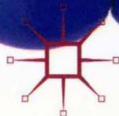


# CIVIL SOCIETY AND ELECTORAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN LATIN AMERICA

**Sharon F. Lean**

ELECTIONS, VOTING, TECHNOLOGY

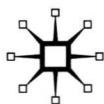


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## Elections, Voting, Technology

The series Elections, Voting, Technology examines the relationships between people, electoral processes and technologies, and democracy. Elections are a fundamental aspect of a free and democratic society and, at their core, they involve a citizenry making selections for who will represent them. This series examines the ways in which citizens select their candidates—the voting technologies used, the rules of the game that govern the process—and considers how changes in processes and technologies affect the voter and the democratic process.

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*Confirming Elections: Creating Confidence and Integrity through Election Auditing*  
Edited by R. Michael Alvarez, Lonna Rae Atkeson, and Thad E. Hall

*Civil Society and Electoral Accountability in Latin America*  
Sharon F. Lean

To my parents, Jane and David Lean, and  
in loving memory of Vivian C. Fox.

### **Previous Publication**

*Promoting Democracy in the Americas.* Thomas Legler, Sharon F. Lean, and Dexter S. Boniface, eds. 2007.

## LIST OF FREQUENTLY USED ACRONYMS

AD	Democratic Action Party (Venezuela)
AMDH	Mexican Academy of Human Rights
CAFFE	Citizen Action for Free and Fair Elections (Jamaica)
CAPEL	Center for Election Assistance and Promotion (Costa Rica)
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CNE	National Election Council (Venezuela)
CNO	Conseil National de Observación (Haiti)
COPEI	Committee for Independent Political Electoral Organization (Venezuela)
CSE	Supreme Electoral Council (Nicaragua)
DMO	Domestic monitoring organization
EAB	Electoral Assistance Bureau (Guyana)
EU	European Union
GNDEM	Global Network of Domestic Election Monitoring Organizations
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
IADC	Inter-American Democratic Charter
ICIO	International Coalition of Independent Observers (Haiti)
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Election Assistance
IFE	Federal Election Institute (Mexico)
IFES	International Foundation for Election Systems (United States)
IHRLG	International Human Rights Law Group
IIDH	Inter-American Institute of Human Rights
INGO	International nongovernmental organization
IO	International organization



IRI	International Republican Institute (United States)
LASA	Latin American Studies Association
NAMFREL	National Citizen's Movement for Free Elections (Philippines)
NDI	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (United States)
NED	National Endowment for Democracy (United States)
NEEDS	Network for Enhanced Electoral and Democratic Support
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
OAS	Organization of American States
ONUSAT	United Nations Mission for the Verification of Elections in Nicaragua
OPD	Office for the Promotion of Democracy
PAN	National Action Party (Mexico)
PRD	Party of the Democratic Revolution (Mexico)
PRI	Institutional Revolutionary Party (Mexico)
PDVSA	Petroleos de Venezuela, Sociedad Anónima
PVT	Parallel vote tabulation
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UN-EAD	United Nations Electoral Assistance Division
UNIORE	Inter-American Union of Electoral Organizations
UPD	Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (OAS)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WOLA	Washington Office on Latin America

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# CONTENTS

Previous Publication	vi
List of Illustrations	ix
List of Frequently Used Acronyms	xi
Acknowledgments	xiii
1 Civil Society and Electoral Accountability	1
2 Election Monitoring in Latin America	23
3 Civil Society and Electoral Accountability in Mexico	55
4 Civil Society and Electoral Accountability in Venezuela	81
5 Regional Networking for Electoral Accountability	111
6 Civil Society and Electoral Accountability: Lessons from Latin America	131
Notes	151
References	165
Index	183

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

### FIGURES

2.1	The expansion of election monitoring in the Americas, 1978–2009	39
2.2	Who monitors elections in the Americas? The relative share of election observation missions among major groups, 1988–2009	45
2.3	Conditions for international and domestic election monitoring, 1988–2009	48
3.1	<i>Alianza Cívica</i> : A political timeline	75
4.1	Domestic election monitoring in Venezuela: A political timeline	105

### TABLES

2.1	Election monitoring in the Americas, 1988–2009	41
2.2	Domestic election monitoring in the Americas, 1988–2009 (in ascending order of elections monitored)	43
5.1	Members of the <i>Acuerdo de Lima</i> , 2000–2012	117

## CHAPTER 1

# CIVIL SOCIETY AND ELECTORAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Democracy in any country ultimately rests in the hands of its people and depends on the existence of a civil society that can effectively use the instruments that democracy provides.

(Muñoz 1998, 14)

ON APRIL 8, 2001, Peru held an extraordinary election following the precipitous fall of President Alberto Fujimori. Fujimori, a political outsider first elected in 1990, had won a controversial third term in 2000 in an election plagued with problems. He was forced to resign in disgrace when videotaped evidence surfaced to prove that he was bribing opposition congress members to switch affiliations. When new elections were called, public confidence in Peru's elections and political institutions was at a low. A variety of international organizations stepped in to assist. The UN Election Assistance Division (UN-EAD) provided technical advisors to the Peruvian election authorities. The European Union (EU), the Organization of American States (OAS) and a joint delegation from the Carter Center and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) each sent long-term staffers. In total, these international teams fielded over 300 short-term observers on election day. Their presence was lauded in the international press and by the policy community.

But the internationals were by no means the only actors seeking to ensure that Peru's 2001 elections would help the country get a fresh democratic start. A Peruvian domestic election monitoring

organization (DMO) called *Transparencia* had been working to improve the quality of elections since 1995. In 2001 *Transparencia* conducted a massive project designed to observe every aspect of the new elections. *Transparencia* collaborated with the election authorities and UN advisors to design and implement an audit of the voter registry to help correct problems that had surfaced in 2000. It launched a radio campaign to encourage citizens to verify their registration. *Transparencia* undertook a massive civic education effort to empower voters by teaching them correct election-day procedures, using airtime and page space donated to it by major media outlets. The directors of the organization convinced seven of eight of the contending political parties to sign a pact to conduct a civil campaign in a formal public ceremony. And when election day arrived, *Transparencia's* 22,000 trained volunteer observers visited 90% of all polling sites in the country.

Yet, the important work of these domestic monitors received relatively little attention in the scholarly literature or the international press. Attention to election monitoring at that time was almost exclusively focused on the work of foreign observers, and that has remained true despite the proliferation of domestic election monitoring in both the Americas and worldwide since then. This book is an attempt to fill that gap and to present a balanced picture of how local nongovernmental actors throughout the Americas have sought to promote democratic norms by observing elections in their home countries. It is about not only how civic associations have helped reclaim elections as instruments for democracy in the Americas, but also how they use elections as a means to expand democratic accountability. By studying DMOs in Latin America and the Caribbean, I seek to answer three central questions: What is the role of civic associations in generating electoral accountability? How do civil society organizations such as DMOs support democratic consolidation, and what are the limits of their influence? Finally, how do international ties affect the success of civic associations in promoting electoral accountability?

The nonpartisan monitoring of elections by civic associations or networks in their home country—called *domestic* election monitoring to distinguish the practice from international election monitoring—originated in the Philippines in the late 1980s. The Cold War was coming to a close and the United States and Europe embraced democracy promotion as a core foreign aid and multilateral diplomatic practice (Carothers 1999; Youngs 2002). By the early 1990s international election monitoring was on the rise. International organizations, aid agencies and nongovernmental organizations began to promote and

finance the practice of domestic election observation as part of their programs for election and civil society assistance. At the same time, theories about the social capital generated by vibrant associational activity and the importance of autonomous civic organizing to democracy were experiencing renewed popularity in academic and policy circles (Putnam 1993; Diamond 1994). Influential research on transnational advocacy networks also emphasized the importance of domestic counterparts for effective international promotion of norms and principled issues (Brysk 1993; Sikkink 1993; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Risse et al. 1999). For policymakers working to promote free and fair elections, the need for civic participation seemed especially important. Domestic actors, after all, have a necessary and rightful stake in the political changes generated through elections in their own states. The proper role of the international community in promoting and defending a right to democracy and supervising elections, by contrast, was a matter of considerable debate.<sup>1</sup> In this context domestic election observation came to be seen as both a means of building social capital and an antidote to the so-called “dilemma of sovereignty” generated by the presence of international election observers (Chand 1997, 549–550). Programs were organized and international democracy assistance funds allocated around these theories.

After early experiences in countries such as the Philippines, Chile, Panama and Bulgaria, by the late 1990s many democracy promoters saw domestic election observation not only as a useful ingredient for transitional elections, but also as a necessary one. Canton and Nevitte (1998, 46–47), for example, posit “one of the fundamental lessons that has emerged in observing elections during the past fifteen years is that a successful electoral process stands on three ‘legs.’ Two of these necessary components are relatively obvious: political parties and election authorities . . . . Civil society has become a key component—the ‘third leg’—of successful electoral processes through the efforts of nonpartisan domestic election monitoring groups.” Some predicted that domestic election monitors would replace international observers. Participants in an international conference on “The Future of International Election Observation” organized by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) in 1998 concurred that “in the interest of cost-effectiveness and long-term capacity building, international election observers should draw more on the resources and expertise of domestic election observers.” They concluded that strengthening internal capacity “could eventually eliminate the need for future international observation” (IDEA 1999, 13–14).



Once international organizations had helped instill the norm of electoral democracy by helping countries to hold transitional elections, it seemed both right (by reason of sovereignty norms) and efficient (in terms of the relatively lower cost to mobilize a greater number of local observers as compared to international teams) for domestic civic actors to take over the task of electoral observation. In Booth's words (1998, 204), "consolidated, stable democracies must ensure the quality of their own elections over the long term rather than rely on outsiders." On a similar note, Reilly asserts that "democratization is a long-term process of social and political development, not a short-term event run by or for the international community . . . International interventions are crucial in putting in place the short-term conditions for a transition to democratic rule, but their longer term impacts are necessarily limited" (Reilly 2004, 132).

In practice, though, a replacement of international election observers by domestic monitors is not the pattern that has developed. In Latin America and around the world, international election monitoring has continually expanded, to the point that as of 2006, over 80% of national elections had international observers present (Hyde 2011, 2). At the same time, with considerable international support, domestic election monitoring has also become widespread. In Latin America since 1988, 24 different civic networks have monitored election processes in 18 countries. Domestic monitors are active in 15 countries in south and southeast Asia (ANFREL 2010). At least 21 civic organizations monitor elections in 17 countries of central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (ENEMO 2010). Domestic election monitors also operate widely in Africa, as well as in several Middle Eastern countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Yemen. The Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM), launched in 2010, counts 125 member organizations from 90 countries around the world (GNDEM 2010). These organizations can play a key role in democratizing elections, but not all experiences are equally fruitful. In some cases, civic associations that monitor elections become effective advocates for election reform, respected civic watchdogs and influential players in election policy, while in others they are unable to achieve significant influence. Why?

Despite the spread of domestic election monitors, the high expectations for their role in democratic transitions and consolidation and the existence of two popular theoretical frameworks that suggest that international support for domestic election monitors is an effective means of advancing democracy, surprisingly little research exists on domestic election monitoring.<sup>2</sup> Although it is widely recognized that the