

# The Democratic Foundations of Policy Diffusion: How Health, Family, and Employment Laws Spread Across Countries

Katerina Linos



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Why do law reforms spread around the world in waves? Leading theories argue that international networks of technocratic elites develop orthodox solutions that they singlehandedly transplant across countries. But, in modern democracies, elites alone cannot press for legislative reforms without winning the support of politicians, voters, and interest groups. As Katerina Linos shows in *The Democratic Foundations of Policy Diffusion*, international models can help politicians generate domestic enthusiasm for far-reaching proposals. By pointing to models from abroad, policitians can persuade voters that their ideas are not radical, ill-thought out experiments, but mainstream, tried-and-true solutions. The more familiar voters are with a certain country or an international organization, the more willing they are to support policies adopted in that country or recommended by that organization. Aware of voters' tendency, politicians strategically choose these policies to maximize electoral gains. Through the ingenious use of experimental and cross-national evidence, Linos documents voters' response to international models and demonstrates that governments follow international organization templates and imitate the policy choices of countries heavily covered in national media and familiar to voters. Empirically rich and theoretically sophisticated, *The Democratic Foundations of Policy Diffusion* provides the fullest account to date of this increasingly pervasive phenomenon.

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