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The Proliferation of International Parliamentary Institutions: A Neglected Phenomenon of World Society and Politics

This report is a nontechnical (mostly unfootnoted) digest of the first stage of a larger report, preliminary in nature, surveying IPIs and evaluating them as a new phenomenon in international politics and world society. IPIs introduce national elites to ranges of views and perspectives, particularly from democratic oppositions in other regimes that are not yet fully democratized. They also establish ongoing transnational relationships that restrain old power-politics patterns where the "civil society" sector and nongovernmental organizations are underdeveloped, politically constrained, and resource-poor. In such a manner they prepare a middle ground for interstate cooperation and are developing in practice into an important societal oversight mechanism on traditional executive-based diplomacy.

The paper presents a conceptual and cursory empirical examination of the newly proliferating international parliamentary institutions (IPIs), a neglected and underestimated phenomenon in international politics and world society. There are nearly two dozen IPIs in the world today. This paper establishes a typology of IPIs and analyzes their growth over time. Modern IPIs, as formally defined, may well be only the most recent and recognizable institutionalization of a more general and ancient phenomenon.