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The Pseudo-Democrat's Dilemma

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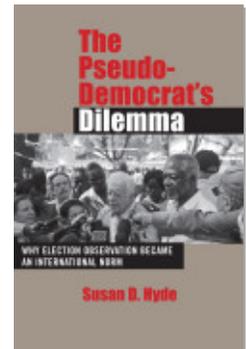
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SOVEREIGN LEADERS AND THE DECISION TO INVITE OBSERVERS

The Costa Rican elections of February 1962 are widely cited as the first internationally observed election in a sovereign state, but they were not the first elections for which a government had sought international observers.¹ Four years earlier, the democratizing government of Costa Rica and the threatened Cuban dictatorship each attempted to invite international observers, foreshadowing the trajectory of international observation in which both true and pseudo-democrats invite foreign election monitors. These invitations were issued amid heated debates within the Americas about the relationship between democracy, anti-communism, and U.S. support for dictators in the Western Hemisphere. Costa Rica invited observers from the UN and the Organization of American States (OAS) to the 1958 elections for the purpose of making the election, in the words of President José Figueres, “an example to the Americas.”² The *New York Times* coverage describes the extensive efforts undertaken by the Costa Rican government to identify a credible signal of the quality of their democratic institutions:

Dr. Alberto F. Canas, representative of Costa Rica at the United Nations, said today that the presidential election in his country next February would be the first to be conducted in Latin America with neutral observers

1. See Slater, *The OAS and United States Foreign Policy*; Beigbeder, *International Monitoring of Plebiscites, Referenda and National Elections*; Santa-Cruz, “Constitutional Structures, Sovereignty, and the Emergence of Norms”; McCoy, “Monitoring and Mediating Elections during Latin American Democratization”; Middlebrook, *Electoral Observation and Democratic Transitions in Latin America*; Legler, Lean, and Boniface, *Promoting Democracy in the Americas*; Organization of American States, “Supporting the Electoral Process.”

2. Special to the *New York Times*, “Costa Rica Inviting Election Observers,” *New York Times*, January 16, 1958.

present under the auspices of an international organization. The initiative came from the Costa Rican Government and was a voluntary move, he added. . . . President José Figueres asked Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld to submit a list of individuals from democratic countries around the world, as potential observers of the balloting. On Sunday Dr. Canas will fly to San José with the confidential list delivered to him today.³

President Figueres' reputation as the country's "father of democracy"⁴ and his vehement opposition to other dictatorships in the region made him one of the hemisphere's leaders in lobbying the U.S. and other governments to adopt more explicitly pro-democracy foreign policies. Despite his efforts to attract foreign observers, the UN and the OAS denied the government's request to provide official observers for the 1958 Costa Rican elections, and no record of a formal observation mission has been uncovered.⁵

Several months later, the Cuban government also attempted to invite international election observers. Facing threat from Fidel Castro, an arms embargo, and pressure from the United States "to curtail repression and hold honest elections without his own participation,"⁶ Batista scheduled multiparty elections, allowed opposition candidates to run, and released a number of political prisoners.⁷ In November of 1958, following demands from the opposition parties, Batista invited international observers from the OAS and the UN to monitor the elections.⁸ Both organizations refused to send observers, but the invitation stands out as an early example of a government with few democratic credentials attempting to demonstrate its new—and likely false—commitment to democratic elections following heavy international and domestic pressure for political liberalization.

Although the central question of this book is ultimately why inviting foreign observers became an international norm, the first question to ask is why leaders invite observers at all. This chapter evaluates why leaders began inviting election monitoring and why election observation spread throughout the world by using a variety of empirical evidence, including

3. Special to the *New York Times*, "Vote Will Be Observed: U.N. Hands Costa Rica List of Individuals She Requested," *New York Times*, December 14, 1957.

4. United Press International, "José Figueres, Father of Costa Rican Democracy, Dies," UPI, June 8, 1990.

5. It is possible that the three observers suggested by the United Nations were present for the 1958 Costa Rican elections.

6. Aguila, *Cuba*, 36.

7. Braddock, "1958 Elections."

8. Special to the *New York Times*, "Cuba Will Accept Voting Observers," *New York Times*, October 18, 1958.

government rhetoric about the decision to invite observers and cross-national data from 1960 to 2006 documenting when and where election monitoring diffused. The evidence in this chapter evaluates and lends support to the first seven empirical implications outlined in chapter 1, all of which focus on explaining the decision by governments to invite election monitors. I conclude the chapter by discussing the normalization of election monitoring, including its nearly universal spread, even among the long-term developed democracies.

Early Inviters and the Diffusion of Election Observation

The early history of election observation shows a majority of cases in which leaders were attempting to demonstrate that they were leading genuine transitions to democracy, and a few cases, such as in the Dominican Republic in 1966, Bolivia in 1978, and Nicaragua in 1963, in which electoral autocrats attempted to bring some undeserved democratic legitimacy to their continued rule by holding elections and allowing a managed transition to a puppet president. International election monitoring had previously taken place only in nonsovereign or trust territories, most commonly for plebiscites on territorial issues.⁹

Although these first cases are notable for initiating the practice of international election monitoring in sovereign states, such as those in Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic in the 1960s, they are distinct. The rate of observed elections continued at less than five per year until the early 1970s. With several exceptions, these early missions sent only one or two observers to the capital city on election day and rarely criticized elections.¹⁰ No elections were observed between 1973 and 1976, with the practice picking up again in the late 1970s.¹¹

As election observation spread, observers were particularly likely to be invited to high-profile elections following transitions from authoritarian rule in which the government's commitment to democracy was uncertain. For example, the 1984 Guatemalan elections were observed by the OAS following a 1983 coup. The Efraín Ríos Montt government, remembered

9. Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*; Wambaugh, *A Monograph on Plebiscites*; Joseph Coy Green Papers, *Report of the Allied Mission to Observe the Greek Elections*.

10. Reports from the 1962 and 1966 Dominican elections suggest that foreign observers were willing to criticize elections, but they simply chose not to do so based on their observations of the quality of the election.

11. Legler, Lean, and Boniface, *Promoting Democracy in the Americas*.

for the worst human rights abuses in Guatemala's history, was deposed in a coup led by Oscar Mejías.¹² Although Mejías came to power through blatantly undemocratic means, he attempted to manage a return to democracy in Guatemala. He lifted the state of siege, put forth electoral laws, allowed political activity that had been banned under Ríos Montt, and did not permit his government to support any parties or candidates. Concluding his role in the transition, he did not run for office and allowed another individual to be elected president.¹³

In El Salvador, the OAS observed the 1982 elections to the constituent assembly that were conducted in an attempted return to democracy. In 1984 presidential elections were held amid widespread violence.¹⁴ The OAS also sent observers to these elections, and pro-United States and anti-communist candidate José Duarte was elected. Other notable elections include Grenada in 1984 following the 1983 U.S. invasion; the 1978 general elections in the Dominican Republic, in which Joaquín Balaguer (Trujillo's former puppet president) was voted out of office; and the 1978 national assembly elections in Panama in which there was a peaceful transfer of power.

Leaders of sovereign states outside Latin America also began to invite observers in the 1980s. After having observed elections for independence in several nonsovereign states such as Rhodesia in 1979, the Commonwealth began observing elections in newly sovereign states in Africa with observation missions in Zimbabwe and Uganda in 1980.¹⁵

By the mid-1980s, increasingly blatant pseudo-democrats began to seek international observers. The growing strength of the link between democracy and internationally observed elections meant that pro-democracy advocates—both domestically and internationally—began to pressure for observers. Government rhetoric displays the reluctance of these pseudo-democrats to invite observers as well as their attempts to manipulate them. Before the 1986 “snap” elections in the Philippines, the foreign minister was quoted as saying that “[t]he Republic of the Philippines is a sovereign and independent state, with the supreme authority to conduct its electoral processes any way it sees fit” and that Marcos was under “no obligation”

12. Sanford, *Buried Secrets: Truth and Human Rights in Guatemala*.

13. McCleary, “Guatemala's Postwar Prospects.”

14. Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*.

15. The Commonwealth is an international organization based in London, with fifty four member states as of 2010. It was formalized as an organization when the British Empire dissolved, and many member states are former British colonies. The Commonwealth also observed elections in the nonsovereign countries of British Guiana (1964), Mauritius (1967), and Gibraltar (1967).

to invite observers but did so as “a gesture of the good faith” and to prove that “we are a government of laws.”¹⁶ President Ferdinand Marcos announced his decision to invite international observers on a television program that was broadcast in the United States and the Philippines:

You're all invited to come and we will invite the members of the American Congress to please come and see what is happening here. All this talk about fraud—that's sour grapes [from] all these poor losers.¹⁷

After twenty-six years of single-party rule, President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia agreed in July of 1990 to allow a national referendum on one-party rule. He proposed the referendum following an attempted coup and during widespread unrest over increases in the price of food. Kaunda was also facing serious international pressure, having defaulted on a \$23 million payment to the World Bank. In response to the proposed referendum, opposition groups and trade unions demanded the end to a nearly three-decade-long state of emergency, the legalization of opposition parties, and the presence of international observers. By September 1990, Kaunda scrapped plans for the referendum in favor of multiparty elections, and by February 1991, he had agreed to invite foreign observers, including the Commonwealth, the Carter Center, and the National Democratic Institute, which helped organize and fund a broad-based domestic election monitoring network.

Displaying tactics that have become common among pseudo-democrats, in the year before the elections Kaunda's government “arrested political opponents, banned opposition gatherings, fired critics from within the ruling party and unleashed riot police on protesters . . . fired the chief editors of the country's two daily newspapers” and prohibited the government printing press from producing an independent weekly paper.¹⁸ The government also attempted to manipulate and discredit international observers after they had issued somewhat critical statements about the government's preparations for elections and its misuse of state resources. Kaunda's campaign ran a full-page newspaper advertisement alleging that the international observers were biased and that they were in conspiracy

16. Quote and paraphrase from R. Gregory Nokes, “Administration Studying Aid Use in Philippines,” *The Associated Press*, January 22, 1986.

17. Fernando del Mundo. Newswire report. United Press International, November 3, 1985.

18. Melinda Ham, “Kaunda Manipulates Media in Struggle for Political Survival,” *Associated Press*, January 2, 1991.

to overthrow him.¹⁹ Yet despite these efforts Kaunda lost to Frederick Chiluba and, surprising many witnesses to the event, peacefully stepped down and respected the results of the country's first multiparty elections.

Pro-democracy domestic actors also began pressuring for observers in some countries. Some pseudo-democrats also came under pressure from domestic constituencies with an interest in signaling the country's commitment to democracy and potentially exposing the country's leadership as less than democratic. In inviting observers from the Commonwealth Secretariat to the 1990 elections, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed explained his decision, saying that "we suspect certain groups are already plotting to smear the image of the country in the next election" and that "it is vital that we get outside people with no interest to witness and observe our election."²⁰

Although individual leaders invite international observers for diverse reasons, early election monitoring is notable for its signaling character. The rhetorical justifications used by leaders to explain their decision to invite observers suggest that they were primarily interested in finding a way to signal the quality of their elections to international and domestic audiences. Arguing for international observers for the 1997 elections in Jamaica, the president of the Jamaica Manufacturers' Association said that inviting observers "would send a signal to the international community that our democratic process is open." Jamaican Prime Minister Percival Patterson initially refused international observers, complaining that "it would be a travesty to the legacy of our democratic reputation were we now to suggest that we are incapable, as a country, to administer our electoral or other affairs."²¹ Patterson later relented, inviting an official delegation from the Carter Center.

That inviting international election observers became a widely accepted signal of democratic elections is perhaps an historical accident I document in greater detail in chapter 3. However, election monitoring became a credible signal of a government's commitment to democratic elections because observers made it more difficult for pseudo-democrats to cheat and get away with it and because attempts by pseudo-democrats to discredit election monitoring as unwanted foreign intervention were undermined

19. Obinna Anyadike, "Zambia: Commonwealth Observers Demand an Apology from Kaunda," IPS-Inter Press Service, October 28, 1991.

20. "Malaysia to Invite Observers for General Elections," Xinhua General News Service, June 21, 1990.

21. Lloyd Williams, "Jamaican Leader: International Elections Observers Not Necessary," Associated Press Worldstream, April 7, 1997.

by the increasing numbers of countries seeking international monitors. As the reputation of observers began to spread and it became clear that they were willing to criticize fraudulent elections, as more countries began holding elections in which the intentions of the government were uncertain, and as election monitors criticized several high-profile elections, pro-democracy domestic groups began to voice their support for inviting observers. Domestic support for observers was far from universal, however, with some arguing that they “sprinkled holy water on a rigged process.”²² Nevertheless, the incentive for leaders to find a signal of their commitment to democratization led them to invite observers, even when (or perhaps because) doing so would increase the risk that election fraud would be caught and condemned. I now turn to a cross-national quantitative evaluation of the spread of election monitoring and more explicit evaluation of the first seven empirical implications outlined in chapter 1.

Global Data on Elections and Election Observation

Much of the quantitative evidence in this chapter is drawn from an original dataset on national election events in the developing world. When beginning research for this project, existing data on elections were inadequate or incomplete, particularly for elections held in nondemocratic regimes. Because part of the puzzle is why leaders invite international monitors to undemocratic elections, including even the worst elections in the analysis is particularly important. My dataset includes all national elections from 1960 to 2006 in countries with a population greater than 500,000. Appendix B provides a more detailed codebook, lists the primary sources, and lists all countries included and excluded from the analysis.

Coding National Elections

Each observation in the dataset is a separate election in an independent state. If multiple offices are elected on the same day (or during one consecutive multiday election period), the election is treated as one observation. Elections on separate days, even when held in the same country in the same year, are treated as separate observations (for example, a legislative election in June and a presidential election in December are counted as separate observations). Although data were collected on multiround elections, the statistical analysis examines only first-round elections because

22. Beigbeder, *International Monitoring of Plebiscites, Referenda and National Elections*, 297.

the decision to invite observers in the second round is completely determined by first-round invitations. National referenda on constitutional or other substantive issues were excluded because they represent different strategic decisions made by the incumbent leader. In some isolated cases, incumbents held referenda on their own continued rule. Referenda on the continued rule of the executive are equivalent to elections with only one candidate, and both are included.

Defining Internationally Observed Elections

For every election event, I also code whether the election was internationally observed. International election observers are official delegations of foreigners who observe and report on the electoral process. In nearly all cases, international observers were formally invited by the host government. There are some minor exceptions to this rule, discussed below. Sometimes the incumbent government delegates the decision to invite observers to an agent, such as the central election commission. However, because international observers must be allowed access to the electoral process in order to do their job (which includes entering polling stations on election day and observing the vote tabulation process), it is difficult for them to observe without official credentials from the host government. Even in cases in which observers are issued a formal invitation by a government agent, the central government retains the residual ability to prevent them from entering the country to observe on election day. In 2005, the rule that observers must be invited was institutionalized in the *Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation*. The document, signed by more than twenty of the largest and most respected organizations that sponsor observation missions, states that an international observation mission should not be recognized as such unless the election-holding country, “issues an invitation or otherwise indicates its willingness to accept international election observation missions.”²³

Data were collected from election observation missions whose quality varied, including observers whose reputation suggests that they always approve elections regardless of their quality. No organizations sending official delegations of foreign observers were excluded from the data, although I explore varying quality of observers in chapter 5. Election monitoring data were collected in two ways. First, information was collected

23. UN, *Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers*.

directly from organizations that sponsor election observation missions. Because some reports have been lost or were never made public, and because some organizations do not keep comprehensive documentation of all observer missions, for each election after 1978 newswire reports for dates surrounding elections were also searched for mention of international observers.²⁴ In this manner, the record of whether an election was monitored was checked by organization and by election. Additional information from case studies and scholarly articles supplemented these sources.²⁵

There are four types of borderline cases in coding observed elections. In a handful of elections, observers were invited and deployed, but because the conditions were judged to be so poor that a democratic election was impossible, the missions withdrew before election day. In these cases, when the observer mission issues a report on the quality of the election but suspends the mission before election day, I coded the election as observed.

As election observation began to spread throughout Latin America in the late 1970s, there was some debate about which domestic actors had the authority to invite international observers. In some cases, the agreed upon standard was that if all political parties requested observers, they considered themselves invited. Additionally, in several isolated cases between 1978 and 1984, domestic human rights organizations, such as the Guyana Human Rights Association, extended invitations to international election observers directly, and observers from international human rights organizations such as the International Human Rights Law Group or the British Parliamentary Human Rights Group accepted. These elections are coded as internationally observed.

There are also several cases in which autocratic regimes “invited” observers via press release on the newswire, but the invitation was not perceived as credible and no observers were willing or able to accept the invitation. For example, Saddam Hussein’s regime officially announced that they had invited 10,000 foreign observers to the 1995 Iraqi elections in which he was the only candidate. No specific organizations were invited, no official delegations were deployed to the country, and no reports were issued. This election and several others like it were not coded as internationally observed even though an invitation to observers was technically issued.

24. The terms “international,” “foreign,” “monitor,” and “observer” were used in Lexis-Nexis searches.

25. Legler, Lean, and Boniface, *Promoting Democracy in the Americas*.

Finally, there are some reports of “international observers” that are, in fact, direct representatives of individual governments and that observe the election only for internal purposes. These delegations are usually not invited, and they typically do not issue public reports on the quality of the election. They are also more likely to be viewed as biased toward one candidate or party. In general, I do not code these delegations as international observers because they do not issue public reports on election quality and are frequently indistinguishable from foreign embassy staff, which have long paid close attention to election day proceedings in the countries in which they are stationed. There are, however, cases in which these country-sponsored delegations joined with official observer missions from intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) or international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), or combined with representatives of other countries under “coordination and support” by the UN. These missions are coded as official international observers despite the involvement of embassy staff.

Therefore, for each election (each observation in the dataset), there is an indication of whether it was observed and by whom. Many elections are observed by multiple groups, and both international NGOs and IGOs are recorded as sponsors of observation missions.²⁶

26. The majority of election-monitoring missions were carried out by the following organizations: NGOs include the Asian Network for Free Elections, Carter Center, Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, International Foundation for Electoral Systems, International Human Rights Law Group, International Republican Institute for International Affairs, National Democratic Institute, and the Washington Office on Latin America. IGOs include the African Union (formerly Organization of African Unity), Caribbean Community and Common Market, Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth of Independent States, Council of Europe, Economic Community of East African States, European Union, Organization of American States, Organisation Internationale de La Francophonie, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Parliamentary Assembly Council of Europe, Southern African Development Community, and the United Nations. Other organizations recorded in the dataset as having deployed one or more international observer missions include the Andean Parliament, Andean Community, Arab Centre for the Independence of the Judiciary and Legal Professions, Arab League, Arab Maghreb Union, Association of Asian Election Authorities, Association of Central and East European Election Officials, Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa, British Helsinki Human Rights Group, Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians, Center for Exchange and Solidarity, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), Community of Sahel-Saharan States, East African Community, Economic Community of Central African States, European Elections Observatory, European Federation of Liberian Associations, European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations, Freedom House, Global Exchange, Helsinki Committee of Norway, Indian Ocean Commission, International Mission for Iraqi Elections,

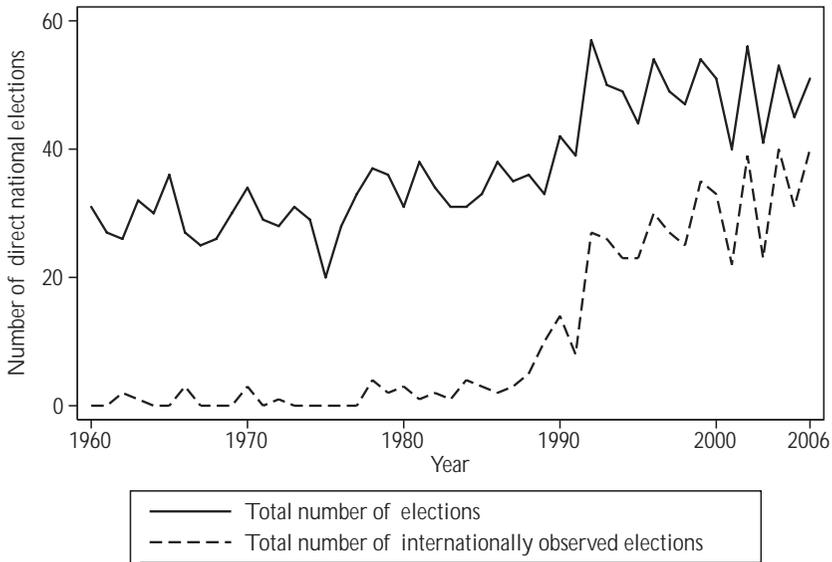


Figure 2.1. Total number of elections per year, 1960–2006

Source: Author

Note: Includes 1,759 elections in 157 independent states.

Trends in International Election Monitoring

Earlier I presented the puzzle of election observation in part by showing the rate of internationally observed elections over time, as well as the percentage of those elections that received negative reports (see introduction, figure I.1). As illustrated in greater detail in figure 2.1, the total number of elections, as well as the rate of observed elections, increased substantially between the 1980s and 1990s, when the number of states in the international system also grew.²⁷

International Mission for Monitoring Haitian Elections, Islamic Conference Organization, Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, Latin American Studies Association, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA), Research Group on the Democratic, Economic and Social Development of Africa (GERDDES-Africa), Shanghai Cooperation Organization, South American Common Market (MERCOSUR), South African Association for Regional Cooperation, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, United Kingdom Parliamentary Human Rights Group, West Africa Civil Society Forum, and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA).

27. Fazal, “State Death in the International System”; Lake and O’Mahony, “The Incredible Shrinking State.”

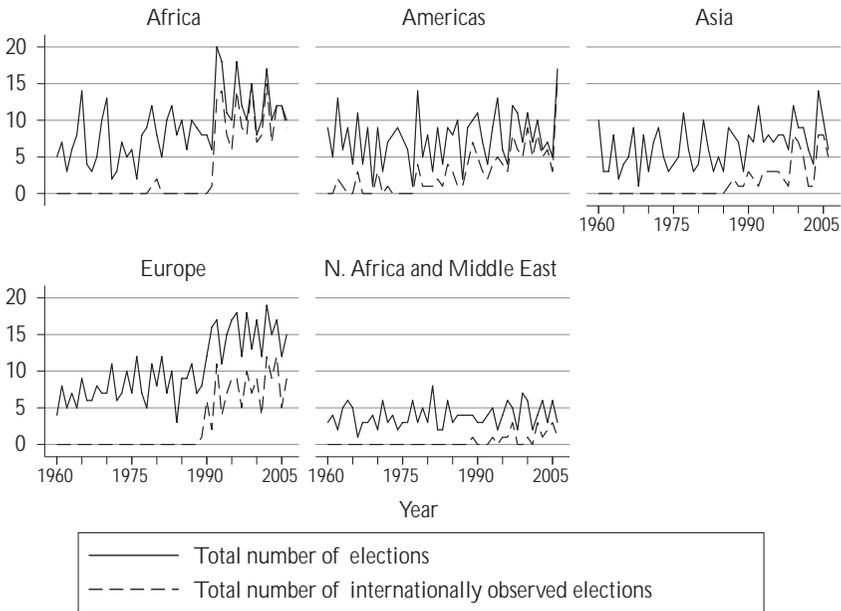


Figure 2.2. Diffusion of elections and election observation by region

These trends also exhibit strong regional dynamics, as shown in figure 2.2. Election observation was initiated and spread first in Latin America.²⁸ Europe and Africa display similar patterns, with a dramatic increase in both elections and election monitoring in 1990. In Asia, election observation began in the mid-1980s but increased only gradually in the 1990s. Finally, in North Africa and the Middle East, elections are not as frequent, and it remains the region with the lowest rate of election monitoring.

Cold War Politics and Patterns of Diffusion

The end of the Cold War brought with it a dramatic change in the types of countries that could seek democracy-contingent benefits. During the Cold War, U.S. and allied preferences for supporting anti-communist countries meant that this variable outweighed any preference for democracy

28. Lean, "External Validation and Democratic Accountability"; Santa-Cruz, "Constitutional Structures, Sovereignty, and the Emergence of Norms."

Table 2.1. Observed elections and Cold War alliances, 1962–1988

Alliance	Country
Allied with USSR	Nicaragua (1963, 1972, 1984)
Nonaligned (residual category)	Guyana (1980); Uganda (1980); Zimbabwe (1979, 1980)
Allied with United States	Argentina (1983); Bolivia (1966, 1978, 1979); Chile (1988); Costa Rica (1962, 1966, 1970, 1978, 1982); Dominican Republic (1962, 1966, 1970, 1978); Ecuador (1968); El Salvador (1982, 1984, 1985, 1988); Guatemala (1970, 1984, 1985); Haiti (1987, 1988); Honduras (1981, 1985); Pakistan (1988); Paraguay (1988); Panama (1978); Philippines (1986, 1987); South Korea (1987); Trinidad and Tobago (1986); Uruguay (1984)

Notes: Cold War alliance patterns coded from Walt (1987). State membership and dates of independence from Gleditsch and Ward (1999).

in countries that were not recognized as anti-communist. The diminished importance of anti-communism as a state-level characteristic was most visible in Africa, where many governments during the Cold War sought international benefits by engaging the United States or the USSR in a bidding war for their allegiance. After the few cases of Commonwealth observation in Africa in the early 1980s, no elections were observed in sovereign African states until the 1991 elections in Zambia.

The first empirical implication outlined in chapter 1 specified that democracy-contingent benefits should be available only to a subset of states during the Cold War, and that before 1989, only anti-communist Western allies should have invited international observers. As shown in table 2.1, the pattern of observed elections in the early period of election observation closely correlates with Cold War alliance patterns: the only Soviet ally to invite international observers before 1989 was Nicaragua (whose alliance switched during the Cold War), and only three nonaligned countries invited observers, all of which are former British colonies.

Alliance patterns also roughly illustrate which countries were positioned to benefit the most from inviting observers at the end of the Cold War. Table 2.2 shows the breakdown of observed elections during this transition by Cold War alliance patterns from 1989 to 1994, with the addition of a category for states that became independent in 1989 or later. Election observation was no longer confined to U.S. allies, and the rates of election observation among former Soviet allies and nonaligned states increased substantially.

Table 2.2. Observed elections and Cold War alliance patterns, 1989–1994

Alliance	Country
Allied with USSR	Albania (1992); Angola (1992); Bulgaria (1990, 1991, 1994); Burundi (1993); Congo (1992, 1993); Czechoslovakia (1990, 1992); East Germany (1990); Estonia (1992); Ethiopia (1994); Guinea (1993); Hungary (1990, 1994); Madagascar (1992, 1993); Mali (1992); Mongolia (1990, 1992, 1993); Mozambique (1994); Nicaragua (1990); Poland (1991); Romania (1990, 1992); Russia (1989, 1990, 1993); Yugoslavia (1992); Zambia (1991)
Nonaligned (residual category)	Bangladesh (1991); Cambodia (1993); Cameroon (1992); Central African Republic (1992, 1993); Djibouti (1992, 1993); Gabon (1993); Ghana (1992); Guinea-Bissau (1994); Guyana (1992); Lesotho (1993); Malawi (1994); Nepal (1991, 1994); Niger (1993); Peru (1992); South Africa (1994); Sri Lanka (1989); Togo (1993, 1994); Uganda (1994)
Allied with United States	Bolivia (1989, 1993); Chile (1989); Colombia (1994); Costa Rica (1990); Dominican Republic (1990, 1994); El Salvador (1989, 1991, 1994); Guatemala (1990); Haiti (1990); Honduras (1989, 1993); Kenya (1992); Malaysia (1990); Mexico (1994); Morocco (1993); Pakistan (1990, 1993); Panama (1989, 1991, 1994); Paraguay (1989, 1991, 1993); Senegal (1993); Tunisia (1989); Uruguay (1989); Venezuela (1993)
Newly independent states (post-1988)	Azerbaijan (1992, 1993); Belarus (1994); Croatia (1992, 1993); Georgia (1992); Kazakhstan (1994); Latvia (1993); Lithuania (1992); Macedonia (1994); Moldova (1994); Namibia (1994); Slovenia (1992); Ukraine (1994); Uzbekistan (1994)

Notes: Cold War alliance patterns coded from Walt (1987). State membership and dates of independence from Gleditsch and Ward (1999).

Pre- and post-Cold War trends should also be visible in the existing level of democracy in countries that invite foreign observers. The second empirical implication outlined in chapter 1 described the types of governments likely to initiate election monitoring. Early inviters should be more democratic than average until the norm is established. As pseudo-democrats mimic the signal of true democrats and all true democrats continue inviting, the average level of democracy in inviting countries should converge with the global average. Figure 2.3 presents a visual representation of the types of countries likely to invite observers by plotting the average *POLITY* scores among countries that invited observers (using a locally weighted regression line) against the average *POLITY*

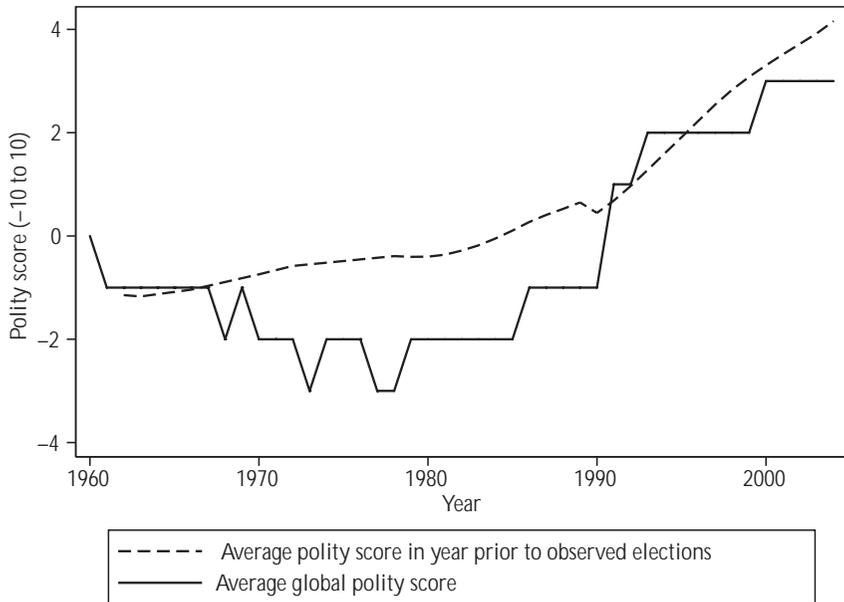


Figure 2.3. Regime type in observed elections vs. global average

score across all countries in the world. All scores for observed elections lag by one year to exclude changes caused by the observed elections. Note that the average *POLITY* scores in the first observed elections in the 1960s were close to the global mean. From 1970 to 1990, observers were more likely to be invited to elections in countries with more democratic political institutions than the global average, which is consistent with the idea that relatively more democratic countries initiated the trend of election observation. From 1990 to the present, the means converge as elections and election observation spread widely.

To look at this trend of decreasing quality of observed elections from another angle, I also examine the over-time changes in election monitoring based on whether there were domestic pre-election concerns about election fraud (see appendix B). This indicator provides an alternative measure of the average characteristics of elections to which observers were invited. As shown in figure 2.4, although the rate of elections with pre-election concerns about fraud is relatively constant over time, averaging about 40% of elections in the developing world, the percentage of these elections that were observed approached 100% by 2006.

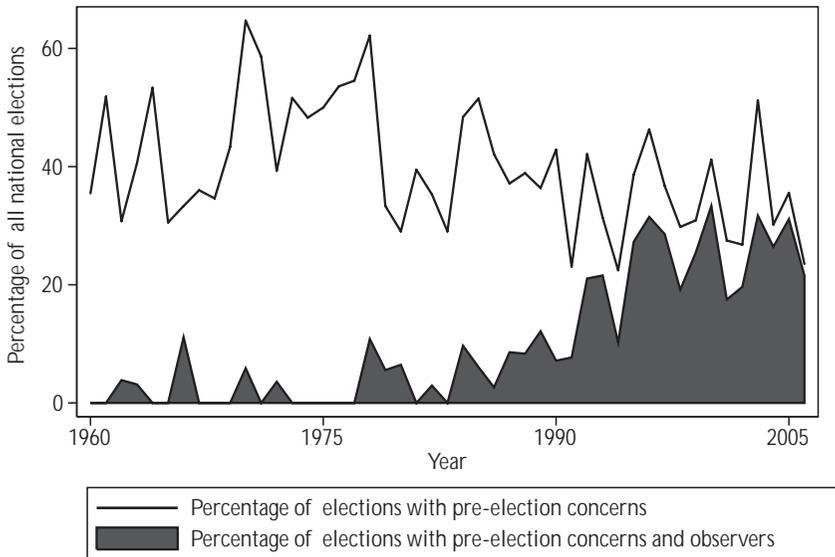


Figure 2.4. Elections with pre-election concerns about fraud

Sources: Author and NELDA

Note: Includes 1,759 elections in 157 independent states.

The third implication of the model outlined in chapter 1 relates to *ex ante* uncertainty among other international actors about a government's "type." Governments of widely known type should not invite observers, whereas governments of more uncertain types should converge quickly toward inviting observers during periods in which it is clear that democracy-contingent benefits exist. I examine three likely election-specific indicators of uncertainty about a government's commitment to democracy: elections held by transitional governments following a period of nondemocratic rule, elections held after previous elections had been suspended, and governments holding the country's first multiparty elections. All of these trends fluctuate significantly over the period under study. Nevertheless, as figures 2.5–2.7 show, "uncertain" types of governments became highly likely to invite international observers by the early 1990s. For example, before 1988, 23% of elections were observed if they were run by a transitional government tasked with holding elections. After 1988, 85% of these elections were internationally monitored, and after 1995, 100% were internationally observed. Similar trends are shown for a country's first multiparty elections and elections held after elections were suspended, with invitations to observers at all three types of elections approaching 100% by the mid-1990s.

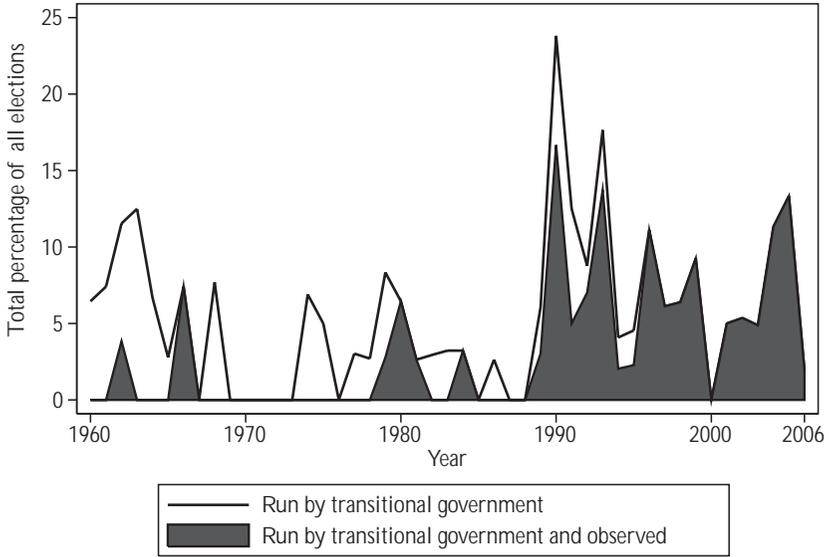


Figure 2.5. Elections held by transitional government
Sources: Author and NELDA
Note: Includes 1,759 elections in 157 independent states.

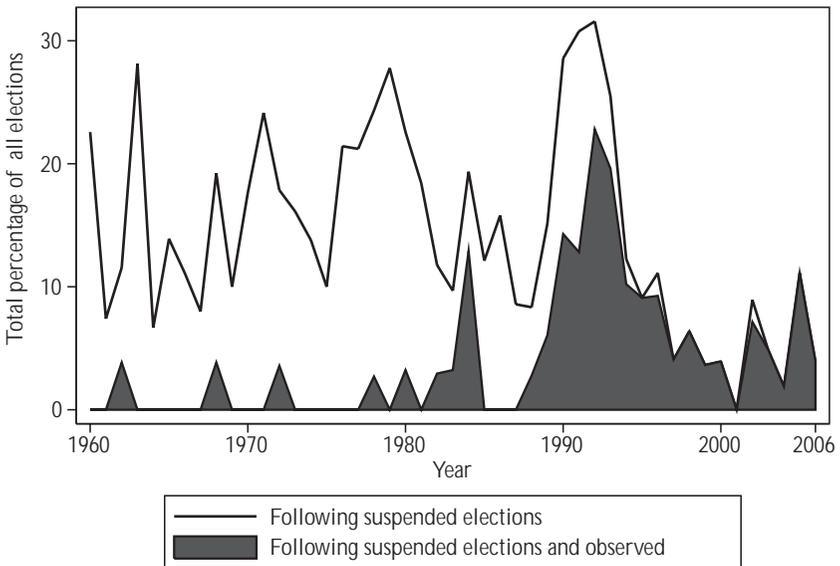


Figure 2.6. Elections held following suspended elections
Sources: Author and NELDA
Note: Includes 1,759 elections in 157 independent states.

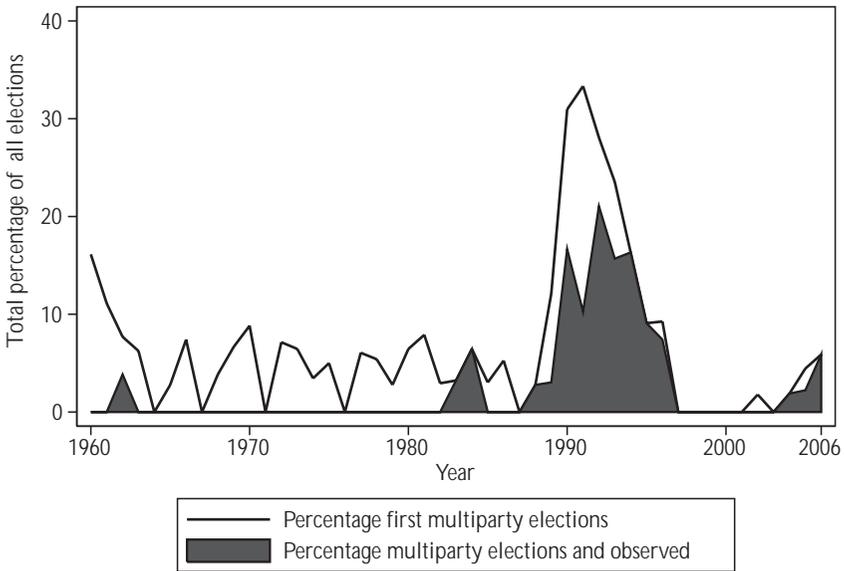


Figure 2.7. First multiparty elections

Sources: Author and NELDA

Note: Includes 1,759 elections in 157 independent states.

Cross-National Analysis

Building on these descriptive statistics, I now turn to a more comprehensive evaluation of the correlates of observed elections. I argue that leaders began inviting international scrutiny of their elections in part because they believed that they would be better off by signaling their commitment to democratization. For leaders committed to holding democratic elections, the decision to invite observers is determined by their likely share of international benefits and the uncertainty among democracy promoters about their commitment to democracy. For pseudo-democrats, their decision to invite observers is based on the potential benefits from democracy promoters relative to the possibility that they will be caught committing election fraud. In addition to providing graphical documentation of the relevant trends over time, I use regression analysis to show that the cross-national evidence is consistent with my argument. Because of the clear break in the rate of election monitoring at the end of the Cold War and the complexity of modeling such time trends in data that are not traditional time-series cross-sectional, I focus the analysis only on the 1991–2005 period. Additionally, election monitoring before 1991 is a relatively rare event, and data on several

important variables of interest, such as democracy-contingent benefits, are not available.

In my theory, focusing on the 1991–2005 period in which election monitoring is known to exist and be available in all regions of the world, two general sets of variables are important in explaining a given state's decision to invite observers. The first set of variables pertains to whether there is existing pre-election uncertainty about a given government's type. There are several ways to think about uncertainty in this context. First, there are some types of governments for which little ambiguity exists about their status as a democracy. Governments that never hold national elections, such as China and Saudi Arabia, are clearly perceived as nondemocracies. In order to be part of the relevant universe of cases included in this study, a government must hold elections. However, if the government holds elections in which opposition electoral competition is banned, there is little chance that they will be able to mimic the signal of true democrats, even if they invite election observers. I therefore include a measure of whether opposition parties are allowed to participate in elections, a variable called *Opposition Competition*. This is a dichotomous indicator that is equal to one if all of the following three conditions hold: opposition parties are legal, opposition parties are allowed (even minimally), and there is a choice of candidates on the ballot. If any of these conditions do not hold, or if there is any uncertainty or ambiguity about whether these conditions hold, the variable is coded as zero. *Opposition Competition* should be positively associated with the probability that observers are present at an election.

Similarly, if a country is already a consolidated democracy, or becomes widely viewed as a consolidated democracy, it should be less likely to invite observers during the 1991–2005 time period. Note that this has begun to change, especially since 2006, as all OSCE members, including countries such as Belgium, France, the UK, and the United States, have recently invited observers. The spread of election observation to developed democracies is further evidence of the normalization of election observation and is discussed in greater detail at the end of this chapter. Nevertheless, between 1990 and 2006 there is little evidence that the democratic credentials in the long-term developed democracies of Western Europe and North America were questioned, nor were Japan, Australia, or New Zealand.²⁹ After 1989, countries that were successful in

29. The long-term developed democracies are those countries that have been continuously democratic for forty years or more, as coded by Lijphart ("Patterns of Democracy") and that were also OECD members in 1960. These twenty-three countries are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland,

joining the European Union are also coded as consolidated democracies beginning in the year that they formally became members of the organization. I code Israel and India as consolidated democracies, although the results are not sensitive to the classification of these two states. Additionally, several countries initially invited international observers but became widely perceived as democracies and were told as much by international monitoring organizations. These countries included Chile after 1992 and the Czech Republic after 2003. Therefore, I code *Consolidated Democracy* as one if the country is one of the long-term developed democracies, is a member of the European Union, or was told explicitly and publically by a well-respected international monitoring group that it no longer needed to invite international observers because their elections were now considered democratic.

Uncertainty about the quality of the process should also influence whether leaders invite observers. Elections held following an interruption of democratic rule are highly uncertain and can lead to democratization or further entrenchment of autocracy. Given my argument, elections with high levels of uncertainty should be more likely to be observed. I therefore include measures of whether the election is the first multiparty election (*First Multiparty*), whether previous elections had been suspended (*Suspended Elections*), and whether the election was run by transitional leadership tasked with holding elections (*Transitional Leadership*). As I argued above, all three variables imply uncertainty about the government's commitment to democratization and represent situations in which existing information about the government's commitment to democracy is frequently low. I include them as individual variables in a model and then create an aggregate variable called *Uncertain Type* that is equal to one if the elections are the first multiparty elections, if previous elections had been suspended, or if the elections were held by transitional leadership.

In my theory, leaders are aware of their potential share of international benefits before they choose to invite observers. Leaders vary, however, in their preferred types of such benefits and may seek a reward such as international legitimacy, which is not easily quantifiable. Recall that leaders should be responding to a change in the weight given to democracy relative to other characteristics valued by powerful international actors. The ideal cross-national measure of international benefits would be an evaluation of what each state leader expected to receive as a result of inviting

Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and United States. International system membership data are from Gleditsch and Ward (1999).

observers and gaining a positive report. Unfortunately, this is impractical for many reasons, and such data are not systematically available.

I instead use a variable intended to serve as a proxy for year-to-year fluctuations in the relative level of international support for democracy in each country. Official development assistance is one observable indicator that can be disaggregated by sector, including foreign aid targeted toward democracy and governance, and such assistance is a reasonable measure of relative international interest in promoting democracy. Note that this variable is not intended to measure the “democracy premium” directly but should be highly correlated with the availability of democracy-contingent benefits. Data on democracy assistance were compiled by a team of researchers who, in cooperation with USAID, study the impact of U.S. democracy assistance on governance. They made data available for the U.S. and non-U.S. OECD donors from 1990 to 2005.³⁰ I use the percentage of all official development assistance (ODA) devoted to democracy and governance in the previous year, called *Democracy and Governance/ODA*. This measure is based on the assumption that the rate of aid spent on democracy and governance in a country should be an observable pre-election indicator of the degree to which influential international actors support democratization in that country. To ensure that the amount of democracy and governance assistance is in fact observable before the election, it is lagged by one year. Finally, I argued in chapter 1 that countries that are otherwise strategically important, such as Israel, Egypt, and more recently, Iraq and Afghanistan, are likely to gain high levels of foreign assistance for other reasons. Therefore, to account for this strategic importance I also include a variable indicating the percentage of U.S. military assistance received by the country in the previous year. Countries receiving a higher percentage of U.S. military aid should be less likely to invite observers.

To account for the possibility that a country's decision to invite observers is related to the size of the economy or the country's economic development, I include measures of GDP (logged) and GDP per capita (logged). GDP data are from the World Development Indicators.³¹

Time trends are clearly important, although I sidestep some of the biggest problems by limiting the analysis in this section to 1991–2005. In part to account for remaining unexplained temporal variation, a year variable is included in all models. Elections are not annual events and therefore do not follow traditional cross-sectional time-series structure. The average number of elections held by a given country in the 1991–2006 time period

30. Finkel et al., “Effects of U.S. Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building.”

31. World Bank, *World Development Indicators*.

Table 2.3. Binary logit, observed elections

Variables	(Model 1) 1991–2005	(Model 2) 1991–2005	(Model 3) 1991–2005	(Model 4) 1991–2005
<i>Previously Observed</i>	2.819** (0.341)	3.157** (0.317)	3.180** (0.315)	3.061** (0.313)
<i>Opposition Competition</i>	1.550** (0.417)	1.379** (0.445)	1.375** (0.400)	1.438** (0.415)
<i>Consolidated Democracy</i>	-1.624* (0.675)	-1.821** (0.726)	-1.817* (0.756)	-1.650* (0.812)
<i>Previous Elections Suspended</i>		1.453** (0.348)		
<i>First Multiparty</i>		0.730 (0.478)		
<i>Transitional Government</i>		0.937 (0.550)		
<i>Uncertain Type</i>			1.933** (0.326)	1.908** (0.321)
<i>Democracy and Governance / ODA_{t-1}</i>				2.852* (1.424)
<i>U.S. Military Assistance (Current USD)_{t-1}</i>				-0.188* (0.086)
<i>GDP (logged)</i>	-0.085 (0.093)	-0.046 (0.100)	-0.054 (0.103)	0.009 (0.101)
<i>GDP per capita (logged)</i>	-0.477** (0.130)	-0.326* (0.148)	-0.324* (0.145)	-0.406** (0.144)
<i>Year</i>	0.042 (0.035)	0.093** (0.036)	0.099** (0.038)	0.087* (0.038)
Constant	-79.894 (69.255)	-185.630** (71.424)	-197.187** (75.520)	-174.607* (75.612)
Wald X ²	178.50	249.94	230.29	217.11
Prob > X ²	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Pseudo-R ²	0.4919	0.5283	0.5284	0.5397
Observations	710	710	710	710
Number of countries	146	146	146	146

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered by country. *Significant at 5%; **Significant at 1%.

is nine, but numbers range from one election to eleven elections (and twenty-seven in the full 1960–2006 sample). Although they are pooled by country, the variation in the number of temporal observations for each country means that many statistical tools for binary time-series cross-sectional analyses are not appropriate.³² Because the decision to invite

32. Statement made based on information in Beck, Katz, and Tucker, “Taking Time Seriously.” Because the number of time points (T) is not “reasonably large” for all units, their

observers in the current time period is not likely to be independent from the decision to invite observers in previous time periods, I include an indicator of whether any previous election in the country was internationally monitored. All models use robust standard errors clustered by country.

Including all independent states holding national elections with a population greater than 500,000, the full dataset consists of 1,759 individual first-round elections held between 1960 and 2006. In the models presented below, which are limited to the 1991–2005 period, there are 714 observations of elections in 146 countries.

Discussion of Results

Models 1–4 include two sets of variables: those associated with uncertainty over a state's commitment to democracy and those associated with a state's need for and potential access to international benefits tied to democracy. Governments should be mostly likely to invite observers when they need to signal their type or when they believe they can gain democracy-contingent benefits.

The specification of the baseline logit model (Model 1) is:

$$Pr(\text{observed election} | x_i) = 1 / (1 + e^{-x_i\beta}),$$

Where $x_i\beta = \beta_0 + \beta_1$ *Previously Observed* + β_2 *Opposition Competition* + β_3 *Consolidated Democracy* + β_4 *Uncertain Type* + β_5 *GDP (logged)* + β_5 *GDP per Capita (logged)* + β_6 *Year*.

As shown in table 2.3, Model 1, consistent with expectations, a country's previous invitation to observers is a strong predictor of whether a given election will be observed. Also consistent with the empirical implications derived from my theory, elections in which competition is allowed are significantly more likely to be observed than elections in which competition is not allowed. However, until 2006, if a country was considered a consolidated democracy, either because it was long considered fully democratic or it had recently become regarded as such, it should be less likely to invite election monitors.

In Model 2, several characteristics of election-holding countries that should correspond to external uncertainty about their type are introduced: *Suspended Elections*, *First Multiparty*, and *Transitional Government*.

recommended method for binary TSCS data is not appropriate. Some countries in the dataset have as few as one election.

As expected, all three are associated with a positive probability that a given election will be observed, although *Transitional Government* and *First Multiparty* is just short of traditional levels of statistical significance. Because each of these events is relatively rare, and because I expect them to be associated with uncertainty about a government's type in the same manner, I combine them into one measure in Model 3. *Uncertain Type* is equal to one if the election is characterized by any of the three events, and the aggregated variable is associated with significantly greater probability that an election will be observed.

On the international benefit side of the decision to invite observers, the percentage of aid devoted to democracy and governance in the country in the previous year is a significant predictor of invitations to international monitors, as shown in Model 4. Model 4 also includes a measure of U.S. military aid, which helps account for the fact that countries that are strategically very important to the United States are unlikely to seek democracy-contingent benefits. As expected, countries receiving more U.S. military assistance are less likely to invite observers, although this result is sensitive to the inclusion of Egypt and Israel.

When all variables in Model 3 are set at median values, the probability that an election will be observed is 27%. Because the substantive interpretation of the size of logit coefficients presented in table 2.3 is not clear, table 2.4 provides simulated first differences for six substantively interesting independent variables included in Models 3 and 4. When all other variables are held at their median values, a previous invitation to observers increases the probability that a given election will be observed by about 62%, from 27% to 89%. This large substantive effect illustrates that once countries begin inviting observers, they are highly likely to continue doing so. Similarly, countries that have never invited observers during this time period are not likely to start, a result that accounts for temporal dependence in a country's decision to invite observers. Supporting my argument, holding elections when the country's regime type is uncertain increases the probability that an election will be observed by 43%. Being a consolidated democracy decreases the likelihood that an election will be observed by about 20%. All else being equal at median values, holding competitive elections increased the probability that observers will be invited by 18%.

The magnitude of the effect of democracy-contingent benefits is relatively small, but it is positive and statistically significant despite the imperfect nature of the proxy measure. It is also instructive to examine how the predicted probabilities of *Observed* change with respect to democracy-contingent benefits in a few illustrative cases, rather than only when other

Table 2.4. Effects of country characteristics on the probability of inviting observers

When this variable . . .	Shifts from . . . to . . .	Change in probability of observed election (%) (95% confidence interval)
<i>Previously Observed</i>	zero to one	62 (52 to 70)
<i>Competitive</i>	zero to one	18 (8 to 27)
<i>Democratic</i>	zero to one	-20 (-33 to -5)
<i>Uncertain Type</i>	zero to one	43 (29 to 54)
<i>Percentage ODA to Democracy and Governance</i>	25th to 75th percentile	4 (0.3 to 9)
<i>U.S. Military Assistance</i>	25th to 75th percentile	-0.1 (-0.2 to -0.01)

Notes: Estimations are based on a logit model estimated in Stata 10.0, with first differences drawn from 1,000 simulations performed by CLARIFY (Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2003). The first four estimates are based on Model 3. The final two estimates are based on Model 4.

variables are held at median values. Assume a country is holding elections in which competition is allowed, but it is not a consolidated democracy and has never invited observers. This hypothetical government is assumed not to be an “uncertain” type per the definition above, and it receives no U.S. military aid. In this case, increasing the amount of democracy and governance aid from the 25th percentile (.3%) to the 90th percentile (23%), which is a huge assumed increase in democracy-contingent benefits, increases the probability that an election will be observed from 23% to 38%.³³ If this country is assumed to be an uncertain type and all other variables are the same, the same increase in democracy-contingent benefits changes the probability that an election will be observed by 14%, from 69% to 82%.

For regions with other characteristics that make them unlikely to invite election monitors, increasing democracy-contingent benefits results in a smaller increase in the probability that the election will be observed. For example, consider a hypothetical country that has never invited observers, does not hold competitive elections, is not democratic, does not have an “uncertain” type, receives about 1% of total U.S. military assistance,

33. The 95% confidence interval of the 14% simulated first difference ranges from 2.7% to 28%.

and receives only a small percentage of development assistance targeted to democracy and governance. The probability that a country with these characteristics will invite observers is about 8%. All else being equal, changing the percentage of development assistance devoted to democracy and governance increases the probability that an election will be observed by about 6%, from 8% to 14%.³⁴

Robustness and Alternative Explanations

Thus far the empirical results in this chapter have focused primarily on variables derived from my theory to explain internationally monitored elections. As discussed in the introduction, there are alternative explanations suggested by the existing literature on election monitoring and the international diffusion of policies between states. Judith Kelley argues that a country's level of democracy is an important variable in determining who invites observers. This is similar to my argument about whether there is uncertainty regarding a government's commitment to democracy, but her explanation is more general and does not detail a testable causal mechanism. Following Kelley's treatment of election observation, I include a measure of a government's regime type with the *POLITY2* measure from the *POLITY IV* data,³⁵ as well as the same measure squared. The twenty-one-point *POLITY2* scale ranges from -10 to 10, or from most autocratic to most democratic. The squared term is included in order to account for Kelley's finding that countries in the middle of the *POLITY* scale are most likely to invite observers.³⁶

The literature on policy diffusion suggests a second alternative explanation for the spread of election monitoring. Although my theory explicitly involves mimicry of election monitoring by states, I account for this empirically by specifying the characteristics of individual regimes that are most likely to invite observers. The diffusion literature does not explain election monitoring, but related arguments would suggest that a country would be more likely to invite international observers if that country's neighboring states also invited observers. Therefore, to evaluate the explanatory power of a more general diffusion argument, I include a variable that measures the percentage of all elections that were internationally monitored in a given region in the previous year. *Regional Percent Observed*

34. The 95% confidence interval of the 7% simulated first difference ranges from 1% to 15%.

35. Marshall and Jagers, *Polity IV Project*.

36. Kelley, "Supply and Demand of Election Monitoring."

excludes elections that took place in a country in the previous year, so it is not necessarily equal across all region-years.³⁷

Because using the *POLITY* data introduces new sources of missing data and reduces the number of observations from 714 to 650, I first replicate Model 4 without the observations for which *POLITY* scores are not available, shown in table 2.5, Model 5. The loss of observations due to missing *POLITY* data does not substantially change the results presented in table 2.3, Model 4. Model 6 adds the three variables outlined above, *POLITY*, *POLITY Squared*, and *Regional Percent Observed*. For 1991–2005, none of these variables are statistically significant, although the signs are in the predicted direction.

These results suggest that the election and regime-specific variables derived from my theory are better predictors of internationally monitored elections than the more general measures of regime type and regional diffusion of election monitoring suggested by the existing literature. These findings support the empirical implications outlined in chapter 1 and lend general support to my theory relative to the two central alternative explanations that can be evaluated in this framework. Note that the alternative explanations presented in table 2.5 are sufficiently general that they are also broadly consistent with my argument. Nevertheless, the cross-national empirical evidence presented in this chapter provides strong support for the first seven empirical implications presented in chapter 1 and shows that variables associated with my argument are more strongly correlated with observed elections than two of the leading alternative explanations.

Note that two other alternative explanations were introduced in the introduction but are not tested in table 2.3. The argument that the norm of election monitoring was generated through advocacy or pressure from powerful states is addressed more thoroughly in the next chapter with detailed evidence about the behavior of democracy promoters. I demonstrate that their role was primarily to make benefits available to states that were recognized as democratizing and that overt advocacy of election monitoring by external actors did not occur until well after the norm was initiated and spread widely. The fourth alternative explanation outlined in the introduction is that election monitoring is costless for pseudo-democrats and they invite observers because election monitoring is inconsequential.

37. Note that in related work on this subject, I had also included *POLITY* and *Regional Percent Observed* as central independent variables explaining internationally monitored elections (Beaulieu and Hyde, “In the Shadow of Democracy Promotion.”).

Table 2.5. Alternative explanations

Variables	Model 5 1991–2005	Model 6 1991–2005
<i>Previously Observed</i>	3.121** (0.329)	3.083** (0.328)
<i>Opposition Competition</i>	1.485** (0.438)	1.417* (0.523)
<i>Consolidated Democracy</i>	-1.624* (0.794)	-1.561 (0.847)
<i>Uncertain Type</i>	1.993** (0.339)	1.995** (0.335)
<i>Democracy and Governance / ODA</i> (computed from 2-year mean)	3.605* (1.487)	3.638* (1.455)
<i>U.S. Military Assistance (Current USD)_{t-1}</i>	-0.094 (0.063)	-0.088 (0.062)
<i>GDP (logged)</i>	0.021 (0.105)	0.026 (0.103)
<i>GDP per capita (logged)</i>	-0.402** (0.154)	-0.360* (0.177)
<i>Year</i>	0.083 (0.041)	0.074 (0.043)
<i>POLITY</i>		0.001 (0.032)
<i>POLITY Squared</i>		-0.004 (0.005)
<i>Regional Percent Observed_{t-1}</i>		0.503 (0.631)
Constant	-166.954* (82.221)	-149.339 (84.838)
Wald X ²	193.15	198.27
Prob > X ²	0.000	0.000
Pseudo-R ²	0.536	0.537
Observations	653	653
Number of countries	143	143

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered by country. *Significant at 5%; **Significant at 1%. For both alternative explanations the null hypothesis that the coefficient is equal to zero cannot be rejected (not reported).

This alternative, addressed in chapters 3–5, demonstrates three ways that election monitoring is consequential to pseudo-democrats.

The Normalization of International Election Observation

Thus far, the empirical analysis has focused on the question of why leaders invite observers, including why election observation diffused widely, and has sidestepped the question of when election monitoring became an

international norm. When did international expectations change? When did it become a widely shared expectation among influential international actors that leaders of democratizing countries would invite international election monitors? Pinpointing the exact moment when election observation changed from an entirely voluntary, state-initiated behavior to a behavior expected and enforced by international actors is difficult. However, it is still possible to provide evidence related to how and when the change took place.

As recognized by a number of prominent scholars, one observable characteristic of norm development is a change in rhetoric surrounding the new behavior and new norm.³⁸ When election observation was initiated, both the leaders who invited observers and the organizations that sponsored them routinely explained and justified their behavior in public forums. As the connection between election observation and democracy grew stronger in the 1990s, leaders began to cite invitations to election monitors as evidence that the elections would be democratic. For example, in the pre-norm period, Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze discussed preparations for the 1992 elections:

[Reform] can only be done by a democratically elected government and only such a government can get the support and solidarity of the rest of the world. . . . We realise this and, at any price, will hold elections. . . . They will be free elections and we will invite observers from other countries and international organisations.³⁹

For the most part, in the mid 1990s leaders ceased explaining the decision to invite observers. Instead, leaders of noninviting countries began to publicly justify their behavior, explaining why they chose not to invite observers. Rather than emphasizing the novelty of international observers, international media reports on elections began to note when observers were not invited, and governments under such indirect pressure began to pre-emptively defend their decisions, often relying on nationalist sentiment or arguing that observers violate sovereignty. For example, in the 1999 Algerian presidential elections, all but the military-backed candidate dropped out of the race ahead of the election due to alleged fraud. A representative of the incumbent party who was also the lone candidate and

38. Payne, "Persuasion, Frames and Norm Construction"; Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change"; Checkel, "International Norms and Domestic Politics."

39. Seamus Martin, "Shevardnadze one hundred days into toughest mission," *Herald* (Glasgow), June 15, 1992.

eventual winner of the contest, Abdelaziz Bouteflika was asked in a press conference about the absence of international observers and responded as follows. “I don’t think elections are more transparent because there are a few UN, OAU (Organization of African Unity) or Arab League observers....I won’t accept, now or in the future, any foreign interference in my country.”⁴⁰ The United States had previously put pressure on the Algerian government to invite international observers, but none were invited to the one-candidate election.⁴¹

In 2000 Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi made an official statement that Ethiopia would not invite international observers to the May 14 parliamentary election.

We are people capable of managing ourselves and our affairs. We have to be able to conduct our elections on our own, as part of our right to exercise self-determination. If there is the assumption that the election is not democratic unless foreign observers monitored the process, this is a distorted outlook.⁴²

The 2000 elections were not observed, but five years later the same prime minister agreed to opposition party demands and invited international observers. The Carter Center and the European Union observed the election.

Egypt has held elections for decades but has yet to invite international observers. Prior to the 2005 presidential election, domestic groups and the U.S. government joined in attempting to pressure the government of President Hosni Mubarak to invite international observers. Although President Mubarak initially appeared to consider the idea, even going so far as to send a foreign minister on a television speaking tour in the United States in which the minister suggested the government’s interest in impartial observers, Mubarak ultimately banned their presence. In a press conference just a few weeks before the election, he was quoted as saying, “We are not a trust country to allow our elections to be subjected to international supervision. We can alone organize our elections and ensure their

40. “Algeria in Crisis as Six Presidential Contenders Withdraw on Poll Eve,” Agence Free Press, April 14, 1999.

41. “We urge both the government of Algeria and the parties to invite international observers to the elections,” said Martin Indyk, Assistant Secretary of State for Middle East Affairs, Agence Free Press, February 24, 1999.

42. Quoted in Yemisrach Benalfew, “Politics—Ethiopia: No Foreign Election Observers Needed,” IPS-Inter Press Service, September 17, 1999.

success.”⁴³ This statement was in contrast to earlier demands by Egyptian human rights groups who called for the opening of the process to international observers. “It is not true that [election observation] constitutes an infringement on sovereignty or interference in internal affairs,” said Hafez Abu Seda, head of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights.⁴⁴ The support for election observation from pro-democracy actors at the domestic and international level is an implication of the normalization of election monitoring.

Also reflecting the global norm of election observation was a trend for leaders in less-democratic countries to call for international election observers at the 2004 U.S. general elections. In an overt public attempt to highlight the paternalistic nature of election observation and U.S. democracy promotion, a leader of the Iranian militia asked UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to appoint observers, saying that “the presence of observers from the Islamic republic of Iran, one of the most democratic regimes in the world, is necessary to guarantee fairness in the U.S. presidential election.”⁴⁵ Similar claims demanding international observers for the U.S. elections were made in Malaysian and Cuban newspapers. Ultimately, in part to enhance the credibility of international election monitoring, the United States invited, and the OSCE sent, a delegation of observers to the 2004 U.S. presidential elections.

After 2004, and perhaps in response to growing criticism of democracy promotion as Western imperialism, many developed democracies also began to change their behavior and began to invite international election observers. Invitations from countries such as Austria, Belgium, France, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom are not signals of governments’ commitment to holding democratic elections. In these cases, invitations to observers—and their subsequent reports—reveal little information about the country’s commitment to democracy. International actors view these countries as democratic before they invite observers, and the invitation and the observers’ report do little to update this belief. Rather, invitations from stable democracies to international election observers represent a confirmation of their compliance with the norm of international election monitoring and is a further sign that only non-democratic governments refuse to invite observers. For example, in announcing the United States’ invitation

43. “Egypt Insists Refusal of International Election Monitors,” *Financial Times Information*, August 31, 2005.

44. “Rights Group Calls for International Monitoring of Egypt Polls,” Agence Free Press, June 13, 2005.

45. “USA: Iranian Militia Wants Observers at Presidential Election,” ANSA English Media Service, October 18, 2004.

to OSCE observers for the 2006 congressional elections, the U.S. ambassador to the OSCE explained why the United States invited observers by saying that “the United States supports fully the OSCE’s important work, in particular its election observation efforts in promoting free and fair elections throughout the OSCE community.”⁴⁶ Underscoring the widespread acceptance of the norm of election monitoring, in response to a question about why Austria’s 2010 elections were going to be observed by the OSCE, the head of the government’s election commission responded that “observing elections in western Europe has become a routine act.”⁴⁷ This change occurred relatively quickly. In 2000, it was still rare for long-term consolidated democracies to invite international observers and even more unusual for an organization to agree to send them. By 2010, many of the widely accepted democratic countries began inviting and receiving observers, including Canada, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The trend continues to expand throughout Europe, and it remains to be seen whether other democracies, such as Chile and India, will follow the trend and seek international observers.

The normalization of election observation is also reflected in domestic public opinion. A 2009 survey conducted in seventeen nations by the University of Maryland’s Program on International Policy Attitudes confirmed widespread support for observers in both developed and developing countries:

Asked whether “when there are concerns about fairness of elections,” nations should be willing to have international observers monitor their elections, on average, across all nations polled, 64 percent say that they should. In no nation do most people oppose the idea, though views are divided in Turkey and India. Most of the nations favoring election monitors do so by solid majorities, often two-to-one. The highest levels of support are found in Azerbaijan (83%), Kenya (82%) and Britain (81%). . . . Perhaps most striking, most publics also say that their nation would “benefit from having international observers monitor elections here.” The most enthusiastic are Kenya (85%) and Nigeria (74%). In no country do more than 51 percent oppose the idea.⁴⁸

The diffusion of the norm led even developed democracies to accept election observation. Returning to the model outlined in chapter 1, the

46. Marissa Eubanks, “U.S. Invites OSCE to Observe Congressional Elections in November; Election Observation Promotes Free and Fair Elections, Says U.S. Official.” *State Department Documents and Publications*, June 30, 2006.

47. “OSCE election observation ‘a routine act’.” *Austrian Independent*, March 31, 2010.

48. Program on International Policy Attitudes, “World Publics Strongly Favor International Observers for Elections, Including Their Own,” news release, September 8, 2009.

norm reduces any sovereignty costs associated with inviting observers, and domestic support for observers may even make these costs positive for some leaders.

To be clear, it was governments that lacked clear reputations as democracies that initiated the practice of election monitoring, eventually causing it to become an international norm. The norm of election monitoring, in turn, has now led many stable democracies to invite international observers. The spread of election observation to even the consolidated democracies further increases the number of elections that are internationally observed and creates an even shorter list of governments that refuse to invite observers.

Explaining the Diffusion of Election Observation

In this chapter I evaluated why leaders invite international election monitors, focusing on qualitative evidence about early inviters, rhetoric from powerful states about democracy and democracy promotion, and a cross-national examination of whether trends in elections and the types of states that invited election monitors are consistent with my theory. The decision to invite observers was made independently by many state leaders but ultimately contributed to the creation of a norm of international election observation. Although the determinants of the decision to invite observers have changed over time, most notably due to the creation of the norm, there is qualitative and quantitative evidence that leaders were motivated to invite observers, in part because it provided a credible signal of their intent to hold democratic elections and because they could gain more benefits from democracy promoters as a result. Election monitoring became an effective signal because it provides valuable information to international actors and it was more costly for pseudo-democrats to imitate. In subsequent chapters, I examine election monitoring from the perspective of democracy promoters, explaining why they were initially reluctant to send election monitors and how their views changed over time. I also explore the consequences of international election observation within countries to which they are invited. I show that international observers can reduce election fraud directly, therefore making it more difficult for leaders to cheat; that they have changed the form of manipulation, leading pseudo-democrats to engage in more strategic forms of election manipulation; and that if leaders are caught and criticized by international observers, they can face serious consequences.