy to authoritarianism but still prefer domestic rule over foreign, colonial, or imperial rule. This is evidenced by the fact that authoritarian leaders have been able to successfully shore up domestic support and consolidate their own power by leveraging complaints about unfair treatment, imperialism, and external impositions or meddling.¹³²

¹²⁷ This follows from empirical work in psychology on Self-Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci 2006).

¹²⁸ Fearon 1994

¹²⁹ Dai and Spires 2018; Lorentzen 2013

¹³⁰ Acemoglu and Robinson 2001; Arriola 2012

¹³¹ Anderson 1983

¹³² Bush and Prather 2020; Simon 2020; Terman 2019

Overall, this suggests that leaders, elites, and citizens should be expected to hold preferences over the process through which cooperation occurs, decisions are made, or actions are taken that are independent from their preferences over the outcome of these actions. This includes having preferences over how an action is carried out, by whom it is carried out, and the amount and quality of input they have in the process. Both leaders and citizens may prefer the version of a policy that they proposed *because* they proposed it, or they may resent the feeling that policies are imposed on them from the outside even while agreeing with the underlying content.

In some cases, what leaders want and what the population of a state wants may conflict, or there may simply be no connection to what the people want and what rulers do. This situation is particularly acute in authoritarian states, where the ability of the people of a state to participate in their own government is greatly limited. Ending grossly repressive rule could require external involvement, while interference by external actors that defies the wishes of a state's government may be consistent with domestic self-determination.¹³³ Yet, situations in which individuals within a state would overwhelmingly prefer to have domestic problems dealt with by having their state's sovereign authority usurped by an external actor are likely to be limited to relatively extreme cases of violent or oppressive governments.¹³⁴ Wendy Brown suggests that such interventions may serve to simply "trade one form of subjection for another," removing one unaccountable ruler, a domestic dictator, only to replace them with another, in the form of an unaccountable foreign government.¹³⁵

¹³³ McMahon 1996

¹³⁴ Getachew 2018; Rafanelli 2021

¹³⁵ Brown 2004: 455

Nevertheless, in focusing on the international aspects of self-determination, outsized focus does tend to fall on the leaders of states, as these are the actors that are authorized to make decisions to delegate or cooperate. These leaders form the point of intersection between domestic and international self-determination. At the international level, leaders translate domestic interests into delegation or cooperation that furthers or reflects these interests, and they participate on an ongoing basis in the design, elaboration, or implementation of international rules. As both a normative and theoretical matter, both domestic self-determination *and* self-determination over international rules and authority are necessary for democratic rule to be fully realized.¹³⁶

4.2. Self-determination as a political goal of post-colonial states

Though many forms of direct contestation are limited by the possibility of retaliation, dependent states do not simply accept that their domestic and foreign policies will be imposed by outside actors. In this section, I discuss a range of political projects that have been pursued and supported by post-colonial states,¹³⁷ re-casting them as, in part, efforts to realize self-determination over international rules and authority.¹³⁸

An important way that dependent states have responded to an international environment that undermines their self-determination is through cooperation with other dependent states. As Adom Getachew shows, these states have attempted to use international institutions to establish

¹³⁶ Getachew 2018

¹³⁷ I include Latin American states as post-colonial states because the forms of colonial control they were subject to were very similar to colonial control experienced by states that became independent beginning in the 1940s and because their economies developed with and continue to be marked by similar forms of dependence as states that became dependent later.

¹³⁸ This discussion bears similarities to Getachew (2019). However, where Getachew was focused on using international institutions to create conditions of international nondomination, I emphasize the ways that states attempt to ensure that international rules and authority are collectively chosen and affirmed by states subject to them.

“international nondomination,” or positive international conditions for peoples to freely and meaningfully exercise their states’ sovereign independence.¹³⁹ By engaging in collective action, they can limit the imposition of external authority, increase their ability to influence policies and decision-making at the international level, and diffuse the costs of contestation and vulnerability to discipline.

Contesting self-determination and intervention

As Getachew has explored in detail, one of the first and most explicit efforts of realizing self-determination over international rules and authority occurred in the years immediately following their independence.¹⁴⁰ Within the United Nations, post-colonial states attempted to contest and expand the meaning of self-determination to include self-determination of sovereign states. In fact, the 1960 U.N. General Assembly Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, one of the foundational documents of the anti-colonial movement, established the importance of state sovereignty to the realization self-determination, asserting that “all peoples have an inalienable right to complete freedom, the *exercise of their sovereignty* and the integrity of their national territory.”¹⁴¹

As decolonization progressed, newly independent states were quick to recognize that their formal independence left them subject to international pressures and a hierarchical international environment that greatly limited their ability to meaningfully exercise their sovereign authority.¹⁴² In response, these states attempted to expand the definition of international intervention to capture and prohibit a wider range of forms of interference and

¹³⁹ Getachew 2019: 22-24

¹⁴⁰ Getachew 2019

¹⁴¹ U.N. General Assembly 1960. Emphasis mine.

¹⁴² Getachew 2019; Nkrumah 1965; Prashad 2007.

coercion as violations of a people's right to self-determination.¹⁴³ As the representative of one state observed during this time:

“The traditional idea that only the threat or use of armed force constituted intervention was too restrictive for the present age...The basic criterion for determining whether there was intervention...was whether there was any open or disguised coercion to make a State do something contrary to its desires and interests or to prevent it from doing something which it could legitimately do otherwise.”¹⁴⁴

A group of Latin American and non-aligned states introduced a draft declaration in the U.N. General Assembly which was adopted in 1965 as the Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States. This declaration asserted that strict respect for state sovereignty was an important component of exercising the right of peoples to self-determination, while interference and intervention were violations of this right. Additionally, the declaration put forward an expanded definition of non-interference, defining it broadly as anything that would limit the ability of states to “freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.” This included “the use of economic, political or any other type of measures to coerce another State in order to obtain from it the subordination of the exercise of its sovereign rights.”¹⁴⁵

In the 1970s, these efforts to expand the right to self-determination formed a central part of the campaign for the New International Economic Order (NIEO). The 1974 Charter on Economic Rights and Duties of States, one of the NIEO's foundational documents, included similar references to a state's “sovereign and inalienable right to choose its economic system as well as its political, social and cultural systems in accordance with the will of its people, without outside interference, coercion or threat in any form whatsoever.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Getachew 2019

¹⁴⁴ U.N. General Assembly 1966

¹⁴⁵ U.N. General Assembly 1965

¹⁴⁶ U.N. General Assembly 1974: Article 1. See also Getachew (2019: 142-175).

Importantly, this was not simply a case of authoritarian states attempting to consolidate their domestic power and create permissive conditions to engage in repressive behaviors, though that certainly did motivate some states. The 1965 declaration was adopted prior to the widespread use of international pressure by powerful states to push for human rights and democratic governance. At the time, these pressures were primarily used to further Cold War policies and to prevent states from expropriating foreign holdings.¹⁴⁷ Additionally, throughout this time, democratic states throughout the Third World supported these ideas.¹⁴⁸ For example, the Commonwealth Caribbean, a region which has been among the most consistently democratic in the Global South, was a leading advocate for these projects. In 1982, the heads of state of the regional organization the Caribbean Community issued a declaration condemning an international system that was “increasingly characterized by...subtle or indirect measures of coercion,” with “small States ... increasingly subject to unbearable pressures.”¹⁴⁹

Collective action to realize self-determination

Post-colonial states also engaged in collective action to increase their self-determination through jointly limiting their vulnerability to the imposition of authority and increasing their ability to participate in the design and implementation of rules to which they are subject. Regionalism was an important form that cooperation to realize self-determination has taken.¹⁵⁰ In 1967, a representative of Trinidad and Tobago to the U.N. General Assembly outlined the logic of how regional action allows states to realize self-determination. The representative noted that “national self-determination can often be most effectively pursued within the framework of regional

¹⁴⁷ Prashad 2007

¹⁴⁸ Beall 2021b

¹⁴⁹ Caribbean Community 1982

¹⁵⁰ Acharya 1992, 2004; Hettne *et al* 1999; Hettne 2005.

groupings” because “it is through such associations that small nations are afforded the best opportunity to contribute to the solution of the world’s problems on their own.”¹⁵¹

By increasing their relative bargaining position, decreasing their individual dependence, and creating expectations that regions ought to be deferred to or consulted in affairs that affect them, these kinds of actions can reduce the extent of their dependence, decrease the likelihood or extent of imposition from other powerful actors, and increase their ability to influence the design and participation of international rules that affect them. States with dependent economies attempted to use regional organizations to establish markets that were competitive with more developed markets through regional industrial development or the creation of economies of scale. The norm of regional solutions to regional problems or advocacy for regional autonomy has also been an important way for dependent states to limit outside interference and encourage regional involvement in international decision-making.¹⁵²

States have also cooperated to constrain or alter the behaviors of more powerful states, reforming international institutions, norms, and law to limit the degree to which inter-state relations are dictated by power and delegitimizing actions by powerful states that undermine their self-determination.¹⁵³ Contestation over the meaning of self-determination within the U.N., detailed above, was an important example of this. Latin American states’ strategic development of international law to limit the acceptable uses of intervention in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is another example.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, Line Engbo Gissel demonstrates that initial African enthusiasm for the International Criminal Court was, in part, due to the belief that the court could mitigate the effects of power disparities and increase the degree to which

¹⁵¹ U.N. General Assembly 1967: 44

¹⁵² Acharya 2004; Beall 2021a; Duursma 2020

¹⁵³ Thompson 2006

¹⁵⁴ See Finnemore 2003 and Finnemore and Jurkovich 2014.

international politics reflected “universality, participation, independence, deference to national courts and respect for sovereignty and sovereign equality.”¹⁵⁵ Their later rejection of the court, Gissel argues, can be understood as a consequence of the court instead reproducing inequalities, with the court being used by powerful states to enforce norms in weak states.¹⁵⁶

Self-determination over international rules has been and continues to be an important goal of post-colonial states. In fact, the re-emergence in recent years of demands and rhetoric common during the Cold War reflect this goal and have formed a central part of more recent contestation over the liberal order.¹⁵⁷ While the campaign for a New International Economic Order largely came to an end during the 1980s, very similar demands re-appeared in the U.N. General Assembly in 2001. That year, a resolution was passed calling for the creation of a “democratic and equitable international order,” whose central elements include “[t]he right of all peoples to self-determination, by virtue of which they can freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development” and “promotion...of transparent, democratic, just and accountable international institutions...through the implementation of the principles of full and equal participation in their respective decision-making mechanisms.”¹⁵⁸ This has become an annual item on the General Assembly’s agenda, with voting on these resolutions has fallen across lines of Global North and Global South.¹⁵⁹ As before, democratic states are among the important supporters of self-determination at the international level.

¹⁵⁵ Gissel 2018: 729

¹⁵⁶ Gissel 2018

¹⁵⁷ Aggarwal and Weber 2012

¹⁵⁸ U.N. General Assembly 2001: 3(a), 3(g)

¹⁵⁹ For example, in voting over this resolution in 2008, all European and OECD countries voted no. By contrast, from the Global South, only the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau, and Samoa voted no, and only Vanuatu, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Peru, and Timor-Leste abstained. Voting information taken from the U.N. Digital Library’s voting records repository, available at: <https://www.un.org/en/ga/documents/voting.asp>.

5. Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that international relations scholarship should recognize the importance to states of self-determination over international rules and authority. The independent value that political actors place on self-determination has long-term implications for global governance. In particular, the prolonged and systematic undermining of self-determination can help to explain present-day discontent with the international liberal order and with individual institutions. This provides a new way to think about the problems that elicit backlash against international institutions, and the international liberal order more broadly, including by states that otherwise agree with the underlying values of institutions or liberal norms. As I argue in this essay, in many cases, it is not liberal norms themselves, but the fact that they have been imposed on states in ways that undermine their ability to participate in global governance.

Returning to the example of Jamaica, in spite of their continued participation, Jamaican leaders have continued to express largely negative views of the liberal international order and institutions like the IMF. In 2003, PNP Prime Minister Percival James Patterson, who was Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade under Manley's government in the 1970s, asserted to a meeting of the Jamaican diaspora in Brooklyn that "we must resist any global economic system which allows the rich and powerful to condemn those who are small and weak, to a perpetual state of poverty and underdevelopment." Patterson asserted that Caribbean states "demand...a just, peaceful and equitable world where we are no longer expected to be satisfied with the crumbs that fall from the Masters' tables."¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Patterson 2003

The Jamaican government, despite its robust liberal institutions, has been quite receptive to cooperating with illiberal powers. In concert with other Caribbean states, Jamaica pushed back against international action against Nicolas Maduro's regime in Venezuela following the contested re-election of Maduro and his government's widespread violations of human rights. Caribbean states, as a bloc, voted against measures targeting Maduro within the Organization of American States.¹⁶¹ Additionally, while Jamaica has supported the One-China policy since Manley became prime minister in 1972, the government has moved in recent years to deepen its ties with the Chinese government. When, in 2019, the U.S. Ambassador to Jamaica publicly expressed concern about this development, admonishing the Jamaican people to be wary of Chinese aid and loans, an editorial in Jamaica's leading newspaper, the *Jamaican Gleaner*, noted that the ambassador "should be given a message about where Jamaica's foreign policy is formulated, which oughn't be Foggy Bottom."¹⁶²

In fact, for a state like Jamaica, with democratic norms deeply institutionalized after nearly 60 years of uninterrupted democratic governance, the best explanation for their interest in cooperation with the Chinese government may not be that it will enable undemocratic practices. Instead, it may be attractive inasmuch as it reflects their beliefs about the inappropriateness of powerful actors using states' dependence to dictate their domestic and foreign policies and their resentment at the forms of control that have been exercised over them.

For scholars and policymakers concerned with global governance and the spread of and compliance with norms, this has important implications. Reliance on the use of economic carrots and sticks may increase short-term compliance with norms, but these methods may result in resentment on the part of both elites and the population. Over the long run, they may actually

¹⁶¹ Johnson 2019

¹⁶² MacDonald 2019

have negative effects on compliance, worsen trust, dampen the possibilities for cooperation between states, and erode overall commitment to international institutions. Given concern that has been expressed over the possibility of a larger turn away from the liberal international order, it is worth seriously considering why an alternative “illiberal” order appears so attractive to many states. This also contributes to evidence which suggests that the idea that the liberal order had widespread public support is a “historical fiction.”¹⁶³

Finally, these dynamics are likely to overlap and interact with historical dynamics between former colonial and imperial powers and those who were subject to these forms of domination.¹⁶⁴ While I argue that domination in the form of undermining self-determination is undesired in its own right, these dynamics can interact with and trigger associations with past relationships between weak and powerful states, increasing the sense that they are simply the same old forms of control dressed up in new clothes.

¹⁶³ Adler-Nissen and Zarakol 2020; Barma *et al* 2013

¹⁶⁴ I am grateful to Desmond Jagmohan for pointing out this distinction to me.

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