

# Democratization and Hybrid Regimes: Comparative Evidence from Southeast Europe

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## Abstract

Despite the central place of democratization studies in comparative politics, we still lack both theory and empirical evidence to understand institutional change in hybrid regimes (characterized by a collapse of one authoritarian regime and failure to transition to a consolidated democracy). We contribute to the emerging study of hybrid regimes by developing a middle-range theory for a medium-N set of previously neglected cases in Southeast Europe. We theorize institutional change as a process initiated by the elites in power but then either accelerated or hampered by structural factors. Once we decompose the effects of state capacity, opposition, and international influence in this dynamic focus on the process rather than the outcome, we are able to refine the standard assumptions of democratization paradigm. We find that a strong state, a united opposition, and Western assistance can help authoritarian-leaning governments consolidate their coercive powers.