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The Pseudo-Democrat's Dilemma

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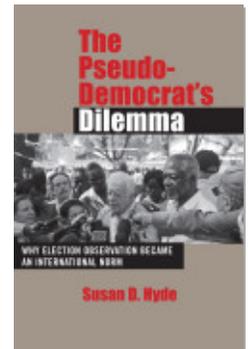
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The Pseudo-Democrat's Dilemma: Why Election Monitoring Became an International Norm.

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INTRODUCTION

In October of 1958, the Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista was one of the first leaders to seek international observation of his country's elections. Facing declining U.S. support of his regime, pressure from the United States to hold elections, and a growing threat from Fidel Castro's revolutionary forces, Batista scheduled elections, announced he would not run again, and attempted to invite international observers from the Organization of American States and the United Nations. Both organizations refused to send monitors, stating that they lacked the "facilities to supervise elections."¹ The November 1958 elections were widely viewed as a charade.² Shortly after these discredited elections, Batista resigned and fled into exile, clearing the way for Fidel Castro's rise to power.³

Fifty years later, the idea that governments should invite foreign election observers had become so widely accepted that the Iranian government's refusal to invite international observers to its 2009 elections was interpreted around the world as evidence that the Iranian elections had been stolen. Responding to questions about the conditions under which he would accept the announced results, U.S. President Barack Obama expressed doubts about the quality of the elections, stating that "we didn't have international observers on the ground" and that therefore "we can't say definitively what happened at polling places throughout the country."⁴ German Chancellor Angela Merkel called for a recount of the votes under international observation as a way for Iranians to "eliminate doubt" and

1. "Doubtful Future Confronts Cuba: Tomorrow's Elections May Begin Uncertain Era—Rebels Ask Boycott," *New York Times*, October 31, 1958.

2. *Ibid.*

3. "Cuba Will Accept Voting Observers," *New York Times*, October 18, 1958.

4. "Text of President Obama Tuesday," Associated Press, June 28, 2009.

increase trust.⁵ Explaining why he believed the Iranian elections to be stolen, U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman said that “one thing we know is that Iran would not let international monitors in, which most every country in the world does to supervise the elections.”⁶ The *Bangkok Post* in Thailand editorialized that the Iranian government was culpable in part because it had harassed foreign journalists and barred election observers.⁷ Iranian Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi called for European sanctions against the Iranian government and argued that “a new election must be held and this time it should be under the monitoring of international organizations.”⁸ This sentiment was echoed widely in forums as diverse as the editorial pages of the *Jordan Times*, *USA Today*, and the *Washington Post*, and by the Iranian League for the Defense of Human Rights.⁹

Between the 1958 Cuban elections and 2009 elections in Iran, inviting international election monitors had become an international norm.¹⁰ Cuba's attempt to invite observers was anomalous, and international actors refused to send observers, but views regarding election monitoring had changed dramatically by the end of the 1990s; by then, the few governments choosing not to invite international observers were assumed to be hiding electoral manipulation.¹¹ As of 2006, more than 80% of elections

5. “Germany’s Merkel urges Iranian Election Recount,” Reuters, June 21, 2009.

6. Lieberman, “Interview with Senator Joseph Lieberman,” June 15, 2009.

7. BBC Monitoring, “Thai Paper Says Iran Must Let ‘Outsiders’ Monitor Poll Probe,” June 17, 2009.

8. Deutsche Presse-Agentur, “Iranian Nobel Peace Prize Winner Ebadi Calls for New Polls,” June 17, 2009.

9. “Iran’s Fishy Election Results,” *USA Today*, June 15, 2009; “Iran Needs Another Election,” *Jordan Times*, June 23, 2009; “Iran: Confiscated Election, FIDH and LDDHI Fear a Bloody Repression,” *News Press*, June 17, 2009; Medhi Khalaji, “Khamenei’s Coup,” *Washington Post*, June 15, 2009.

10. Below, I define an international norm as a shared “standard of behavior appropriate for actors with a given identity.” Finnemore and Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,” 891.

11. There are several borderline cases that precede the Organization of American States’ election observation in 1962, including internationally observed plebiscites before World War II. See Wambaugh, *A Monograph on Plebiscites*; Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*. In addition, at least one internationally observed election was held in the immediate aftermath of World War II, although the international agreements pertaining to the case are unique and it is not referenced by later missions as a precedent. Citing the Yalta Declaration on Liberated Europe and the provision that the Allied powers would assist Axis-occupied countries in order “to form interim governmental authorities broadly representative of all democratic elements in the population and pledged to the earliest possible establishment through free elections of governments responsive to the will of the people; and to facilitate where necessary the holding of such elections,” the Greek government invited international observers from the United States, France, and Great Britain to the March 1946 elections.

in the world were internationally monitored. Even the most committed electoral autocrats—Russia’s Vladimir Putin, Zimbabwe’s Robert Mugabe, Belorussia’s Alexander Lukashenko, Peru’s Alberto Fujimori, and Yugoslavia’s Slobodan Milošević—sought reputable international observers to judge their elections. Many of these leaders went to great lengths to manipulate the elections and the monitors, and they were internationally condemned for election fraud. Why did incumbent governments begin inviting observers, and why do they continue to do so in such impressive numbers? Why did election monitoring become an international norm, even though it is costly for many governments to invite foreign election observers?

That states comply with international norms when it is consistent with their material interests is not a particularly controversial claim. When an international norm contradicts what would otherwise be viewed as a state’s rational self-interest, however, its creation is a puzzle. In this book, I present an alternative theory of norm creation, focused on explaining the mechanism by which costly behaviors are initiated, diffuse, and become internationally expected behaviors, or international norms. In my theory, states seeking international benefits are motivated to send externally credible signals that they possess certain characteristics when they perceive that doing so will increase their share of internationally allocated benefits, such as foreign aid, increased foreign investment, tourism, trade, membership in international organizations, and legitimacy and prestige. When other states imitate successful benefit-seeking signals, new behaviors become widespread, even in the absence of overt pressure on states to adopt the new behavior. If a signal is accepted by other international actors as a behavior common to all states possessing a valued characteristic, it becomes a new international norm. These unintended norms are more likely to exist in issue areas for which pressure from international activists or powerful states is insufficient to motivate governments to adopt new behavior, and typically there is no coalition of individuals or states pushing for the norm. In general, I suggest the conditions for norm generation and diffusion exist when any regime has the incentive and the ability to signal its characteristics to international audiences in order to increase its share of international benefits. In contrast to existing explanations that focus on how norms can be generated despite their costs to states, or explanations

The mission included 1,155 observers and 240 teams from the three countries, the majority of which were military “acting in civilian capacity” (Joseph Coy Green Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ., *Report of the Allied Mission to Observe the Greek Elections.*)

that focus on mutually beneficial norms, my argument explains that international norms are generated in part *because* compliance with the new behavior is costly.

Within international politics, states engage in many puzzling behaviors, some of which become widely adopted practices and international norms.¹² Inviting international election observers is one example of a consequential international norm. This book focuses on election observation because it is a substantively important form of democracy promotion and international intervention in the domestic politics of sovereign states. My account of norm formation is useful to explain a variety of other similar empirical puzzles. For example, why have so many developing countries moved to create independent central banks, reduce capital controls, and adopt fixed exchange rates? Why are countries such as Iraq and North Korea expected to allow the presence of international weapons inspectors and assumed to have illicit weapons if they do not? What explains the rapid adoption of bilateral investment treaties to ensure property rights protection for foreign investors? Why do all but a handful of countries in the world now hold national elections? Why have dozens of countries adopted legislative gender quotas, even in electoral autocracies?¹³ Why has hiring private credit-rating agencies become a necessary step for countries wishing to issue sovereign bonds? Why do some of the worst violators of human rights sign human rights treaties?¹⁴ Some of these examples are more controversial than others, but in each of these cases a convincing argument can be made that these practices would not have become normalized state behavior if individual states were not attempting to find credible ways to signal to international or domestic audiences.

Motivated by the puzzle of how international norms are generated when compliance is costly, I explain why election monitoring became an international norm. I show that international norms are generated through a process that is endogenous to strategic interaction among international actors and that costly signaling leads to unintended and consequential international norms. Although this signaling theory of norm formation is generalizable to other areas of international relations, it was generated to better understand the consequences of international democracy promotion and explain international election observation as an overt and

12. Hurd, "Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics."

13. Bush, S., "International Politics and the Spread of Quotas for Women in Legislatures"; Goertz and Diehl, "Toward a Theory of International Norms."

14. Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui, "Human Rights in a Globalizing World"; Hathaway, "Do Human Rights Treaties Make a Difference?"

substantively important form of international involvement in the domestic politics of sovereign states.

Defining the Norm of Election Observation

Throughout this book, I follow the majority literature in defining international norms as shared “standards of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity.”¹⁵ This book focuses on the norm, or shared standard of appropriate behavior, that for all national elections, leaders committed to democratization should invite international observers and receive their endorsement, particularly when there is uncertainty about the government’s commitment to democracy.¹⁶

Not all internationally observed elections are democratic. Rather, the norm is the shared belief that all potentially democratic elections are internationally observed and any nonobserved election is not democratic. International election observers are official delegations of foreigners invited to observe and report on the credibility of the electoral process. Since at least the early 1990s, observers are typically credentialed by the host government and permitted access to the entire electoral process, including registration of voters, campaigning, distribution of electoral materials, and most notably, observing activities in and around polling stations, vote counting, and vote aggregation centers during the election period. They are officially nonpartisan and are intended to be objective third-party observers.

Uncertainty about the commitment of some governments to democracy was a necessary condition for the initiation and diffusion of the norm. For some states, there is little uncertainty about the incumbent government’s commitment to democracy. On the autocratic end of the spectrum of regimes, governments holding uncontested elections are not expected to invite observers when the characteristics of the election eliminate the possibility of electoral competition. Countries with only one legal political party, with severe restrictions on candidate entry, and with totalitarian political structures would be understood as holding authoritarian elections

15. Finnemore and Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,” 891.

16. Throughout the book, I use the terms “election observers” and “election monitors” interchangeably. Some organizations and governments prefer to avoid the term “monitor” because they argue that it implies a more interventionist practice, or a practice that involves more direct cooperation with the government. However, interventionist monitoring exists very rarely in practice, the distinction between the terms is not particularly useful outside of diplomatic circles.

even if they invited international observers; thus, they stand to gain little by inviting observers.

As the norm diffused in the 1990s, countries that were widely considered to be consolidated democracies, such as those in Western Europe and North America, held elections but were not expected to invite observers. Other states “graduated” by demonstrating their democratic credentials. For example, at the end of a seventeen-year period of dictatorship and as part of the country’s transition back to civilian rule, the Chilean government invited observers to the 1988 referenda on the continued rule of General Augusto Pinochet and to the 1989 general elections. Because the country is now widely perceived to have successfully transitioned to democracy, it is no longer expected to invite international monitors. Similarly, new European Union (EU) members are widely perceived as democracies after meeting the EU accession criteria and frequently are not expected to invite international observers.

However, reflecting the diffusion of the norm, this trend has changed slightly in more recent years, with observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) observing elections in Belgium (2007), Canada (2006), Finland (2007), France (2002, 2007), Iceland (2009), Ireland (2007), Italy (2008), the Netherlands (2006), Portugal (2009), Spain (2008), Switzerland (2007), the United Kingdom (2003, 2005), and the United States (2002, 2004, 2006, 2008). It is not yet clear whether other, similar democratic states will follow their lead and invite observers even when their status as a democracy is unquestioned. It is also unclear whether organizations sponsoring international observation would be willing to allocate scarce resources to observing elections in countries that are already considered stable democracies.

The Puzzling Norm of International Election Observation

There is no global government to enforce the norm of election observation, and inviting observers remains the choice of election-holding governments. Additionally, international monitors observe elections only when they have been officially invited by the host government. The incumbent may delegate this decision to another domestic actor, such as the foreign minister or the election commission, but the incumbent maintains the right to refuse entry to foreign observers. Without formal credentials from the host government, it is nearly impossible for observers to engage in credible election observation, a standard now enshrined in numerous

international documents, including the 2005 *Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation*.¹⁷

Leaders apparently face an easy choice: invite observers when they know their elections will be clean and prohibit them when election fraud is likely to be discovered. The creation of an internationally held norm of election observation, however, has made the choice for leaders much less simple. Pseudo-democrats, or governments willing to engage in election manipulation, face a dilemma. On one hand, the norm generates consequences for not inviting observers. Although noncompliance with the norm is rarely tested (arguably a sign of its strength), those leaders who do not invite foreign observers are assumed to be holding undemocratic elections, as in the Iranian example discussed above.¹⁸ Similarly, Egypt's refusal to invite international observers to its 2005 presidential elections led many external groups to conclude that the election would be a charade before it took place, even though opposition presidential candidates were permitted for the first time. Commentators on Hosni Mubarak's decision to refuse foreign observers argued that the absence of international monitors was "proof that the... election will be no different than preceding ones" in which the president allowed no opposition candidates and voters were given the opportunity only to vote yes or no on Mubarak's continued rule.¹⁹ Holding internationally monitored and endorsed elections has also become a necessary step before countries under economic sanctions can resume normal bilateral relations with many Western governments. For example, U.S. President George Bush challenged the Cuban government to hold free and fair elections in 2003, saying that "once the 2003 elections are certified as free and fair by international monitors, once Cuba begins the process of meaningful economic reform, then and only then will I explore ways with the United States Congress to ease economic sanctions."²⁰

17. Carter Center, *Building Consensus on Principles for International Election Observation*; United Nations, *Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers*.

18. To illustrate, countries that are not already considered consolidated democracies but that refused to invite observers to all elections after 2000 include Bahrain, Cuba, Egypt, Guinea, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Laos, Malaysia, North Korea, Oman, Syria, Turkmenistan, and Vietnam. Countries that refused observers to some but not all elections after 2000 include Benin, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Iraq, Madagascar, Mauritania, and Singapore.

19. "Arab Observers Warn of Egypt Election 'Masquerade,'" September 6, 2005, Agence France Presse.

20. G. Bush, "Remarks on the 100th Anniversary of Cuban Independence in Miami, Florida," May 20, 2002.

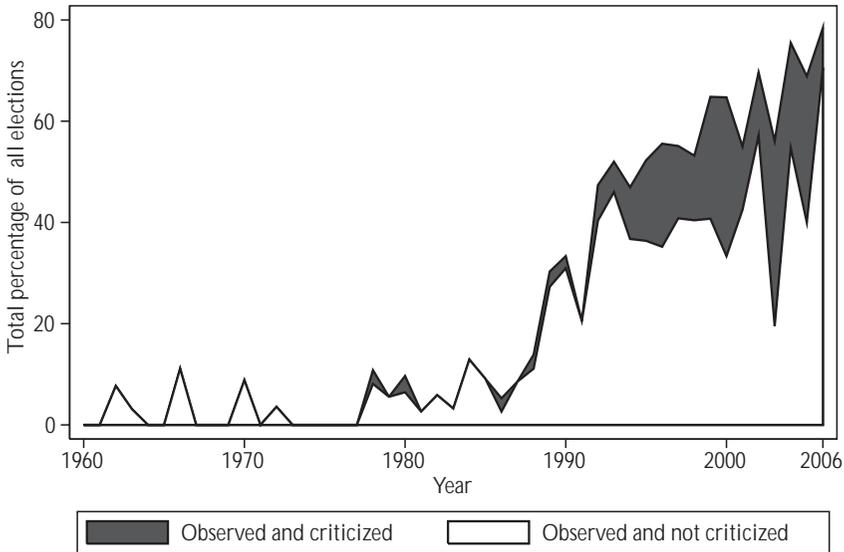


Figure I.1. Internationally observed elections, 1960–2006

Source: Author

Note: Includes 1,759 election events in 157 independent states, excluding those with population < 250,000.

On the other hand, choosing to invite observers and complying with the norm is also risky. For those leaders wishing to manipulate elections, both the chances of getting caught and the consequences of a negative report have increased with the spread of election observation. Negative reports from election monitors have been linked to domestic uprisings and electoral revolutions, reductions in foreign aid, exclusion from international forums, and other forms of internationally imposed sanctions.²¹

Figure I.1 illustrates the rate of observed elections and internationally criticized elections over time and shows that negative reports from international observers have not reduced the rate of internationally observed elections, as we would expect if leaders invited observers to only those elections likely to be clean. To explain the norm of election monitoring, I focus on the decision by leaders to invite international observers. The norm of

21. This topic has not yet been treated in the international relations literature with rigorous cross-national quantitative methods, but a thorough reading of cases in which fraud is alleged by international observers highlights many well-publicized cases in which the government faced internationally imposed costs because of election manipulation. The issue is explored in greater detail in chapter 3.

election observation is particularly useful as an empirical case because it is not well explained by existing theories of norm formation, and I use it to develop a distinct causal explanation for why individually costly behaviors diffuse and become new and self-enforcing international norms.

Signaling and International Norms

In part, my argument is based in economic theory. In the “market for lemons,” famously described by economist George Akerlof, when consumers possess little information about the quality of a product, such as used cars, and the quality of the product is known to vary, the market fails.²² Consumers prefer to avoid cars that are “lemons,” but they cannot, by themselves, distinguish between high- and low-quality products. The price that they are willing to pay reflects the uncertainty of a market containing both (indistinguishable) types of products. Sellers of high-quality used cars cannot command a sufficiently high price and so choose not to sell their vehicles, thus lowering the expected quality of used cars on the market and eventually causing only undesirable lemons to be for sale. Rather than risk a lemon, buyers in this market avoid used cars entirely.

Information between international actors is similarly asymmetric: states possess accurate information about their own type, but international actors can have difficulty judging whether another state is an undesirable type, or a so-called lemon. In the absence of better information about the true characteristics of states, the international-level equivalent of consumers may prefer to avoid risk and interact primarily with states that already have credible reputations as desirable types. In addition, states also benefit from promoting certain types of characteristics among other states in the international system, and they do so by rewarding states that are believed to possess valued characteristics. For states possessing valued characteristics but lacking a matching reputation, this type of international market gives them the incentive to find credible ways to signal their type to external audiences.

To describe this dynamic in other terms, many states in the international system seek international benefits—such as increased investment, trade, foreign aid, military support, membership in international organizations, and legitimacy and prestige. These international benefits are frequently targeted toward states possessing valued characteristics and withdrawn

22. Akerlof, “The Market for ‘Lemons.’”

from states that are revealed not to possess them. Benefit-seeking leaders, like sellers of used cars, possess more information about their own characteristics than other international actors. Even when influential international actors prefer to interact with specific types of states, they cannot always distinguish good types from bad types and, all else equal, prefer to avoid rewarding states of uncertain type. Benefit-seeking states, like owners of high-quality used cars, are motivated to find a solution to this market failure. A credible signal of their type to other international actors represents such a solution.²³

Within international politics, it is well known that states vary in their type. In fact, Akerlof's 1970 paper was motivated by a desire to explain why business in "underdeveloped" countries is difficult and not, despite its title, to explain the used car market. Yet in part because of the diffuse nature of the international system, it is rarely articulated exactly how states that possess desirable characteristics but lack a matching reputation might credibly signal their type. Credible signals are not necessarily mandated or articulated by benefit-giving actors; they must instead be discovered by benefit-seeking states. Before election monitoring became a norm, for example, it was clear that the value of democratic political institutions was increasing and that democratizing states wanted such support to increase, but international actors did not specify exactly how states that were not already considered consolidated democracies could demonstrate their commitment to democratization.

Similarly, increasing globalization and the preferences articulated by powerful states and international organizations for neoliberal economic policies gave many states the incentive to signal their valued characteristics in order to attract increased international investment, help negotiate better trading arrangements, and enhance their stature relative to other countries. Across a variety of issue areas, if a given signal is successful in communicating that a state is a valued type, other states will have the incentive to adopt the signal. If all "good" types are believed to send a given signal, even states that do not actually possess the valued characteristic should attempt to fake that signal.

Signaling behaviors have been linked to social norms by Robert Axelrod, who argues that individuals follow existing social norms in part because "violating [the norm] would provide a signal about the type of person you are."²⁴ Dressing sloppily at a formal dinner, he argues, not only draws dis-

23. Spence, "Job Market Signaling."

24. Axelrod, "An Evolutionary Approach to Norms," 1107.

approving stares from other diners but may lead them to conclude more generally that you are a lazy, cheap, or rude person. Axelrod links this concept to the creation of new social norms, which grow out of “behavior that signals things about individuals that will lead others to reward them” and that “as more and more people use the signal to gain information about others, more and more people will adopt the behavior that leads to being treated well.”²⁵

States seeking international benefits, in my theory, are similar to individuals seeking social approval in Axelrod’s argument. A signal becomes a norm when the relevant audience assumes that all desirable types of states likely engage in a specified behavior. The norm creates incentives for other, less-desirable types to try to mimic the signal. Thus, if it is possible to simulate a signal, even if it is costly for undesirable types to do so, signaling behaviors spread and become new international norms when they become linked to desirable characteristics. This diffusion can take place even in the absence of explicit advocacy, overt pressure from powerful states, or incentives for cooperation. Adoption of the behavior as an international norm reinforces the incentives for governments of uncertain type to continue sending the signal and may create incentives for international actors to raise the stakes for undesirable types by increasing the costs of mimicry.

This process has strong parallels to solutions for the market failure identified for Akerlof’s market for lemons. Similarly, in Michael Spence’s well-known education game, workers are willing to pay the costs of obtaining an education because education represents a credible signal to employers that workers are worth a higher wage, even if more years in school do not add to their productivity.²⁶ In relation to international credit markets, Sylvia Maxfield argues that “politicians use central bank independence to try to signal their nation’s creditworthiness to potential investors.”²⁷ To gain international credit, states are willing to invite (and pay for) sovereign bond ratings from reputable firms, even when they are likely to get a less than perfect rating. Now that credit-rating agencies are widely accepted, countries have difficulty issuing sovereign bonds if they have not been rated by one of the three major agencies.²⁸ Higher ratings should attract better investors, yet because of the international expectation that

25. Ibid.

26. Spence, “Job Market Signaling.”

27. Maxfield, *Gatekeepers of Growth*, 4.

28. Although credit rating agencies have been criticized and their reputations were damaged by the 2008 financial crisis, countries cannot forgo credit ratings entirely.

all creditworthy states receive a credit rating, a poor credit rating is better than none at all.

For this theory to work, it is not necessary that signals communicate an actor's type with certainty. Signals, even when they become accepted as norms, are not always perfectly informative. In the corporate job market, for example, it is logically possible that a very intelligent, educated, and productive job applicant could lack an MBA. It is also possible that a high-quality used car could be for sale without a factory-certified warranty. Or a creditworthy country likely to repay its debts could refuse to obtain a sovereign bond rating. However, the widespread acceptance of these signals has made it unlikely that any good types will refuse to signal. When such signals become norms, the relevant audience believes that all good types send the signal, and the act of refusing to signal itself becomes a source of information about an actor's type: all else equal, used cars with factory-certified warranties are perceived as more reliable than those without, individuals with MBAs or other advanced degrees are perceived as more qualified job applicants than those without, and internationally observed and certified elections are perceived as more democratic than those that are not observed.

In all these cases, the signal is useful and becomes accepted because there is some existing uncertainty about the characteristics of a subset of actors, the process of signaling reveals additional information about the signaling actor, and sending the signal is more costly to bad types. Some warranties are limited or cover a short period of time, some graduates receive poor grades, some countries earn low sovereign bond ratings, and some reports from international election observers criticize elections as fraudulent.

Not all international signals become international norms. At the international level, a norm is generated only if a signal becomes widely accepted as a useful source of information about a state or leader's type, and benefit-seeking actors develop the belief that all good types of leaders send the signal. Domestic actors may also accept the signal as credible, a change that becomes more likely as a new behavior becomes an internationally held norm. Although domestic actors may pressure some governments to adopt a new norm after it has been initiated in another state, it is important to note that in the absence of a transnational advocacy network²⁹ domestic pressure does not explain the international diffusion of a norm. Especially in the case of international election observation,

29. Keck and Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders*.

domestic audiences react to the signal by the incumbent government in crosscutting ways. More important, pressure from domestic audiences does not necessarily provide a common exogenous shock that can explain international diffusion of a behavior. Without such a common shock, such as a change in the allocation of international benefits, it is more difficult to explain the global diffusion of a new behavior.

In the case of election observation, the signal requires inviting international observers *and* receiving their endorsement of the election. Governments that invite observers and receive negative reports fail to signal to both domestic and international audiences that they are holding plausibly democratic elections. Normalization of a signal reinforces the behavior by generating costs for noncompliance. When the belief is accepted that all valued regime types send the signal, then choosing not to signal indicates that a state is not a valued type, further increasing the incentives for other international actors to imitate the signal.³⁰

My theory of norm development is therefore characterized by a change in benefits available to democratizing states, governments attempting to signal to external audiences, mimicry of successful signals by other governments, acceptance of the signal by prominent international actors, and enforcement of the norm by those who benefit from improved information about governments' types. International norms in a variety of issue areas could be explained by this theory, as I explore later. Distinctions among states regarding property rights protections, domestic political institutions, levels of corruption, civic and media freedoms, independence of central banks, or the presence or absence of specific military weapons are all sources of variation that have been rewarded by various international actors. The theory can help explain why most countries now have neoliberal economic institutions; why nearly all countries in the world hold national-level elections even where few believe that the process is democratic; why countries such as Iraq and North Korea are willing to allow weapons inspectors; and, returning to the question motivating this book, why most leaders now invite foreign monitors to evaluate their elections.

Democracy and the Norm of International Election Monitoring

This book presents an alternative causal path to the development of international norms and explains the rise and persistence of international election observation as a consequential form of international involvement

30. This emphasis on the costs of norm-violating behavior is similar to Axelrod, "An Evolutionary Approach to Norms."

in the domestic affairs of sovereign states. The norm of inviting observers, I argue, was initiated by leaders of developing countries in an effort to attract increased international support for democratic and democratizing governments. When powerful states expressed a general preference for supporting democratic regime types, initially in the early 1960s and overtly in the 1980s, the premium for being identified as a democratizing regime gave “true democrats” an incentive to signal their democratic credentials to international audiences.³¹ Although there were other possible signals of democratization, such as an opposition candidate victory or opposition party acceptance of the results, these leaders chose to invite observers as an action that distinguished their regime as one committed to democratization but that did not necessarily require them to give up power.

As the potential rewards for demonstrating a commitment to democracy increased and as international actors developed the belief that all governments holding potentially democratic elections would invite international observers, other benefit-seeking leaders imitated the signal even when they were not committed to democratization. This widespread and repeated behavior, coupled with the growing importance of democracy to international actors, changed international expectations such that inviting observers became an international norm. The norm holds that pro-democracy actors believe that all good types invite observers and receive their endorsement. Given uncertainty about the government's commitment to democracy, failing to hold internationally certified elections necessarily became a signal that a government was not holding democratic elections. Pro-democracy actors, primarily those at the international level but also domestic actors, began to rely on election monitoring to evaluate the democratic credentials of states and tied foreign aid and other targeted benefits to internationally certified elections. For example, following coups or other interruptions of democratic rule, Western aid donors

31. The international emphasis on democracy is a consequential and relatively unexplored variable within international relations. See McFaul, “Democracy Promotion as a World Value.” It is more thoroughly explored in the international law literature on the emerging right to democratic governance: Fox and Roth, “Democracy and International Law”; Rich, “Bringing Democracy into International Law”; Franck, “The Emerging Right to Democratic Governance.” See also the literature on the international dimensions of democratization, including Burnell, *Democracy Assistance*; Crawford, *Foreign Aid and Political Reform*; Drake, “The International Causes of Democratization”; Gleditsch and Ward, “Diffusion and the International Context of Democratization”; Levitsky and Way, “International Linkage and Democratization”; Mansfield and Pevehouse, “Democratization and International Organizations”; Pevehouse, *Democracy from Above*; Pevehouse, “Democracy from the Outside-In?”; Starr, “Democratic Dominoes”; Vachudova, *Europe Undivided*; Whitehead, *The International Dimensions of Democratization*.

frequently required internationally certified elections before normal bilateral relations could be restored. By the late 1990s, a government's refusal to invite observers became a conspicuous signal that the election was not legitimate, further constraining election-holding leaders throughout the developing world.

Alternative Explanations

This book outlines a new theory of international norm formation. The majority of existing work on international norm creation focuses on two causal pathways: norms that result from the work of committed activists, commonly referred to as norm entrepreneurs, and norms that result from attempts to facilitate international cooperation.³² Although not focused on norm formation, the literature on the international diffusion of policies also provides a potential alternative explanation for the spread of election monitoring.³³ I provide a brief summary of these general theories and contrast them with my argument.

Advocacy and Norm Entrepreneurs

The most prominent theory of norm development in international relations offers one possible explanation for the creation of norms under which compliance is costly. According to this theory, initiated by constructivist scholars of international relations, new and more controversial international norms are generated because coalitions of activists or powerful states pressure other actors to change their behavior. Activist pressure changes the decision calculus for leaders, and as a result state leaders are motivated to comply with the new norm. This activist-centered theory is

32. For representative works involving norms and international cooperation see Katzenstein, Keohane, and Krasner, "International Organization and the Study of World Politics"; Krasner, "Structural Causes and Regime Consequences"; Keohane, "Reciprocity in International Relations"; Keohane, *After Hegemony*; Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*. For a sample of widely recognized work on norm entrepreneurs, see Klotz, *Norms in International Relations*; Finnemore, "International Organizations as Teachers of Norms"; Risse-Kappen, Ropp, and Sikkink, *The Power of Human Rights*; Price, "Reversing the Gun Sights"; Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect*; Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change"; Nadelmann, "Global Prohibition Regimes."

33. Elkins, Guzman, and Simmons, "Competing for Capital: The Diffusion of Bilateral Investment Treaties, 1960–2000"; Gleditsch and Ward, "Diffusion and the International Context of Democratization"; Simmons and Elkins, "The Globalization of Liberalization"; Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett, *The Global Diffusion of Markets and Democracy*.

most clearly articulated by Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink: in the first stage of norm initiation, “norm entrepreneurs attempt to convince a critical mass of states (norm leaders) to embrace new norms.” Norm leaders then pressure other states to become norm followers, causing a “norm cascade” in which increasing numbers of states adopt the new norm. In the third stage of their theory, norms can become internalized and compliance with the norm becomes automatic.³⁴

Although instrumental logics play a part in this theory and many related arguments—the work of activists may be intended to, for example, generate costs for actors who fail to comply with the new norm—norm entrepreneurs are central in initiating and spreading the new behavior. Without this pressure, the activist-centered theory implies that states or other international actors that are better off not complying with the potential norm would not be motivated to change their behavior. Therefore, unless advocates for a new norm are sufficiently powerful, influential, or persuasive, attempts to change state behavior and generate new international norms are unlikely to succeed.

Like Finnemore and Sikkink, Richard Price highlights the work of transnational activists in the global campaign to generate a norm against the use of antipersonnel landmines.³⁵ Norm entrepreneurs and activists lobbied governments, generated international media attention against mine-producing states, mobilized domestic populations, and campaigned for the UN treaty banning the production and sale of landmines. Similarly, Nina Tannenwald argues that in addition to nuclear deterrence, a post-World War II international norm against the use of nuclear weapons explains the absence of nuclear weapon use since 1945. This norm was created, she argues, in part because of the work of a global and morally motivated network of activists who campaigned against the use of nuclear weapons and raised moral objections against them.³⁶ The work of activists, which may include networks of committed individuals, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), or states, is intended to “mobilize popular opinion and political support both within their host country and abroad” and ultimately to motivate international actors to change their behavior.³⁷

The pattern of election observation over time closely tracks the pattern of norm development described by Finnemore and Sikkink, including

34. Finnemore and Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,” 896.

35. Price, “Reversing the Gun Sights.”

36. Tannenwald, “The Nuclear Taboo.”

37. Nadelmann, “Global Prohibition Regimes,” 482.

norm initiation, norm cascade, and norm internalization.³⁸ It is tempting to conclude that the causal mechanism is the same and that norm entrepreneurs advocated the practice of election monitoring, causing it to spread, and lobbied powerful states to pressure noncomplying states to change their behavior. Finnemore's and Sikkink's theory is so widely accepted as the dominant explanation for norm development that when encountering a new international norm, some scholars assume that it must have been generated through activist pressure. This is clearly a tautology that Finnemore and Sikkink did not intend, but it highlights the dominant influence of their theory.

Advocacy-based theories of norm creation have been useful in explaining a number of now-prominent international norms governing state behavior, including the targeting of civilians in war, the production and use of landmines, trafficking in slaves, as well as those international norms proscribing individual behavior within states, such as international norms against child labor, killing endangered species, and discriminating against ethnic and religious minorities.³⁹ They have also been useful in demonstrating that international norms matter and that states may comply with international norms even when it is costly for them to do so.⁴⁰ Yet the activist theory of norm development does not—nor was it intended to—explain all international norms, nor all norms that are consequential.

Finnemore and Sikkink argue that “norms do not appear out of thin air; they are actively built by agents having strong notions about appropriate or desirable behavior in their community.”⁴¹ It is this feature of the Finnemore and Sikkink theory that most clearly distinguishes it from my argument in this book. By providing a theory of norm initiation and diffusion that does not require activism or imposition by powerful states, I focus explicitly on norms that are generated primarily through diffusely motivated strategic action and that can be created even in the absence of activist pressure.

Judith Kelley adopts the Finnemore and Sikkink model to explain the norm of election monitoring.⁴² In contrast to the more general theory and Kelley's explanation of election monitoring,⁴³ I argue that the primary

38. Finnemore and Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change.”

39. Checkel, “International Norms and Domestic Politics”; Klotz, *Norms in International Relations*; Payne, “Persuasion, Frames and Norm Construction”; Nadelmann, “Global Prohibition Regimes”; Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect*.

40. Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security*.

41. Finnemore and Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,” 896.

42. Kelley, “Assessing the Complex Evolution of Norms.”

43. *Ibid.*

motivation for the initiation, spread, and acceptance of international norms is not activist pressure but the incentive of individual states to signal their type and avoid being viewed as pseudo-democrats by influential international actors.

In the case of election monitoring, as I document in chapter 2, norm entrepreneurs and activists were conspicuously absent when election observation was initiated and began to spread, and regimes seeking international benefits, rather than activists, were the first movers in initiating election monitoring. Some scholars infer the existence of norm entrepreneurs because election observation is now an international norm, but evidence of norm entrepreneurship in election observation is nearly all present after the end of the Cold War, and well after election observation was initiated and diffused widely, undermining confidence in its explanatory potential.⁴⁴ Even prominent election observers such as former U.S. President Jimmy Carter were at first reluctant to engage in election observation. Carter grew willing to participate as an international monitor only after being invited by sovereign leaders as part of a broader peace process in Haiti and Nicaragua. Even after these elections, the Carter Center continued to emphasize that they would observe elections only if invited by the host government and opposition parties. Providing an even clearer example of international reluctance to engage in election monitoring, from the 1950s to 1990 the United Nations refused numerous invitations to monitor elections on the grounds that the practice violated sovereignty and constituted undue influence in the domestic affairs of member states. Even the Organization of American States, the first international organization to adopt international monitoring as a common practice, initially refused to send election monitors after being invited on multiple occasions by leaders of member states.

Norms and Incentives for Cooperation

Within international relations theory, one of the dominant approaches—frequently referred to as “rationalist” or “neoliberal institutionalism”—typically discusses norms as embedded within international institutions, and therefore generated along with them, frequently as a result of demand for interstate cooperation or through imposition by powerful states.⁴⁵ This second alternative theory of norm development is similar to my argument

44. Ibid.

45. Keohane, *After Hegemony*; Krasner, *International Regimes*; Young, “Regime Dynamics: The Rise and Fall of International Regimes.”

in that both focus on strategic interaction between international actors; however, the institutionalist theory is not intended to explain the formation of costly norms or norms that are not intended to facilitate cooperation within international institutions. The types of norms discussed by institutionalists—such as those governing the flow of goods across borders—are distinct in that they contribute to or result from mutually beneficial international cooperation. Any risks associated with the norm must therefore be outweighed by the benefits of cooperation. Cooperative norms (also called conventions) can result from simple coordination dilemmas, such as a community's decision to drive on one side of the road or the adoption of international aviation control regulations. Defection is automatically punished, and the gains from following the norm are clear. Norms may be sticky or path dependent and may persist after the incentives that generated them change, but in general, the substantive focus is on norms that facilitate international cooperation by providing focal points and common knowledge or by constraining or ordering preferences.⁴⁶ Similarly, scholars in economics and international law have argued that norms and other social conventions can develop spontaneously as a result of repeated interactions and persist because they are Nash equilibria, with no actor having the incentive to deviate from the norm.⁴⁷

My argument presents an alternative causal explanation for the creation of international norms and shows how consequential international norms can be generated unintentionally in a process that is endogenous to strategic interaction. Nevertheless, the interests of powerful states and pro-democracy advocates were important in raising the profile of democracy during the Cold War and generating the near-universal support for democratic governments within international organizations. International pressure for democracy or democratization, however, does not necessarily include pressure for monitoring of elections, and my argument is that the norm of election monitoring was generated primarily because states seeking international benefits reacted to growing international support for democratic states. I find little historical evidence to show that early advocates attempted to pressure other governments to invite observers. Across other issue areas, signaling-generated norms may coexist with advocacy, norm entrepreneurs, pressure from powerful states, and incentives

46. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*; Katzenstein, Keohane, and Krasner, "International Organization and the Study of World Politics."

47. Sugden, "Spontaneous Order"; Koh, "Why Do Nations Obey International Law?"; Axelrod, "An Evolutionary Approach to Norms."

for cooperation, although I emphasize the distinction to make my theoretical contribution clear.

In relation to election monitoring, even in a counterfactual world in which the United States demanded that all democratizing countries invite observers, or if a transnational advocacy network developed with the objective of pressuring or shaming states into inviting international election observers, there are several reasons why it was unlikely they could have persuaded state leaders who were not already committed to democracy to begin allowing such an intrusion into their domestic political affairs. Invitations to international election monitors from sovereign governments motivated to improve their country's democratic credentials were a necessary first step. Additionally, international organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization of American States initially objected quite strenuously to the practice of election monitoring as a violation of the organizations' commitment to nonintervention. In the absence of repeated invitations from sovereign leaders, it is not clear that they would have been persuaded to not only send observers but also to initiate election observation, pressure countries to invite observers, and force observers upon unwilling states. Finally, pressuring governments to invite observers would have been unlikely to succeed for a very practical reason. Without government permission, it is extremely difficult for foreigners to engage in effective election monitoring because they can be denied entry to the country and access to important parts of the electoral process. In the case of election monitoring, and in other similar cases, my contention is that election observation would not have spread so widely had it not been initiated by state leaders in an effort to (sometimes falsely) signal the democratic quality of their elections. International pressure for democracy, democratization, human rights, and self-determination played a role in motivating states to find a signal of their commitment to democratization, but the norm of election monitoring would not have developed without the incentives generated by the dynamic signaling process.

Diffusion of Policies across Time and Space

An additional alternative explanation for the norm of election monitoring is suggested by the literature on international diffusion of policies. Although the policy diffusion literature is not intended to explain international norm formation, it is similar to my argument in several ways. Like my argument, recent theories of policy diffusion also focus on instrumental motivations in explaining the spread of behaviors among states. For example, Beth Simmons and Zachary Elkins argue that the diffusion

of neoliberal economic policies, including capital account liberalization, exchange rate policy unification, and current account liberalization, have taken place in part because of international factors that influence information and the available set of policy choices. They argue that the incentives for a given state to adopt a particular policy are influenced by the foreign policy choices of other states and the information used by governments to make policy choices is also altered by policy choices in other states.⁴⁸ Similarly, Simmons, Frank Dobbin, and Geoffrey Garrett theorize that policies diffuse between states by four processes: coercion, competition, learning, and emulation.⁴⁹ Competition, learning, and emulation are all elements of my signaling model of norm formation and diffusion, although my theory can be considered a more specific version of a diffusion model and one that focuses on a particular causal mechanism. Kristian Gleditsch and Michael Ward highlight international factors in explaining the global diffusion of democratic political institutions.⁵⁰ In addition to domestic causes of democratization, they demonstrate that a democratic transition is more likely in a given nondemocracy if neighboring countries also democratize and “firmly reject the idea that institutional change is driven entirely by domestic processes and unaffected by regional and international events.”⁵¹ However, like Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett, they do not go into great detail about the casual mechanism underlying how international variables affect democratic transitions.

Across the literature on international policy diffusion, international norms are treated as a potential explanatory variable rather than a topic to be explained, and scholars in this literature tend to present norm-based explanations for the diffusion of policies as an alternative to those that focus on strategic behavior. For example, Gleditsch and Ward present the argument that “norms and values . . . favor the development and durability of democratic rule” as an alternative to their interpretation.⁵² Simmons and Elkins argue that one way that the policy choice payoffs can be altered are “ideational” and “works through the more subjective pressures of prevailing global norms.”⁵³ As I discuss in the next section, this contrast presents an incomplete picture of the role of international norms

48. Simmons and Elkins, “The Globalization of Liberalization.”

49. Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett, “Introduction”; Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett, *The Global Diffusion of Markets and Democracy*.

50. Gleditsch and Ward, “Diffusion and the International Context of Democratization.”

51. *Ibid.*, 930.

52. Gleditsch and Ward, “Diffusion and the Spread of Democratic Institutions,” 263.

53. Simmons and Elkins, “The Globalization of Liberalization,” 172.

when accounting for the widespread diffusion of a variety of policies and practices among states. Although these scholars do not attempt to explain international norms, I believe that many of the substantive topics they explore can be better understood if viewed through the lens of international norm formation, as I discuss in greater detail below.

Election Monitoring Is Costless?

A final alternative explanation, and a challenge to my argument and the overall theme of this book, would be that election monitoring does not matter: if it is costless to invite observers, then it would be easy for all state leaders to mimic the trend even if they are engaging in widespread election fraud, and election monitoring would be relatively uninteresting as a topic. Therefore, in order to evaluate my argument, it is also necessary to evaluate whether election monitoring matters in substantive ways.

Several consequences of election monitoring are implied directly by my theory. The signal of inviting observers must be more costly for pseudo-democrats than for leaders committed to holding democratic elections. There are at least three ways that election monitoring matters for the domestic politics of inviting states and that make election monitoring more costly for pseudo-democrats. First, the existence of the norm of election monitoring may reduce international benefits for those who invite monitors and are caught cheating, as well as for those pseudo-democrats who do not invite them at all. Second, election monitors may reduce fraud directly and cost pseudo-democrats a percentage of their fraudulently obtained vote share. Third, the dynamics of signaling and norm creation triggered an evolving game of strategy between international monitors attempting to evaluate the quality of elections and incumbent leaders seeking international certification of their elections. Taken together, the potential costs of election monitoring act as a set of diverse constraints on governments, making it more difficult for leaders to hold elections without risking their hold on power and also illustrating why international monitoring is an important—although imperfect—element of democracy promotion.

Caveats for International Norms

International norms are often mischaracterized or misunderstood by political scientists, and it is helpful to clarify several points. First, I focus on international norms that are generated unintentionally, in the absence of advocates, but that are also puzzling because compliance with them can

be costly. The current literature provides few examples of norms that are both consequential (i.e., noncooperative norms) *and* that are generated without norm entrepreneurs, incentives for cooperation, or imposition by powerful states.⁵⁴

Second, my theory is not about moral or ethical motivation, which is typically used to explain the commitment of activists and is assumed by some to be a necessary component of international norms. Although international norms or “shared standards of appropriate behavior” must be expected to possess a quality of “oughtness,” they need not be based in morality to be international norms.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the substantive focus of many studies, such as those on torture, the slave trade, landmines, child labor, female genital mutilation, treatment of medical personnel in war, the use of nuclear weapons, and other similar cases of international norm formation may lead one to conclude otherwise. My view of international norms, following a widely used definition in the literature, is more general and can be applied to shared expectations of appropriate behavior across issue areas, regardless of the moral dimension.

Third, although I present an overtly instrumental or “rational” theory of norm formation and diffusion that is distinct from existing theories, it is far from the only theory of norm creation to include some element of strategic interaction or rational behavior. The debate about international norm formation is sometimes misperceived as a debate between rationalists and constructivists over whether norms matter. This perceived debate is outdated, at best, and by some accounts it never took place. Highlighting constructivist attention to rational action, Finnemore and Sikkink label the process of norm formation “strategic social construction” and argue that “rationality cannot be separated from any politically significant episode of normative influence or normative change, just as the normative context conditions any episode of rational choice.”⁵⁶ Peter Katzenstein, Robert Keohane, and Stephen Krasner argue that although constructivists and rationalists disagree on ontology, “on issues of epistemology and methodology, however, no great differences divide constructivists from rationalists.”⁵⁷ Similarly, James Fearon and Alexander Wendt complain

54. Some coordination norms are generated without activists, but because they generate gains from cooperation, compliance with such norms is not controversial. See Sugden, “Spontaneous Order.”

55. Goertz and Diehl, “Toward a Theory of International Norms.”

56. Finnemore and Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,” 888.

57. Katzenstein, Keohane, Stephen Krasner, “International Organization and the Study of World Politics,” 675.

that rationalism and constructivism are often falsely pitted against one another, and some scholars mistakenly argue that “rationalists believe that people are always acting on material self-interest, and constructivists believe that people are always acting on the basis of norms and values.”⁵⁸ They go on to argue that this widely held misperception is due to misunderstanding of rationalism, not to any fundamental theoretical conflict between rationalism and constructivism.

Additionally, a number of prominent scholars focused on international norms have now highlighted that rational choice and constructivism complement each other more often than not and that rational or strategic action is closely tied to norm initiation and norm compliance.⁵⁹ For example, in relation to the norm of Arabism governing the international relations of Arab states, Michael Barnett argues that changes in this norm were generated through “social and strategic interactions” between rational and self-interested Arab states. In explaining state acceptance of the norm of territorial integrity, Mark Zacher argues that instrumental motivations played a large part in driving states to accept the norm, in addition to democratic ideals promoted through international organizations.⁶⁰

A final clarification relates to which actors must hold an international norm in order for it to exist. It is not necessary for those actors who are expected to comply with the norm to share it. Rather, it is entirely possible for one group of states—such as the Western developed democracies—to share expectations about the appropriate behavior of a second group of states—such as developing countries. Continuing with Zacher’s territorial integrity norm, it is not necessary for all states to believe that the norm is legitimate in order for it to be enforced.⁶¹ It only must be true that some sufficiently powerful states share the norm of respect for territorial integrity and are willing to enforce it against potential aggressors. The fact that many powerful states and most international organizations now share the norm of election observation is sufficient to motivate change in state behavior; it is not necessary that every state leader choosing to invite

58. Fearon and Wendt, “Rationalism v. Constructivism,” 58.

59. Abbott and Snidal, “Values and Interests: International Legalization in the Fight against Corruption”; Barnett, *Dialogues in Arab Politics*; Finnemore and Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change”; Fearon and Wendt, “Rationalism v. Constructivism”; Kelley, “Assessing the Complex Evolution of Norms: The Rise of International Election Monitoring”; Zacher, “The Territorial Integrity Norm.”

60. Zacher, “The Territorial Integrity Norm.”

61. *Ibid.*

observers does so out of a belief in the appropriateness or legitimacy of the norm.⁶²

In my theory, only after the norm exists are costs imposed for non-compliance. If the norm, and the associated costs of noncompliance, did not exist, improvements in the accuracy of the signal (the quality of election monitoring) would mean that leaders could stop playing the game without fear of sanctions (losing only potential benefits from successful signaling). With the international norm and the expectation that all true democrats invite international observers to their elections, the costs of noncompliance reinforce the incentives for states to participate in the signaling game, even when compliance with the norm becomes more costly. The norm makes it more likely that domestic and international democracy promoters will react to a negative report or a country's failure to invite observers.

States' leaders may, of course, still choose to comply with the norm because they have internalized it or because they believe it is legitimate, and for most purposes it is not productive to debate whether states comply with international norms out of instrumental or norm-based reasons. As Fearon and Wendt argue, the answer could always be "both."⁶³ In the case of election monitoring, by distinguishing between norm-compliers and those who hold the norm, however, I am able to show how norms generate costs for noncompliance that would otherwise not exist and argue that the international norm causes states to continue inviting observers when it would not otherwise be in their interest to do so.⁶⁴

Outline of the Book

In chapter 1, I present this argument in greater detail, working up to a set of empirical implications about the causes and consequences of the norm of election monitoring that are evaluated in chapters 2–5. In chapter 2, I focus on changes over time in the reasons why leaders invite international election observers. I provide a detailed narrative description

62. This point is similar to the "logic of appropriateness" and "logic of consequences" arguments outlined by March and Olsen in "The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders." Actors sharing the norm are motivated by a "logic of appropriateness," but actors that comply with a norm may be doing so not because they believe it is right but rather based on a "logic of consequences."

63. Fearon and Wendt, "Rationalism v. Constructivism."

64. For a discussion of the differing motivations to comply with new norms, see Hurd, "Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics."

of the governments that initiated election monitoring and present a new dataset documenting the trend of election monitoring over time. Using descriptive statistics and regression analysis, I use original data to evaluate whether my theory about the causes of internationally monitored elections is consistent with the cross-national empirical evidence. I also compare my argument to the alternative explanations outlined above, for which I find only limited support.

Chapter 3 considers the supply side of election monitoring and documents changes in international democracy promotion as well as the change in democracy-contingent benefits associated with the norm of election observation, providing quantitative and qualitative evidence in support of my argument. I show that pro-democracy actors are responsive to the reports of observers and that the reports of observers are now used in many prominent indices, such as Freedom House, that quantify a country's political institutions. I also document changes in international benefits over time in several illustrative cases, providing clear evidence of the connection between international benefits and internationally certified elections.

In chapter 4, I use experimental evidence to document that election monitoring is costly for pseudo-democrats in a way that it is not for true democrats. At a minimum, monitoring reduces election day manipulation, thus making it harder or more expensive to steal an election outright. For those holding clean elections, the same cost does not exist, an empirical finding that buttresses my theoretical argument.

In chapter 5, I explore the game of strategy between international observers and incumbent governments that are intent on manipulating the election and evading the consequences of a negative report. Using qualitative evidence, documented changes in observation methodology, and details from hundreds of election observation reports, I illustrate how the types of election manipulation have changed over time, in part responding to improved methods of election observation and increased willingness by other international actors to tie benefits to the reports of observers.

Even as it became more costly for many leaders to comply with the norm, the growing international emphasis on democracy meant that the norm was reinforced rather than weakened. So long as democracy remains a characteristic valued by other states in the international system, the norm will reinforce itself. However, should democracy become unimportant to powerful states and international organizations, the norm will weaken, and pseudo-democrats would be the first to stop inviting international election monitors.

In the concluding chapter, I briefly extend the argument to several other issue areas, including international weapons inspection, bilateral

investment treaties, and the diffusion of a variety of neoliberal economic policies. I then discuss the implications of this study for future research on international norm formation, election manipulation, and international constraints on pseudo-democratic leaders. In terms of policy, I outline the implications of this project for international election monitoring and for democracy promotion and international pressure more generally.

Indirect Pressure, Diffusion, and Norm Formation

This book presents a theory of norm development that explores how states in the developing world respond to the preferences of powerful states. Regardless of where these preferences originate, the overarching implication of this theory is that leaders respond to the changing preferences of more powerful actors within the international system. A corollary to this theory is that it is not necessary for powerful states to impose their will on less-powerful actors for new international norms, rules, and institutions to be generated. Rather than requiring the work of advocates, imposition by powerful states, or mutually beneficial coordination, these rules and norms can result from diffusely motivated reaction to anticipated international benefits. States respond to the availability of international benefits, and successful responses are mimicked. When signals diffuse in such a manner because of their relationship to characteristics that are valued or rewarded, signals can quickly become international norms, even when no relevant actors pressure for a new norm.

This project covers the global development of international election observation from 1960 through 2006. The central argument is presented as a signaling game between incumbent leaders and democracy promoters. The empirical implications derived from this model are evaluated using several types of evidence, including original cross-national data on elections and election observation throughout the developing world, natural and field experiments involving the random assignment of international observers, and qualitative evidence about the dynamics between leaders, international observers, and pro-democracy international actors. By moving from a macro-level theory explaining the new norm of election observation to cross-national, qualitative, and micro-level tests of the implications of this theory, I provide a comprehensive examination of why election monitoring has become an international norm as well as the consequences of the norm for governments throughout the world.