Assessing the Complex Evolution of Norms: The Rise of International Election Monitoring

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Abstract Given that states have long considered elections a purely domestic matter, the dramatic growth of international election monitoring in the 1990s was remarkable. Why did states allow international organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to interfere and why did international election monitoring spread so quickly? Why did election monitoring become institutionalized in so many organizations? Perhaps most puzzling, why do countries invite monitors and nevertheless cheat? This article develops a rigorous method for investigating the causal mechanisms underlying the rise of election monitoring, and "norm cascades" more generally. The evolution and spread of norms, as with many other social processes, are complex combinations of normative, instrumental, and other constraints and causes of action. The rise of election monitoring has been driven by an interaction of instrumentalism, emergent norms, and fundamental power shifts in the international system. By dissecting this larger theoretical complexity into specific subclaims that can be empirically investigated, this article examines the role of each of these causal factors, their mutual tensions, and their interactive contributions to the evolution of election monitoring.

International election monitoring has existed in various forms for decades,[1] but its dramatic growth in the 1990s was particularly remarkable.[2] Whereas few elec-

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1. The first instance was in 1857 when a European Commission established by the Treaty of Paris observed elections in Moldovia and Wallachia. United Nations (UN) supervision of elections in "Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories" (UN 1991b) was an important precursor to modern election monitoring. The Organization of American States (OAS) also started observing elections on a small scale in sovereign states in 1962, and starting in 1964, the Commonwealth Secretariat (CS) undertook several missions in territories controlled by Britain. The United States has also long been highly active in

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tions were monitored before the late 1980s, more than half of elections during the following decade were monitored by major agencies such as the Organization for American States, the European Union (EU), and the Carter Center. International election monitors, also called observers,[3] have increased both in quantity and in the scope of their assignments. Early missions typically consisted of a short visit by a few people, while today there are pre-election assessments visits, long-term missions, and on election day, individual observers often numbering in the hundreds. Furthermore, many international organizations have built strong capacities for monitoring.

Figure 1 shows the number and percentage of legislative or presidential elections monitored between 1975 and 2004 in nonestablished democracies. Monitoring increases from an average below 10 percent of elections from 1975 to 1987, to a high of 81.5 percent of elections in 2004. The most drastic increase occurs between 1988 and 1990.

This rapid rise of election monitoring was unanticipated in the 1980s. Whereas Huntington foreshadowed it,[4] Franck argued that at best election monitoring might spread "through gradual, incremental steps," before possibly one day becoming a "universal habit."[5] This, he cautioned, would happen only if established democracies showed the way by inviting monitors to their elections. Without this, he stressed: "Few states are likely to volunteer as long as participation in international monitoring is tantamount to a government's admission that it does not have credibility with its own people."[6] However, to this day, established democracies are quite unlikely to invite monitors. According to Franck's theory, therefore, one should not have seen the rapid spread of election monitoring. Nonetheless, it has occurred.

So why did international election monitoring spread so quickly? Why did the surge in election monitoring not accompany the wave of democratization in the mid-1970s? Why did states that traditionally viewed elections as falling purely within domestic jurisdiction allow international organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to interfere? After all, elections are arguably the most sensitive domestic area of all. Furthermore, why did the United Nations (UN) and many regional organizations institutionalize election monitoring? Perhaps most puzzling, why do countries invite monitors but nevertheless cheat?

Central America, the Caribbean, and Europe (Wright 1964) and—spearheaded by the Carter Center—myriad U.S.-funded NGOs began observing elections in the 1980s; see Garber 1984. For historical overviews, see Beigbeder 1994; Jason 1991–92; and Hyde 2006a, chap. 2; and Wright 1964.

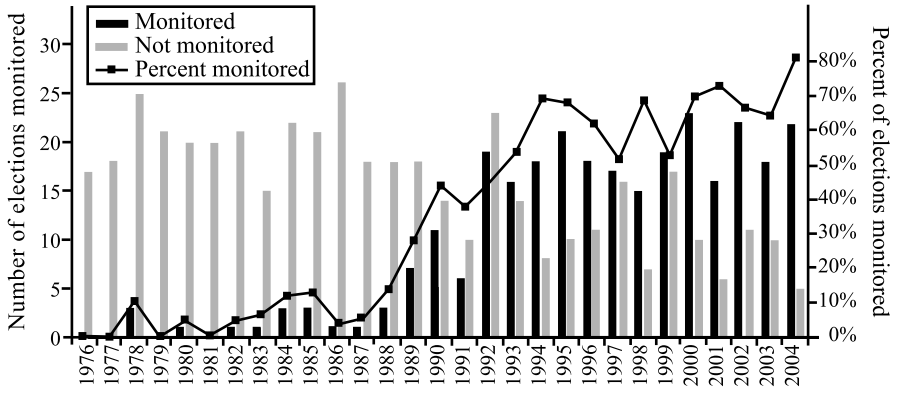
2. Carothers 1997.

3. Some authors refer to observers as short-term missions and monitors as long-term missions. In practice, organizations have different definitions for these terms. I use the terms interchangeably.

4. Huntington 1991, 8.

5. Franck 1992, 85, 87.

6. Ibid., 87.



Note: Nonestablished democracies are defined as countries with a Polity II score equal to or less than seven in the year before the election.

Sources: Data taken from the following eighteen organizations: the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Council of Europe, European Union, the Carter Center, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Organization of American States, National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, IFES (Formerly the International Foundation for Election System), the Norwegian Helsinki Center, the European Parliament, the International Human Rights Law Group, the Asian Network for Free Elections, the Elections Institute of South Africa, the South African Development Community, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, and the United Nations.

FIGURE 1. *Number and percentage of monitoring missions in nonestablished democracies*

These questions go to the heart of efforts to explain the spread of norms and behaviors among governments.[7] Political scientists traditionally define norms as "collective expectations for the proper behavior of actors with a given identity"[8]; whereas sociologists refer to norms as institutions and define them as "a relatively stable collection of practices and rules defining appropriate behavior for specific groups of actors in specific situations."[9] Regardless of whether inviting monitors signals the intent to hold free and fair elections, inviting monitors has become a norm for governments not yet under established democracy. International monitoring is part of the collection of rules and practices that define proper election behavior for such governments. Importantly, however, the norm is not that all governments should invite monitors; the larger goal is for states to attain democratic maturity and therefore graduate out of the practice. This expected dropout makes the persistent overall rise in monitoring even more surprising.

7. See Nadelmann 1990; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Checkel 2001; Cortell and Davis 1996; Johnston 2001; and Simmons and Elkins 2004.
8. Katzenstein 1996, 5.
9. March and Olsen 1998, 948.

There are several possible explanations for this phenomenon. Perhaps the rise of election monitoring was purely a mechanical function related to increasing democratic transitions. However, this does not explain why the current form of election monitoring should have been a response to democratization. Furthermore, the pace of democratic transitions between the mid-1970s and 1980s compares favorably with that of the 1990s.[10] Thus, if election monitoring was driven purely by a surge in transitions, then one may have expected election monitoring to spread during the late 1970s and cascade during the 1980s.

Alternatively, a diffusion model may shed some light on the pattern of the spread of monitoring.[11] Even so, one would still need to understand the diffusion logic. It is clear that regional patterns exist, but why is this so? To complicate matters, the early pattern of election monitoring is quite geographically dispersed with cases on most continents.

Some scholars have focused on election monitoring in the Americas, suggesting that it emanated from there. Santa-Cruz argues that the constitutional structure of the Americas alone can account for the emergence of international monitoring.[12] However, NGOs operated outside the Americas without major difficulty. Cases include the elections in Guyana in 1980,[13] Malaysia in 1982, Zimbabwe in 1985, the Philippines in 1986, South Korea in 1987, and Soviet Parliamentary elections in 1989. Furthermore, in the debate about expanding UN monitoring facilities, Latin American countries were not advocates, as Santa-Cruz asserts,[14] but critics, fearing that election monitoring could lead to Panama-style unilateral military interventions and a new colonialism.[15] Thus, something other than diffusion from Latin America led to the global rise of election monitoring.

Another possibility is that the rise of monitoring resulted purely from a change in the global normative environment about elections and human rights. However, the consolidation of these norms themselves cannot be properly understood without reference to how the Cold War changed the international system. Furthermore, norms alone cannot explain why governments invited monitors, because by the early 1990s electoral rights, although increasingly adopted into international law, were in practice still quite weak.[16] Indeed, the fact that many governments invited monitors and still cheated suggests that they were not driven entirely by norms about elections and human rights. More generally, norms do not automatically change behaviors. These same norms, for example, did not facilitate monitoring of human rights practices. Even though Article 40 of the Covenant on Civil, Political, and Social Rights obligates states to report on their domestic human rights,

10. Huntington 1991.
11. Simmons and Elkins 2004.
12. Santa-Cruz 2005a, 686; and 2005b.
13. Carter Center 1992, 16.
14. Santa-Cruz 2005a, 665.
15. See Franck 1992, 84; and Beigbeder 1994, 104.
16. Franck 1992, 81–82.

countries routinely fail to do so. Similarly, by 2004 only fifty countries had issued standing invitations to the UN Commission on Human Rights Thematic Special Procedures. Naturally, these monitoring measures are low profile, but that is the point: Why is election monitoring flourishing when other monitoring mechanisms are not?

The end of the Cold War alone also cannot explain the attention to elections, the framing of election monitoring as a human rights issue, or the specific choice of election monitoring as a favored tool of democracy promoters. Furthermore, neither the end of the Cold War nor the instrumental calculations of some governments made the rapid spread of election monitoring inevitable. Why did election monitoring reach a threshold at which it became rational even for cheating governments to invite monitors? Instrumental logic itself does not explain the precipitating context that so rapidly increased the overall willingness of governments to invite monitors.

Argument

With the exception of Santa-Cruz's detailed study,[17] the rise of election monitoring has received little systematic attention.[18] Furthermore, Santa-Cruz's argument focuses mostly on explaining the emergence of monitoring. To understand the global spread of election monitoring, however, it is not enough to explain its emergence; one must also explain the timing of the rise of monitoring and its rapid spread. I therefore adopt the model developed by Finnemore and Sikkink, who argue that norms evolve though a "life cycle" that begins with norm "emergence," reaches a "tipping point" that causes a "norm cascade," and ends with "internalization." Finnemore and Sikkink argue that each of these evolutionary stages is characterized by different actors, motives, and mechanisms of influence.[19] This model is therefore particularly well-suited to the case of election monitoring because the explanations for the emergence, timing, and pace of the spread of monitoring clearly differ.

As I show in the following sections, election monitoring initially emerged due to an evolving set of norms related to democracy, elections, and human rights. These norms interacted with post–Cold War changes in the international environment to create both a demand for and a supply of monitoring. This is why timing of the "tipping point" occurred around the end of the Cold War. As more and more transitioning countries sought legitimacy through monitoring, the cost of refusing

17. See Santa-Cruz 2005a and 2005b.

18. Bjornlund 2004 discusses factors such as opposition demands for monitoring and government desire for legitimacy; McCoy 1995 highlights changing concepts of security, the growth of global communication, technology, and international institutions; and Hyde 2006a and 2006b offers a rational model.

19. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 895.

monitors rose so that even many cheating governments found it rational to invite monitors. This led to the rapid spread, or cascade, of monitoring. Thus, although international election monitoring may not have become internalized, it has become the norm for nonestablished democracies and transition states.

The causal explanation is more complex, however. My aim is therefore to develop and present a rigorous method for investigating and demonstrating the causal mechanisms underlying the rise of election monitoring, and "norm cascades" more generally. The evolution and spread of norms, as with many other social processes, result from complex combinations of normative, instrumental, and other constraints and causes of action. As noted, the rise of election monitoring has been driven by an interaction of instrumentalism, emergent norms, and fundamental shifts in the international system. By dissecting this larger theoretical complexity into specific subclaims that can be empirically investigated, I examine the specific role of each of these causal factors, their mutual tensions, and their interactive contribution to the evolution of election monitoring. The following sections articulate the argument in greater detail.

Emergence

Scholars argue that new norms can enable actors and create interests or categories of actions that otherwise would be impossible.[20] The human rights and democratic entitlement norms that grew steadily in the post–World War II period were central in defining new interests and shaping the concept of election monitoring. Three principles were particularly important, namely the principle of self-determination, the principle of free expression, and the principle of genuine and periodic elections.[21] In line with arguments that norm entrepreneurs often connect new norms to existing norms,[22] proponents framed election monitoring in the context of human rights and democratic rights and essentially "grafted" election monitoring onto the new principle of periodic and genuine elections.

Multiple actors, such as NGOs, courts, international and regional organizations, and state leaders and representatives heavily supplemented any domestic pressures for monitoring. International NGOs began to offer election monitoring and state leaders pressured incumbents to invite monitors. Along with institutional actors such as the UN Secretary General, state leaders also encouraged capacity building within the international and regional organizations. The high profile involvement of former U.S. president Jimmy Carter significantly increased attention to the issue. The normative enabling environment for election monitoring was thus laid by many different norm entrepreneurs.[23]

20. See ibid., 891; and Flynn and Farrell 1999.
21. Franck 1992.
22. See Klotz 1995; and Prize 1997.
23. See Nadelmann 1990; and Finnemore and Sikkink 1998.

Proponents of election monitoring had a difficult fight, however. As Flynn and Farrell argue, new behaviors that violate existing collectively legitimated norms are likely to produce counteraction that will make the new behaviors costly or ineffective.[24] International election monitoring clearly violated the existing norms of sovereignty and noninterference in internal affairs. Creating institutions that encouraged external actors to monitor elections therefore faced opposition from many states that valued those norms highly. However, the emergence of humanitarian interventions strengthened the link between democracy and human rights as entitlements[25] and also whittled away at sovereignty objections to intrusions in domestic affairs.[26] The growth of election monitoring in turn ignited new debates that then further bolstered the norms of external action in domestic affairs. As Finnemore has argued, the process of "contestation" or debate of the prevailing norms thus helped foster new norms.[27]

Timing

Figure 1 shows a notable change in the use of election monitoring between 1989 and 1992. Some might call this a tipping point. The original concept of a tipping point is a level of activity that triggers explosively convergent expectations and behaviors.[28] In the evolution of norms, tipping is rarely so drastic. Nevertheless, there are noticeable behavioral threshold effects. Finnemore and Sikkink report that tipping points seem to occur when a third of the relevant actors have adopted the norms.[29] As Figure 1 shows, in 1990, election monitoring passes this critical point for the subgroup of nonestablished democracies with a jump from 28 percent in 1989 to 44 percent in 1990.[30]

There was also significant institutionalization around this time as international organizations created new capacity for monitoring election norms and embedded the concept in organizational agreements. In 1989, at the first meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), member states began to discuss elections and monitors.[31] In October 1989, the Commonwealth Secretariat (CS) recommended that it formally engage in election monitoring of member states,[32] and in November 1989, the Organization of American States (OAS) General Assembly officially recom-

24. Flynn and Farrell 1999, 511.
25. Franck 1992.
26. Powers and Goertz 2006.
27. Finnemore 1996, 160.
28. See Grodzin 1958; and Schelling 1960.
29. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 901.
30. If one looks at the trends for all countries, not just nonestablished democracies, there is a similar increase around the early 1990s with 34 percent of all countries holding elections inviting monitors by 1993.
31. CSCE 1989.
32. CS 1990.

mended sending observation missions to member states that requested them.[33] In June 1990 the CSCE member states issued a standing invitation to election monitors, effectively obligating themselves to accept monitors in the future,[34] and the OAS called for the creation of the Unit for Promotion of Democracy.[35] The CSCE likewise established an Office of Free Elections in November 1990.[36] The early 1990s thus saw rapid institutionalization of election monitoring norms and activities.

Although the normative environment and the ensuing debate had spurred the emergence of election monitoring, the timing of the rise of election monitoring remains puzzling. Normative consolidation occurred only toward the end of the 1990s and remains incomplete. The tension between external democracy promotion and sovereignty concerns had also not been resolved by the time election monitoring reached this tipping point, so why did it occur then? Furthermore, the pace of democratic transitions had accelerated in the mid-1970s, so why was the tipping point not reached earlier?

Election monitoring reached a tipping point around 1989–91 because the normative environment interacted with important shifts in the international system of power. First, systemic changes accompanying the end of the Cold War bolstered the emerging norms. Just as ideas associated with the losing side of war or with economic failure often get discredited[37] and just as winning coalitions get to construct a new order after political upheavals,[38] the end of the Cold War allowed the victors to shape prevailing norms. The emerging norms were further bolstered by the collapse of the Soviet Union (USSR), because this revealed the failure of autocratic governments and communist doctrine in particular. Furthermore, because the Cold War partly began with Stalin's prohibition of free elections in Eastern Europe, its end naturally led to a focus on elections there and boosted the emerging democracy and election norms.[39]

Causality also ran in the other direction, however: the emerging norms may have expedited the end of the Cold War. Thomas argues that the human rights ideas disseminated by transnational activists and dissidents persuaded key actors to reject Soviet repression and that the international normative environment "had made it almost impossible for the Soviet Union to improve its relations with the West without first improving its human rights record."[40] If Thomas is right, which I cannot establish herein, then the timing may also partly capture a two-way relationship between the evolving norms and end of Cold War.

33. OAS 1990.
34. CSCE 1990a.
35. OAS 1990.
36. CSCE 1990b.
37. See Hall 1989; and Odell 1982.
38. Barkin and Cronin 1994, 114.
39. See Franck 1992, 46–47; and Powers and Goertz 2006.
40. Thomas 2001, 127.

The timing of the rise of monitoring was connected with the international power shift in another important way. Whereas the Cold War had forced Western countries to place a higher priority on their allies' stability than on their democratic credentials,[41] the war's end freed Western countries to push for democratic changes.[42] Indeed, democracy increasingly came to be seen as strengthening rather than undermining security interests.[43] Western countries thus became increasingly willing to push for elections and spearheaded democracy promotion efforts in countries such as Namibia, Cambodia, Angola, and El Salvador. This new democracy push in turn fostered important institutional changes in global and regional organizations, increasing the supply of monitors from intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations.

Finally, because norms are more likely to spread during periods of domestic turmoil and transition, "we should expect states to endorse international norms during periods of domestic turmoil in which the legitimacy of elites is threatened."[44] Thus, the timing of the rise of election monitoring may partly derive from the domestic turmoil generated by the instability brought on by the end of the Cold War. The end of the Cold War may thus have presented both a normative and practical "policy window,"[45] or opportunity, as it bolstered the emerging norms, spurred the development of capacity, and supplied a new set of actors to promote these norms.

However, although institutionalization of an emergent norm promotes its spread,[46] it does not guarantee it. Nor can the fact that Western countries wanted to promote democracy explain why so many incumbents cooperated instead of simply refusing monitors who might criticize them.

Cascade

A norms cascade is defined as the wider and faster spread of the norm after the tipping point.[47] The above section discussed conditions that affected the timing of the tipping point, but did not explain why election monitoring then spread so rapidly. As Figure 1 shows, after monitoring began to rise around 1990, in just eight more years it had risen to nearly 70 percent of all nonestablished democracies. By 2004, it reached a high of 81.5 percent. Why did more and more governments agree to invite monitors who could interfere and criticize them? Why in particular did governments who fully intended to cheat permit such scrutiny? In this section, I discuss the concept of legitimacy and how incumbent governments began to seek

41. Rich 2001, 22–23.
42. See Flynn and Farrell 1999, 512; and Youngs 2001, 2.
43. See UN 1992, 34; and Ottaway and Carothers 2000.
44. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 906.
45. Kingdon 1984.
46. See Keohane and Goldstein 1993; and Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 900.
47. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 902.

legitimacy for both instrumental and normative reasons. I then discuss how this search for legitimacy altered the incentive structures of incumbent governments and accelerated the rise of election monitoring.

Theory on norm cascades stresses that the search for legitimacy is a driving factor in the spread of norms.[48] This was clearly the case in the spread of election monitoring. As the Cold War ended, Western states increasingly made clean elections a prerequisite for bestowing legitimacy on governments, and international organizations pressured governments to hold elections and invite international monitors. These pressures for legitimacy were amplified by changes to the balance of power in the international system. The end of the Cold War altered the payoff structure facing governments, because it partially ended a patronage system where the superpowers doled out support conditional only on alliance stability. When this system collapsed, many governments needed new allies and new sources of funding. Thus the need for legitimacy also had origins in the systemic shift in the global system; because governments no longer could survive just by "picking sides," legitimacy became a more salient criterion for external political and financial support. Combined with domestic demands for democracy, these international pressures made it harder for governments to sustain repressive regimes and more urgent for them to gain some level of legitimacy.[49]

Incumbents' motivations for inviting monitors were thus both normative and instrumental. Some incumbents may personally have adopted the new election norms and some politicians were truly eager to transform their countries into democracies. If so, then their search for legitimacy was in line with belief-based definitions such as that of Hurd who defines legitimacy as "the normative belief by an actor that a rule or institution ought to be obeyed."[50] Other governments, however, simply invited monitors to reap the rewards of appearing legitimate.[51] This is in line with more behavior-based definitions of legitimacy such as that of Franck, who notes that that "legitimacy depends on meeting a normative expectation of the community of states."[52] Seeking legitimacy by inviting monitors thus may be an instrumental "optimizing mechanism."[53] Even so, norms remain central because the governments' behaviors result from a set of moral expectations of a community. As expected during norms cascades, the motivation for the search for legitimacy thus likely varied among incumbent governments.[54]

This dual motivation for seeking legitimacy was important, however, because the actions of governments with different motivations influenced each other and contributed to the spread of monitoring. Because some governments were hon-

48. Ibid., 895.
49. Dahl and Lindblom 1992, 115.
50. Hurd 1999, 381.
51. See Weber 1978, 953; and Hyde 2006a and 2006b.
52. Franck 1992, 46.
53. Herrmann and Shannon 2001, 264.
54. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 895.

estly seeking to transition to democracy, they willingly succumbed to international scrutiny. Indeed, because refusing monitors forfeited possible benefits of international endorsement including an increased domestic confidence in the democratic process, such honest governments always had an incentive to invite monitors. The international community could therefore infer that incumbents who refused monitors must have intended to cheat.

The wave of invitations extended by honest governments thus made monitoring sufficiently prevalent to impose reputational costs on governments that refused to invite monitors. That is, contrary to Franck's assertion that governments would not invite monitors because it was tantamount to an admission of lack of domestic credibility,[55] the rising acceptance of monitoring by many honest governments reversed this logic. Stigma now became associated with governments that refused to invite monitors. A cheating incumbent now had to consider that although rejecting monitors could allow a staged win, it would also assure international criticism. Facing this fate, inviting monitors might be worth the risks. The cheating might not be detected and the incumbent could then reap some reward for conducting a seemingly honest election. Even if cheating was detected, perhaps international criticism would not be much worse than if the incumbent had outright refused monitors. Indeed, given the imperfections, biases, and geopolitical constraints on monitors,[56] perhaps criticism would be muted or less harsh than if the government had refused monitors outright. If not, then governments could always try to spin criticism to minimize damages.[57]

For a cheating incumbent, the decision to invite monitors thus came to depend on whether the expected benefit of a possible endorsement by the monitors would warrant the risk of documented and overt criticism. As the expected benefit naturally varies with the possible rewards while the risk of criticism varies with the probability of detection, cheating governments therefore became quite willing to invite monitors in the early 1990s when there was a rise in democratic conditionality and when election monitors were few and inexperienced. If this is correct, then in the early 1990s one should thus expect to see a wave of invitations from honest governments, followed by more cheating and authoritarian governments inviting monitors. However, if the probability of detection increases as monitors improve with experience, there may again be some decrease in the willingness among cheating governments to invite monitors. Finally, strong pariah governments for whom condemnation is near certain have nothing to gain by inviting monitors. Similarly, governments whose geopolitical importance makes them immune to international criticism have nothing to lose by refusing monitors. These governments will therefore refuse monitors.

55. Franck 1992, 87.
56. See Carothers 1997; and Zak 1987.
57. Kelley 2006.

Internalization

Election monitoring has certainly become widespread. Only a few countries, such as Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Cuba, Syria, and Uzbekistan, still outright reject observers. As noted, the ideal is to make monitoring obsolete because properly conducted elections have become sufficiently institutionalized. Internalization of monitoring is, therefore, a suboptimal stage that, if present, may at best be defined as the commonly held belief that nonestablished democracies should invite monitors. Defined as such, it is possible, based on the prevalence of monitoring, to say that significant internalization has occurred. This is rather superficial, however, and it is questionable whether governmental elites have truly internalized the fundamental democratic norms that underlie the practice of election monitoring.

This deeper level of internationalization is difficult to assess, because the concept and mechanisms of internalization are unclear in the literature. For example, Finnemore and Sikkink argue that internalization may occur through "iterated behavior and habit" or legal institutionalization, yet these are also measures of internalization.[58] However, they also note that with norm internalization, norms acquire a taken-for-granted quality and are no longer a matter of broad public debate. One sign of internalization therefore could be a decrease in a broad public debate. Furthermore, if governments have internalized the basic election norms underlying election monitoring, then they should not invite monitors and still cheat.

Methods and Observable Implications

To systematically examine the many subparts of the extensive argument about the emergence, timing, cascade, and internalization of international election monitoring, in the remaining sections I carefully derive a set of observable implications for each of these stages and then examine empirically the presence of these observable implications. The observable implications are drawn directly from the main arguments. To pay careful attention to the rules of evidence and falsification, for each of the observable implications I assess their certainty and distinctiveness. The implications are not all certain, meaning that they are not bound to follow if the theory is correct. However, for those with a high degree of certainty, their absence would falsify at least some part of the argument.[59] Further, several of the observable implications are quite distinctive, meaning that there are no other highly plausible factors that can explain the observations. If present they therefore provide strong evidence of the causal mechanism. The following observable implications are derived from the above discussion of emergence (E), timing (T), cascade (C), and internationalization (I).

58. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998.
59. Van Evera 1997.

Observable Implications

Emergence. The first set of observable implications relate to the argument about the emergence of election monitoring and the notion of enabling norms, norm contestation, and the direct link between human rights, democracy, and election monitoring.

Observation E1 (Enabling norms): If the evolution of a prior set of norms enabled the development of election monitoring, then one should be able trace the historical evolution of these norms and identify their growing linkages to elections and sovereignty more broadly.

Because these norms could exist without really being related to monitoring, this implication is not very distinctive, but it is quite certain. Therefore, if one cannot identify links between prior norms and election monitoring this undermines the logic of enabling norms. The next two observable implications are more specific formulations of the first.

Observation E2 (Norm contestation): If extensive disagreement occurred between proponents of election monitoring and proponents of the traditional norms of sovereignty and noninterference, then such a debate should be evidenced in primary documents of organizations and states.

This implication is not very certain because debate may not have been recorded, but it is rather distinctive. Furthermore,

Observation E3 (Human rights and democracy): If electoral norms developed specifically out of the human rights and democratic entitlement norms, then proponents should reference these during the creation of new institutions for election monitoring.

This implication is only somewhat distinctive; such references could have other causes. However, the implication is quite certain. Therefore, if no such references exist, this undermines the argument that the election monitoring norms derived from the human rights norms.

Timing. The second set of observable implications relate to the timing of the rise of election monitoring and the extent to which this can be attributed to the end of the Cold War.

Observation T1 (Geopolitical references): If the end of the Cold War helped consolidate democratic norms, then proponents should relate the end of the Cold War to democracy norms and then to election monitoring.

This observable implication is not entirely certain, because this rhetoric may not be traceable. However, it is quite distinctive; there are not many other plausible reasons actors would explicitly link the end of the Cold War to elections and monitoring. Therefore such links would strongly support the importance of the structural role in the timing of the emergence of monitoring. Secondly,

Observation T2 (Western leadership): If it was important that the end of the Cold War altered the power balance and freed Western countries to push for democratic changes, then strong proponents of election monitoring—in terms of advocacy, practice, and funding—should be Western.

This observable implication is not highly distinctive. Western actors could end up promoting election monitoring for other reasons than a larger power-balance shift. However, the observable implication is quite certain. Because the new power balance favored Western actors, if the shift was important to the rise of election monitoring, Western actors should have taken the initiative. Thus, if Western actors play little role or non-Western actors lead, this considerably weakens the structural power-balance argument. Lastly,

Observation T3 (Domestic turmoil and pressures): If the timing of the rise of monitoring was partly enabled by the domestic turmoil created by the end of the Cold War in some countries, then one should observe an increase in domestic groups who seek to monitor elections and who call for international monitoring.

Although increased domestic pressure is neither certain nor something that follows distinctively from a structural or normative connection with the end of the Cold War, the timing of such demands would support the argument that these contributed to the rise of monitoring.

Cascade. The third set of observable implications relate to the cascade, or the rapid spread of election monitoring. The first observable implication concerns the change in the incentive structure facing governments.

Observation C1 (Increased conditionality and sanctions): If discontinued patronage funding patterns from the Cold War influenced monitoring, then international actors should increasingly make rewards conditional on elections and democracy.

If there is no shift toward democratic conditionality, then the argument for an instrumental motivation for legitimacy is considerably weakened. The next observable implication involves rhetoric:

Observation C2 (Legitimacy rhetoric): If the need for legitimacy drives invitations, then governments might state the need for legitimacy when inviting monitors.

This prediction is fairly weak, however. Lack of such rhetoric would not disprove that legitimacy was a driving factor, nor would its presence prove the importance of legitimacy. The next two observable implications pertain to the types of governments that should invite monitors, and when. First,

Observation C3 (Honest governments): If the practice of inviting monitors was initially boosted by a series of newly honest governments seeking legitimacy, then the countries that invited monitors in the early 1990s should have run fairly clean elections (otherwise they would not have been honest).

If they indeed ran clean elections as a break from the past, then these countries should demonstrate larger than average democratic gains. Over time, invitations from autocratic governments should increase while democratic gains decline. This prediction is not distinctive; the gains could be unrelated to election monitoring. However, it is fairly certain, so without a demonstration of gains, the logic of the argument fails. Furthermore, if the quest for legitimacy is instrumental and if the probability of detection grows as monitors gain experience, then some authoritarian governments should resume their rejection of monitors over time. That is

Observation C4 (Authoritarian governments): The rate at which undemocratic governments invite monitors should first rise as they come under pressure, then decrease as monitors gain competence and raise the likelihood of criticism.

This observable implication is neither certain or distinctive, however. There may be other factors that prevent or alter this pattern. The last observable implication related to the spread of monitoring concerns cheating.

Observation C5 (Continued cheating): If inviting monitors is instrumental for some governments, then some governments should still cheat while inviting monitors.

This is not certain, however. If there is no cheating, the instrumental logic could still hold (that is, governments might not cheat for instrumental reasons). However, this observable implication is highly distinctive: If governments are in control of the running of the election and if there nevertheless is cheating, this strongly bolsters the instrumental logic because governments that invite monitors due to their belief in election norms should, by definition, run clean elections.

Internalization. The final set of observable implications is a modest attempt to assess any deeper internalization of the norms underpinning international election monitoring. The first relates to the expectation about contestation.

Observation I1 (Decreased contestation): If election monitoring has become internalized, contestation should decrease and governments should rarely object to the presence of monitors.

If there is really internalization, one would expect decreased contestation to follow with certainty. However, this is not an entirely distinctive expectation. It is possible that the disagreement is expressed in other ways or simply repressed. Thus, decreased contestation would not prove internalization, but continued raucous debate would make internalization questionable. The other way to assess internalization is through behavior. It is essentially the inverse of the implication related to continued cheating as in observation (C5):

Observation I2 (Decreased cheating): If election monitoring has become widely internalized in the sense that most governments believe in the related norms of conduct of elections, then governments that invite monitors should not cheat.

This observable implication is not distinctive because governments may avoid cheating for strategic reasons. Thus, honest elections cannot prove internalization. The implication is quite certain, however; if governments are in control of the running of the election, then continued cheating can refute internalization of the underlying set of norms related to elections and democracy.

Table 1 lists the observable implications and the assessment of their certainty and distinctiveness.

TABLE 1. *Observable implications and their certainty and distinctiveness*

Observable implications	*Certainty*	*Distinctiveness*
Emergence		
E1: Enabling norms	High	Low
E2: Norm contestation	Low	High
E3: Human rights and democracy references	Moderate	Low
Timing		
T1: Geopolitical references	Moderate	High
T2: Western leadership	High	Moderate
T3: Domestic pressure	Low	Low
Cascade		
C1: Increased conditionality and sanctions	Low	Low
C2: Legitimacy rhetoric	Low/moderate	Low
C3: Honest governments	Moderate	Low
C4: Authoritarian governments	Low	Low
C5: Continued cheating	Low	High
Internalization		
I1: Decreased contestation	High	Moderate
I2: Decreased cheating	High	Low

Data and Sources

Examining the observable implications requires various methods such as content analysis of documents, historical analysis of legal standards, research on voting patterns, and longitudinal data. The analysis is also based on sequencing of events such as the emergence of norms and institutionalization predicted by the arguments. Lastly, the analysis examines public justifications of actions. Although actors may strategically use rhetoric, in an analysis of norms and concepts such as legitimacy, public justifications speak directly to the normative context.[60]

Data collection and presentation is guided by the sets of observable implications. Historical analysis is based on a chronological examination of global developments, hundreds of primary documents from the UN and regional organizations, as well as numerous secondary accounts. The data include 177 countries since 1975 and all missions by the eighteen major agencies listed under Figure 1. Including only these organizations slightly underreports monitoring but has the advantage of being accurate within these agencies. The election monitoring data was gathered in cooperation with the election monitoring agencies and includes 514 reports spanning twenty years. Elections in the database have been checked against several official election archives online, in academic journals, and in encyclopedias. Both elections and the presence of monitors were checked against *Lexis Nexis* news accounts. Data on UN votes and statements were derived from primary documents.

The data presented are focused on nonestablished democracies, which are defined as countries with a score on the Polity II democracy scale of seven or below in the year before the election. Nonestablished democracies were chosen because organizations rarely consider monitoring well established democracies. The following section examines the evidence.

The Empirical Evidence

Emergence. The argument about the emergence of international election monitoring emphasizes that proponents of election monitoring were able to build on a set of prior entitlement norms and frame election monitoring in the context of human rights and democratic rights. Furthermore, because international election monitoring clearly violated existing collectively legitimated norms of sovereignty and noninterference in internal affairs, this led to strong debate, which in turn helped to foster the new election monitoring norms.

This section examines whether the observable implications support this argument. It first traces the historical evolution of these norms and identifies their growing linkages to elections and the sovereignty debate more broadly (*E1: Enabling norms*). It then takes a more in-depth look at a central debate occurring within the

60. Finnemore 1996, 159.

UN regime between sovereignty and elections norms (*E2: Norm contestation*), and finally analyzes whether proponents directly linked existing human rights and democracy norms to election monitoring (*E3: Human rights and democracy references*).

Historically, one of the core enabling norms for election monitoring was self-determination, which became associated with elections in the process of gaining independence.[61] During the process of decolonization, the UN developed the ability to observe and supervise elections, sometimes taking on "direct responsibility in order to ensure that the popular consultation is conducted in an atmosphere of complete freedom and impartiality."[62] This foreshadowed the growing role of the UN in electoral assistance, and as the Trusteeship Council promoted self-determination through supervision of elections in these non-self-governing territories, it also associated "monitoring" with legitimation. The principle of self-determination thus was linked directly with elections and was often connected with some form of monitoring.

A second set of enabling norms were the principles of the freedom of expression and participatory rights that developed election-related standards to which governments could be held accountable. In 1948 the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man referred to voting rights and periodic popular elections held in a free and fair manner, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognized the universal right to freedom of opinion and expression and to peaceful assembly and association. In 1966 the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights specified the forms of expressions required to support freedom of expression (Article 19(2)) and provided that all citizens should have the right to participate in public affairs either directly or through freely chosen representatives, and to vote and be elected in genuine, periodic, and secret elections (Article 25). Regional developments such as the 1950 European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the 1969 American Convention on Human Rights, as well as their respective courts, also bolstered the expectations of political rights and electoral competition. These were further supported in the Commonwealth Secretariat's 1971 Declaration of Commonwealth Principles[63] and in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. By bolstering the norms of self-determination, freedom of expression, and participatory rights, these new declarations and conventions paved the way for the rise of external supervision of these new obligations.

These norms, however, did not present a *fait accompli* for the spread of election monitoring. External engagement in elections was still hampered by the long-standing norms of sovereignty and nonintervention.[64] Just as important for the

61. Franck 1992, 52.
62. Ebersole 1992–93, 94–95.
63. Beigbeder 1994, 238.
64. See Lyons and Mastanduno 1993; and Barkin and Cronin 1994. Even during the earliest UN monitoring in colonial territories, France, Britain, and Portugal had claimed that the activity constituted interference in their internal affairs; see Asante 1994, 273.

emergence of election monitoring, therefore, were modifications to these normative prohibitions on external engagement in domestic affairs. Abhorrence of South African apartheid was particularly important in increasing the willingness of the international community to become engaged in domestic affairs. In 1954 the UN Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa declared that South Africa's racial laws violated the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UN Assembly followed up with successive resolutions rebuking South Africa and threatening expulsion. Throughout the next three decades the international community condemned South Africa and endorsed mandatory sanctions.[65] In the 1970s states also began to claim more legitimate uses of external intervention.[66] The UN Security Council passed Resolution 688 in 1991 insisting that the government of Iraq "allow immediate access by international humanitarian organizations to all those in need of assistance." The criteria for intervention were thus broadened to include the promotion of human rights and democracy.[67]

Finally, as more states signed international human rights treaties, the notions of domestic jurisdiction and nonintervention became subject to such commitments.[68] In 1986, for example, the International Court of Justice also ruled that a state is "sovereign for the purpose of accepting a limitation of its sovereignty in this field [of elections]."[69] A 1990 opinion by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights refuted Mexico's contention that the Commission lacked the right to address three claimants who alleged fraud in the recent local elections. The opinion stated that: "[T]he right of the state to develop its internal life freely has a counterpart in its obligation to respect the rights of individuals. . . . The correct interpretation of the principle of nonintervention is, therefore, one based on protection of the rights of states to self-determination provided that right is exercised in a manner consistent with respect for the rights of individuals."[70] Similarly, in 1991 the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) declared that "the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the OSCE are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating states and do not belong exclusively in the internal affairs of the state concerned."[71]

It is thus possible to trace how the permissive norms of self-determination, freedom of expression, and participatory rights clearly evolved while the prohibitive norms of sovereignty and noninterference were restricted. This combination of changes created a normative enabling environment for the emergence of election monitoring (*E1: Enabling norms*).

65. Asante 1994, 262–63.
66. Luard, 1988, 49.
67. Kegley, Gregory, and Herrman 1998, 89.
68. See Asante 1994, 264; and Crawford 1993, 14.
69. Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. U.S.) 1986 ICJ Rep. 14, 131 (judgment of 27 June).
70. Mexican Election Decisions, Cases 9768, 9780, 9828; Inter-Am. C.H.R. 98, OEA/ser.L/V/II.77, doc.7, rev. 1 (1989–90), 119–20, cited in Asante 1994, 278.
71. CSCE 1991, preamble.

There is also considerable evidence of the debate about election monitoring that arose within the UN regime (*E2: Norm contestation*). Although the entitlement norms and the increasing tolerance toward external actors discussed above had helped create an environment in which election monitoring might be permissible, the notion of "competitive" elections was still not part of international law and opposition to monitoring was still fierce. Because election monitoring threatened the legitimacy of entrenched regimes,[72] governments such as East Timor and Ethiopia, which used the shield of sovereignty to abuse their populations without much scrutiny,[73] argued that elections should remain a purely domestic matter.

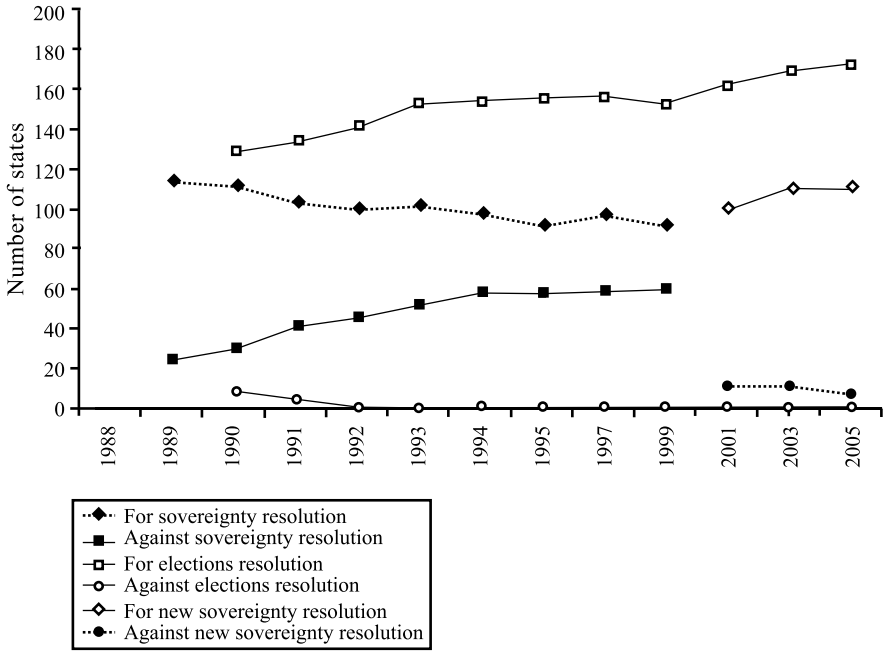
Several elections fueled the debate about election monitoring. Although the UN observation of Nicaragua's elections was embedded in a 1987 peace agreement,[74] and therefore in legal terms was justified on the basis of international peace and security, it nevertheless focused attention on monitoring because of its scale and because it was in a sovereign state. The debate truly escalated, however, with the 1990 elections in Haiti, where the international dimension was less clear. Even the secretary general noted: "The request for United Nations electoral verification in an independent country generated considerable discussion within the organization and one of the issues was whether the request could be reconciled with the provisions of Article 2, paragraph 7 of the charter. Opinions differed on the existence of an international dimension in the Haitian case."[75]

The debate manifested itself in various venues, but it became most visible in the series of twin resolutions in the UN General Assembly. These resolutions, which recurred almost annually for fifteen years, began with the 1988 resolution on "The Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections" (henceforth the "elections resolution") that was countered by a series of resolutions on "Sovereignty and Non-interference" (henceforth the "sovereignty resolution"). The UN Secretary General commented: "[T]his series of General Assembly resolutions, together with the respondent reports submitted by myself and other relevant UN entities, illustrates the ongoing process of dialogue, assessment, debate, and reform in the area of electoral assistance that has emerged in response to the rising tide of interest in democratization and requests for UN support."[76]

The votes on these resolutions indeed displayed the battle of ideas. The first and second elections resolutions in 1988 and 1989 were adopted without a vote. The first counter-resolution on sovereignty was adopted in 1989. Figure 2 shows the number and percentage voting for and against each of the resolutions over time. There is a steady gain for the elections resolution and a steady decline for the sovereignty resolution, until, as discussed below, the latter seriously softens

72. Fox 1995.
73. McFaul 2004–2005, 153.
74. UN 1989.
75. UN 1991b, 14.
76. Boutros-Ghali 1996, 15–16.

its language. There was thus ample evidence of a real debate of core norms within the context of the emergence of new norms on election monitoring (*E2: Norm contestation*).



Note: The 1988 and 1989 resolutions for elections were adopted without a vote and are therefore not recorded. There was no sovereignty resolution in 1988.

Source: UNBISnet.

FIGURE 2. *Absolute numbers voting for and against the twin resolutions*

Proponents of election monitoring specifically used the language of human rights and democracy norms when creating new institutions for election monitoring (*E3: Human rights and democracy references*). The evolving language in the twin resolutions reveals these references and the gradual weakening of the sovereignty and noninterference position. Language in the elections resolutions strongly connected competitive elections to human rights norms. They typically mentioned human rights in the first paragraph and then noted the provisions on elections in the Universal Declaration for Human Rights and similar provisions in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Once again linking apartheid to human rights and then elections more broadly, the next paragraph condemned the system of apartheid and stated that "the right of everyone to take part in the gov-

ernment of his or her country is a crucial factor in the effective enjoyment by all of a wide range of other human rights and fundamental freedoms."[77] So in every way these resolutions linked elections and participatory rights to human rights, not to good governance, economic stability, or other general aims. Furthermore, the debate related directly to the role of external actors in elections, and specifically to election monitoring. The 1990 elections resolution praised UN support for elections in member states and authorized greater efforts for the UN Secretary General to explore how to build that role. The 1991 resolution endorsed several steps for the UN Secretary General to streamline UN election assistance. The link between human rights, the elections resolutions, and external actors is complete and clear.

The language in the sovereignty resolution was equally revealing. The early resolutions were entitled "Respect for the Principles of National Sovereignty and Non-Interference in the Internal Affairs of States in Their Electoral Processes" and stressed Article 2, paragraph 7 of the UN Charter,[78] arguing that individual states have the right to determine their own destiny and system of government. After 1999 the language of the sovereignty resolution had been so muted that it was no longer the same resolution. The 2001 resolution even "reiterates that periodic, fair, and free elections are important elements for the promotion and protection of human rights."[79] By 2003, the term "noninterference" is even dropped from the title that then changed to "respect for the principles of national sovereignty and diversity of democratic processes as an important element for the promotion and protection of human rights."[80]

In February 1991, UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar requested comments from all member states on the matters raised in the twin resolutions, specifically asking for comments on the apparent conflict of the principles. Table 2 shows a content analysis of the replies. As seen from the different concerns identified in the letters, many countries highlighted sovereignty, nonintervention, and noninterference. However, for many countries these were portrayed as compatible with external elections assistance. Thus, in his 1992 *Agenda for Peace* the new UN Secretary General Boutrus Boutrus Ghali declared: "The time of absolute and exclusive sovereignty ... has passed."[81]

The emergence of election monitoring was thus enabled by a set of norms rooted in self-determination, and by the principles of freedom of expression and participatory rights. Moreover, election monitoring emerged out of an intensive debate that specifically pitted democracy and human norms against traditional sovereignty norms.

77. UN 1988, point 2.
78. "Nothing contained in the Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State."
79. UN 2001, point 2.
80. UN 2003.
81. Boutros-Ghali 1992.

TABLE 2. *Positions of UN members on the role of the UN in elections. Responses by member states to the UN Secretary General, May–September 1991*

Country	*Explicit support for increased UN role*	*Endorses monitoring generally*	*Notes respect for sovereignty*	*UN should only act after a request*	*Notes nonintervention/ noninterference/ domestic jurisdiction*	*Explicit criticism of increased UN role*	*Specific comments*
Bulgaria, EU Twelve, Luxembourg	X	X					Stresses UN experience. EU argues it is a moral obligation to intervene to protect and promote human rights, including the right to vote.
Malta, Canada, Norway	X	X		X			Canada stresses world changes and increased demand for democracy.
Nicaragua, Australia, Turkey	X	X	X	X			
United States, Zambia	X	X	X	X	X		U.S. offers extensive supportive legal analysis and practical recommendations.
Jamaica	X						Stresses technical assistance only.
Uruguay	X				X		
Poland, Sweden, Israel, Czechoslovakia	X			X			
Venezuela, Chile	X		X	X	X		
Japan	X			X	X		
Botswana		X		X			
India, Barbados, Argentina, Philippines				X			
Mauritius		X					
USSR, Ghana				X	X		USSR favors a group of "independent experts"; Ghana opposes UN institutionalization.
Brazil			X	X			
Brunei, Ecuador, Indonesia			X	X	X		Brunei denies need for monitors.
Peru, Uganda				X		X	Peru prefers OAS to UN; Uganda opposes UN institutionalization.
Colombia, Mexico				X	X	X	Columbia notes new UN unit not needed; Mexico notes it is beyond UN charter purpose.
China			X	X	X	X	Sees no need for UN activity.
Cuba			X		X	X	Sees UN as a tool of the hegemon.

Source: Human rights questions: UN 1991a.
Notes: Voting against UN draft resolution: Angola, China, Columbia, Cuba, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Myanmar, Sudan, Viet Nam. Abstaining: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Ecuador, Ghana, India, Mali, Mexico, Peru, and Syrian Arab Republic.

Timing. As the above account shows, consolidation of the enabling normative environment was ongoing throughout the 1990s. Indeed, in 1993 the World Conference on Human Rights called on external actors to promote democracy and the 1994 Second International Conference of New or Restored Democracies called on the UN Secretary General to study how the UN could support new or restored democracies. Following these leads, new series of General Assembly resolutions began calling on the UN to strengthen its role in enhancing elections and the promotion of democratization. This strengthening of norms on elections likely continued to exert pressure on incumbents to invite monitors.

However, the fact that the enabling normative environment and the debate between opponents of external intervention and proponents of democracy promotion had not been resolved by the time election monitoring reached a tipping point raises the question of why it occurred when it did. This section examines the evidence for the argument that election monitoring reached a tipping point at the end of the Cold War because the Cold War helped consolidate the normative debate, freed the victors of the war to set a new agenda and push for democratic transitions, and increased domestic pressures on incumbents to hold democratic elections.

That the Cold War contributed to a consolidation of democratic norms is supported by the fact that proponents of election monitoring did relate changes in the political environment to democracy norms and then to advocacy of election monitoring (*T1: Geopolitical references*). Indeed, U.S. leaders especially linked world events to their interest in election monitoring. At the 1990 CSCE conference, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker noted that, "We are present at the creation of a new age of Europe" and that "the free-elections proposal . . . has gathered strength from the dramatic events of last fall and the new elections of this spring."[82] Former U.S. President George Bush Sr. said to the UN General Assembly that the end of the Cold War was the first time the UN was able to function as intended.[83] Other actors, including the Commonwealth Secretariat (CS), and then-Czechoslovakia also acknowledged the link between global events and election monitoring.[84] Thus, the actors calling for election monitoring clearly saw the end of the Cold War as the catalyst.

There is also extensive evidence that Western actors led the advocacy, practice, and funding of election monitoring (*T2: Western leadership*). The historical record shows that the main actors were the political leaders of the West and mostly U.S. NGOs. First of all, the countries voting against the aforementioned "sovereignty resolution" were various European countries, the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and Israel. Western countries clearly spearheaded the movement to engage the UN in election monitoring and other election-related activities, to

82. Baker 1990.
83. Bush 1990.
84. See CS 1990; and UN 1991b, 20 and 48.

press for a set of international obligations establishing norms about elections and citizens' rights, and to normalize external engagement in elections more generally.

Furthermore, at the CSCE conference in 1989, it was the United Kingdom and the United States that called for free elections in all CSCE member states and for observation by outside governments, institutions, or organizations.[85] It was also U.S. President George Bush Sr. who proposed the establishment of a UN special coordinator for electoral assistance and a UN Electoral Commission to monitor elections in emerging democracies,[86] and who spoke for the many General Assembly resolutions calling for an enhanced role for the UN in electoral matters. Lastly, it was U.S. Secretary of State Baker who made several speeches in Europe urging the use of observer teams by CSCE states. Summarizing the American fervor, Morten Halperin, the assistant secretary of defense for democracy and peacekeeping, wrote that: "[W]hen a people attempts to hold free elections and establish a constitutional democracy, the United States and the international community should not only assist but should 'guarantee' the result. Those measures should be institutionalized in organizations such as the United Nations and the Organizations of American States (OAS), which would be responsible for carrying out missions to ensure the success of a constitutional democracy."[87]

Other Western states also joined the efforts. For example, during the March 1991 legislative elections in Albania, at least eleven North American and European countries sent legislative delegations in addition to the ones sent by European organizations and American NGOs.[88] As Table 2 shows, this broad Western support was also evident within the aforementioned UN debate. Most of the countries advocating a strengthened UN role were Western. Furthermore, most of the internationally-active NGOs were also U.S.-supported. Although it was based in Costa Rica, the Center for Electoral Promotion and Assistance (CAPEL), for example, operated principally on USAID and National Endowment for Democracy (NED) funds. Similarly, in 1984 when the Human Rights Law Group wrote "Guidelines for International Election Observing," the first standard in the field, that project was funded by USAID.[89] Many NGO missions were trained, organized, and, although multinational, dominated by U.S. personnel and often included elected U.S. representatives.[90] In accordance with expectations (*T2: Western leadership*), the push for election monitoring was therefore a very Western affair.

Finally, invitations for monitors came specifically from states in transition and from states where domestic groups pressured their governments to invite international monitors (*T3: Domestic pressure*). Although there had clearly been instances in the late 1980s where incumbents had only invited international mon-

85. "U.S. Proposes Free Elections Throughout Europe," Associated Press newswire, 19 June 1989.
86. Bush 1990.
87. Halperin 1993, 105.
88. NDI 1991.
89. Garber 1984, ii.
90. Jason 1991–92, 1830–36.

itors under severe international pressure, what brought election monitoring to its tipping point was the rapid succession of invitations to the postcommunist elections in Europe and from other transition countries eager to demonstrate their democratic standards. Hungary was the first to invite observers after significantly changing the legal framework for elections.[91] The election in the German Democratic Republic in March 1990 was the first time free and secret elections took place there.[92] On a global level, one also observes a greater presence of monitors for elections during transitions, first multiparty elections, and postconflict elections. There were also increased demands by citizens for democratic practices.[93] As Canada observed in a UN debate: "Peoples around the world are demanding more responsible and representative governments and expecting from their representatives greater transparency in managing their resources and governing their countries."[94] Domestic monitoring groups multiplied and opposition parties such as those in Guyana and Zambia increasingly called for international observers.[95] Countries undergoing transitions were thus particularly receptive to monitors.

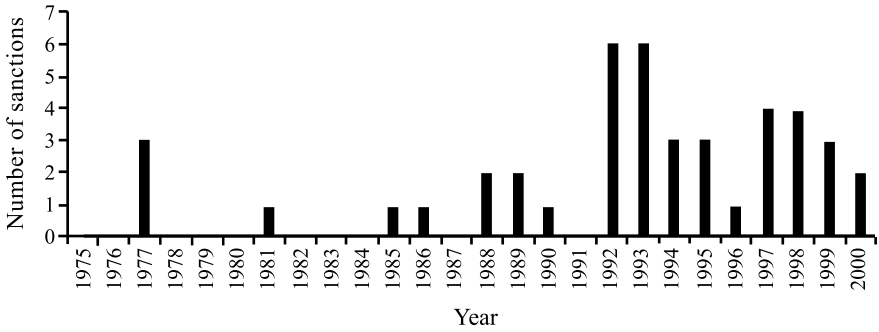
The timing of the breakthrough of election monitoring therefore depended both on the preexisting normative environment and on the shift in norms, power, and priorities brought by the end of the Cold War. It is because both of these factors were important that international election monitoring did not emerge in the mid-1970s although a wave of democratic transitions began occurring then.

Cascade. This section examines the evidence for the argument about why election monitoring spread rapidly. The first part of the argument is that running an illegitimate government became increasingly costly as international actors moved toward more democratic conditionality and exerted greater pressure on governments to be seen as legitimate. The second part of the argument is that the need for legitimacy drove a set of honest governments to invite monitors in the early 1990s and led to a situation where even many cheating governments had an incentive to invite monitors to avoid a definite stamp of illegitimacy.

There is ample evidence that international actors indeed made rewards conditional on elections and democracy (*C1: Increased conditionality and sanctions*). This was most notably manifested in an increased use of various sanctions to promote democracy. As Figure 3 shows, the move coincides well with the rise in monitoring as the years 1991–92 represented a clear spike in the number of sanctions initiated to promote democracy. At the same time the international donor community increasingly linked benefits to democracy.[96] In 1991, the international

91. CE 1990, 20–21.
92. Ibid., 5.
93. See Franck 1992; and Huntington 1991, chap. 2.
94. UN 1991b, add.2.
95. See Carter Center 1992, 17; and Bjornlund, Bratton, and Gibson 1992.
96. See European Bank for Reconstruction and Development 1990; World Bank 1989, 60–61; Geisler 1993, 614; Kaiser 1999; and Nelson and Eglinton 1992.

community also voiced its distaste for power grabs in both the August coup in Moscow and the overthrow of Haiti's elected leader.[97] After Alberto Fujimori's 1992 coup, many countries, as well as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, cut aid to Peru forcing Fujimori to hold parliamentary elections and invite monitors. Regional organizations, particularly the EU, also linked democracy to membership[98] and the OSCE made it requisite for all members to welcome monitors for all their elections. International actors thus indeed linked their support to democracy.



Source: Data compiled from Marinov 2005.

FIGURE 3. *Number of democracy-related sanctions initiated in a given year*

Many governments also stated that they invited monitors because they wanted to be seen as legitimate (*C2: Legitimacy rhetoric*). In the pivotal 1988 plebiscite in Chile, the government would have preferred not to invite outside observers,[99] but General Fernando Matthei summed up the dilemma: "If the government's candidate wins, everyone will say it was fraud. If he loses everyone will say it was a fair election. So it is more in our interests than anyone else's, to be able to show that it was an absolutely fair election."[100] In Nicaragua in 1990, the Sandinistas expected to win the election and hoped that the verification by hundreds of international observers led by U.S. Attorney General Elliot Richardson would legitimize their rule.[101] Bulgaria's ruling party also regarded "international recognition of the elections . . . as a vital national interest."[102] In the letter inviting CE observ-

97. See Franck 1992, 46–47; and Halperin 1993, 110.
98. See Kelley 2004a and 2004b; and Vachudova 2005.
99. Santa-Cruz 2005b, 82.
100. Alfred Stepan, "The Last Days of Pinochet?" *New York Review of Books*, 2 June 1988, 2.
101. See McCoy 1993; and Bunce 2006.
102. CE 1990, 59.

ers, Bulgarian officials noted: "The elections will be completely open. Therefore we would like representatives of countries and international institutions known for their democratic traditions to attend our elections."[103] El Salvador in 1991 and Guyana in 1992 were similar cases.[104] The rhetoric lends support to the argument that leaders recognized the pressure for legitimacy.

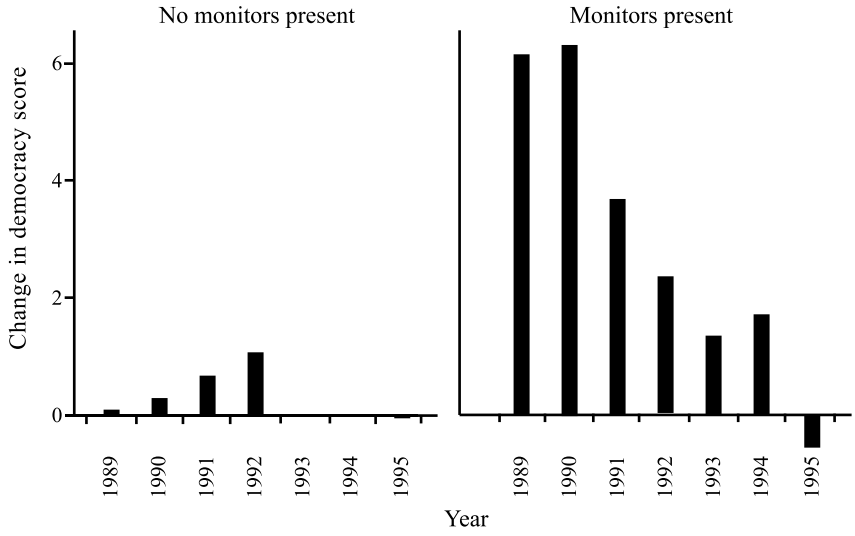


FIGURE 4. *Mean change in democracy scores for nonmonitored versus monitored elections, 1989–95*

There is also evidence that the practice of inviting monitors was fueled by a series of honest governments seeking legitimacy (*C3: Honest governments*). As expected, because countries that invited monitors in the early 1990s were honest, they ran clean elections and therefore demonstrated larger than average democratic gains, and over time, these democratic gains decrease. As Figure 4 shows, in 1989 monitored elections averaged a gain of 6.1 on the Polity II democracy scale, as led by Chile and Panama. In 1990, monitored elections averaged a 6.3 gain led by mostly East European countries; in 1991, monitored elections averaged a 3.8 gain; and in 1992, a 2.2 gain. After this, net gains decreased as more dishonest governments invited monitors. The wave of governments that pushed monitoring past a trivial threshold in the early 1990s was thus led by honest governments.

103. Ibid.
104. McCoy 1993, 133.

Further, there is evidence that as refusing monitors became equivalent to a self-declaration of cheating, autocratic governments also began to invite monitors more often (*C4: Authoritarian governments*). Although there had been some cases of monitoring in authoritarian states earlier, between 1987 and 1995 the percentage of autocratic governments inviting the major monitoring organizations rose steadily from 0 to 60 percent. However, the data are less clear on whether, as expected, authoritarian governments resume the rejection of monitors as monitors gain experience, the probability of detection grows, and criticism becomes more likely. There is a slump in monitoring of authoritarian governments after 1995, but some years still have high percentages. This may reflect two things: (1) the ability to detect cheating may not have increased that much, and (2) as there are more monitoring organizations, the likelihood increases that even autocrats will find someone to their liking. Overall, however, the evidence supports the observation that authoritarian governments quickly jumped on the bandwagon and invited monitors.

Lastly, there is support for the argument that some governments invited monitors for purely instrumental reasons, because a significant number of governments still cheated while inviting monitors (C5: *Continued cheating*). Whether measured by the reports of monitors themselves, by general democracy scores, or by other methods, many governments continued to cheat to various degrees although they invited monitors. One estimate considers that serious cheating occurred in as many as 25 percent of monitored elections.[105] In the more than 500 election monitoring reports gathered for this project, accounts of willful or explicit efforts to hinder the work of election monitors are numerous. This cheating is not merely capacity related, but in many cases appears to be intended. There are also abundant case studies documenting cheating in the presence of monitors. This persistence of cheating bolsters the instrumental logic because if governments only invited monitors because they believed in the election norms, then they should, by definition, not cheat.

Thus, election monitoring spread rapidly because the desire for legitimacy drove a set of honest governments to invite monitors in the early 1990s. Combined with increased use of democratic conditionality by external actors, this led to a situation where even many cheating governments had an incentive to invite monitors to avoid a definite stamp of illegitimacy.

Internalization. Although international election monitoring has become prevalent, there is mixed evidence about the extent to which governments and global elites have internalized election monitoring in their belief systems. As would be expected if election monitoring had become broadly accepted, debate about the validity of monitoring has largely decreased (*I1: Decreased contestation*). As discussed earlier, the language of the opposing UN "sovereignty resolutions" has softened drastically and there is convergence on the votes. As the National Democratic

105. Bjornlund 2004, tab. 3.2.

Institute (NDI) president noted in 2000 when criticizing Zimbabwe's rejection of NDI: "The refusal to accredit certain observers violates international standards for democratic elections and is counter to the practice of Zimbabwe's neighbors and virtually all democratic countries."[106] The acceptance of international monitors still varies regionally, however. Among OSCE states, monitoring has acquired a "taken-for-granted" quality, whereas Asia displays the least acceptance. Nevertheless, on a global level the debate has largely abated.

The problem, however, is that if election monitoring had become widely internalized—in the sense that most governments truly believed in the related norms of election conduct—then one should no longer observe extensive cheating in elections (*I2: Decreased cheating*). As discussed above, however, widespread cheating persists. Thus, a growing supply of different organizations practicing monitoring to varying standards has allowed international monitoring to become broadly practiced, but evidence that governments are truly adopting the set of standards and norms that motivated the emergence of monitoring is mixed at best.

Conclusion

I began this article by asking a set of diverse questions about why international election monitoring spread and became institutionalized so quickly: Why did the surge in election monitoring not come with the wave of democratization in the mid-1970s? Why did states that traditionally viewed elections as falling purely within domestic jurisdiction allow international organizations and NGOs to interfere? Finally, and perhaps most puzzling, why did countries that intended to cheat nevertheless invite monitors?

Although these questions may appear unconnected, they are in fact intricately linked. To understand the rise of monitoring, it is not enough to answer one of these questions in isolation. First of all, each only addresses one of the stages of the evolution of norms. A focus on the normative environment and institutionalization may, for example, be able to explain quite well why and how monitoring emerged. As evidenced in the debates in the UN and regional organizations, the norms of free expression and self-determination, and the principle of periodic and genuine elections emphasized democracy as a human right and challenged the existing norms of sovereignty and nonintervention. A focus on this normative environment alone, however, would not explain the timing or pace of the spread.

It might be feasible to explain why monitoring reached a tipping point in the early 1990s rather than the mid-1970s by focusing on the systemic shifts following the end of the Cold War. As shown, the end of the Cold War clearly freed Western countries to push more vigorously for democracy and increased the use democratic conditionality. World leaders and official documents explicitly linked

106. NDI 2000, 1.

their calls for monitoring with world events and conditioned international recognition on clean elections. Answering this question about timing alone, however, does not explain why such a relatively strong intrusion into domestic affairs became acceptable, nor why monitoring spread so rapidly. It might also be possible to explain why monitoring spread so rapidly by focusing on the incentive structure facing governments, which can also help explain why even cheating governments began to invite monitors. As discussed, once many honest governments had invited monitors, not doing so became a self-declaration of cheating. Thus, the costs of refusing monitors rose. This created a feedback loop, increasing domestic and international pressure. But a focus on the incentive structure alone cannot explain the rising importance of legitimacy, and alone it falls short in explaining the initial emergence of monitoring and the timing of its rise.

In addition to failing to account for all the different stages of the evolution of election monitoring, a narrow focus on any one of these questions and a related narrow focus on singular causes might also miss the interactions among the causal factors in contributing to each individual stage. Although a purely incentive-based analysis might be able to account for the pattern of the spread of election monitoring, for example, it misses the normative bases behind the incentives and perhaps how the shift in the international system shaped both the norms and the incentive system that led to this pattern. A focus only on norms and the normative debate might do well in explaining the emergence of monitoring, but it doesn't capture how the end of the Cold War contributed to the consolidation of the norms, how the shift in the power balance changed demands by donors and freed Western countries to push for democracy, and, therefore, how these factors contributed to the need for legitimacy. Lastly, a focus on the power shift following the end of the Cold War might explain the timing of monitoring, but it might miss the importance of the preexisting normative context, or the subtleties of how the new incentive structure was driven by the need for democratic legitimacy.

The case of election monitoring thus amply demonstrates how, as with other complex social processes, the evolution and spread of norms results from the interaction of multiple factors through an intricate interplay of causal mechanisms.[107] Understanding the evolution of norms is important, however, because it holds the key to understanding why governments change their behavior over time. This article has sought to develop and present a rigorous method for investigating and demonstrating a comprehensive set of causal mechanisms underlying the evolution of norms. Dissecting the larger theoretical complexity into specific subclaims has made it easier to empirically investigate the specific role of each of these causal mechanisms, their mutual tensions, and their interactive contribution to the evolution and spread of election monitoring.

Finally, by presenting a strong empirical example of a case study of the evolution of a norm, this study challenges scholars to continue to explore other changes

107. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998.

in government behavior over time, and to investigate commonalities and differences across cases. Together with other studies,[108] this will help scholars to continue to refine theories about the evolution of norms and behaviors.

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108. See Nadelmann 1990; Finnemore 1996; Prize 1997; and Flynn and Farrell 1999.

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