Chapter 1

Transparency in electoral governance

Pippa Norris

Recent years have seen resurgent interest in the potential capacity of transparency - the public availability of information - to improve democratic governance. Timely, accurate, granular and freely-available information is generally regarded as intrinsically valuable, as well as having many instrumental benefits. In development, transparency and accountability are claimed by anti-corruption advocacy agencies to help plug the leaky pipes of bribery and inefficiency, channel public spending more efficiently, and produce better services.¹ In the field of electoral governance, openness about the rules and procedures, outcomes, and decisions processes used by electoral authorities is thought to build public trust, improve policy-making, and facilitate accountability.² By contrast, in the words of the Open Society Institute: “Silence and secrecy are two of the most powerful tools that governments can employ to mute critics and cloak their actions from public scrutiny” (The Open Society Foundation 2016). Proponents claim that open governance has sparked innovation, driven efficiency gains, and fueled economic development (Gordon 2014). The concept of transparency has deep historical roots, and rights to disclosure were implemented through legislation in the US from the 1950s onwards, on diverse issues such as campaign finance, supermarket labelling, and environmental impact statements (Schudson 2015). The principle started to become widely championed by many international development agencies as a tool against corruption and a general principle of good governance worldwide during the mid-1990s, notably by Transparency International and the World Bank (Heald 2006). These sorts of arguments have catalyzed the worldwide rights to information movement. As recently as 1990, it is estimated that only 14 countries had rights to information laws, so that most public access in most states was tightly regulated by official secrecy acts.³ Today, by contrast, 95 countries have implemented such laws, where the burden of proof lies with the body publishing information, not the individual asking for it.

Conventions and guidelines by international bodies and regional organizations widely accept the intrinsic value of freedom of expression and information.⁴ Thus 168 out of 193 member states around the world (87%) have endorsed the UN General Assembly’s 1966 International Convention on Civil and Political Rights.⁵ Article 19.2 in this convention specifies that: “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice” (United Nations General Assembly 1966). The Council of Europe’s 1950 Convention for the
Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms states in Article 10.1: “Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers” (Council of Europe 1950). Similarly, the 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance emphasizes the need for governments to: “Promote the establishment of the necessary conditions to foster citizen participation, transparency, access to information, freedom of the press, and accountability in the management of public affairs” (European Commission 2007).

For electoral management bodies (EMBs), as well, transparency is usually regarded as one of the core principles which should be followed, where officials lay out their goals, responsibilities and constraints, providing information about citizens’ rights and voting procedures, engaging with stakeholders on a regular basis, and giving reasons for decisions and rulings. Whether required by law, code of conduct practices, or EMB policy, bureaucratic transparency is expected to enhance credibility and trust in the electoral process. As the International IDEA Handbook on electoral management design highlights: “Transparency in operational and financial management lays out for public scrutiny the decisions and reasoning of the EMB. It can help an EMB combat perceptions of...financial or electoral fraud, or a lack of competence or favoritism towards particular political tendencies, which can enhance its credibility” (Catt et al. 2014, 23). Even if unable to generate significant positive benefits, there is still a presumption in favor of open governance since, as the Handbook argues: “The absence of transparency in electoral processes invariably leads to the suspicion that fraudulent activities are taking place” (Catt et al. 2014, 23). For all these reasons open access to information is widely advocated as one of the most important values which public sector bodies should follow when managing elections, along with those of impartiality, inclusiveness, integrity, independence, efficiency and professionalism.

The development community has championed initiatives designed to strengthen transparency in elections. For example, the Open Election Data Initiative by the National Democracy Institute seeks to expand public information about basic matters such as the provision of an accurate and comprehensive list of all polling stations, the electoral register, voting laws and rights, and the campaign expenditure of political parties and candidates (National Democracy Institute 2016). The network is founded on the principle that: “election data is open when it is released in a manner that is timely, granular, available for free on the internet, complete and in bulk, analyzable, non-proprietary, non-discriminatory and available to anyone, license-free and permanent. When these conditions are met, citizens can, among other things, use election data to participate more fully as voters or contestants, make informed choices about whom
to elect, understand and accept how winners are determined, recommend reforms to improve the next election and hold electoral stakeholders accountable. In these ways, open election data enhances the inclusiveness, transparency, accountability and competitiveness of elections” (National Democracy Institute 2016).

Transparency has been regarded as particularly important for preventing the abuse of money in electoral campaigns (Norris and Avel van Es 2016; Austin and Tjernstrom 2003; Falguera, Jones and Ohman 2014). Disclosure requirements aim to affect the accountability of political actors through legal rules requiring financial reporting and transparency. These policies reduce the anonymity of ‘dark money’, and they usually stipulate requirements for the disclosure of donor identities, donation amounts, and/or spending accounts. Article 7(3) of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) obligates signatory states to make good faith efforts to improve transparency in candidate and political party financing. Political finance disclosure, through submitting timely and regular public reports to an independent supervisory body with monitoring and auditing powers, including appropriate and reasonable sanction for non-compliance, is the main instrument for achieving transparency. This policy assumes that other direct forms of state intervention may prove problematic, for example by limiting free speech or favoring incumbent parties, so that it is preferable to encourage civic society monitoring agencies and the news media to convey full information about campaign funding to citizens, thereby deterring abuses and allowing voters to cast their ballots accordingly.

The instrumental impacts of transparency

In practice, however, the instrumental consequences of bureaucratic and political transparency, both in general and for electoral integrity, are less clear-cut than many claim. It remains difficult to establish whether, and under what conditions, greater information alone strengthens the accountability of electoral management bodies to their own citizens, the quality of public services, or the compliance of these agencies with international norms and standards. In the era of ‘wiki-leaks’, the right to know, Big Data, and the information society, it is hard for liberals to argue against the normative value of transparency in governance, except where confidentiality is justified under certain special conditions, such as for national security and data protection.

Even if information is accurate, comprehensive, timely, and relevant, its effectiveness for improving governance alone is genuinely open to debate (Fung, Graham and Weil 2008). Meta-analysis of the empirical evidence used in several rigorous evaluation studies suggests that in general some transparency initiatives in democratic governance have indeed proved highly successful, while by contrast others have
had little impact in achieving their objectives (Gaventa and McGee 2013; Joshi 2013; Kosack and Fung 2014). To understand these issues more fully, this book seeks to assess the contemporary drive towards open electoral governance and to identify several conditions predicted to determine the success of transparency policies in strengthening electoral integrity.

1: The transparency-accountability-compliance nexus

Building upon these reflections, the book seeks to advance and demonstrate three claims.

The transparency-accountability-compliance nexus

Firstly, for electoral management bodies, transparency alone (the provision of public information) can ‘work’ by improving credibility and trust in these agencies but, in fact, it can also prove unsuccessful, or even, at worst, damage public confidence. Transparency can generate unintended side-effects and even reverse effects. News headlines and official reports highlighting a series of electoral problems, whether true or false, without identifying potential remedies and sanctions for transgressions, can encourage public cynicism (“All politicians are corrupt.” “Officials are incompetent.” “Election are stolen.” “Voting only encourages them.”). Extensive exposure to negative information can thereby demobilize citizens and lead to fatalistic resignation (De Fine Licht 2011). In the 2016 U.S. presidential elections, for example, following Donald Trump’s claims of voter fraud and vote-rigging, and credible reports by the CIA of cyber-hacking, in mid-August 2016, Gallup found that only six in ten Americans were ‘very or fairly’ confident that their vote would be accurately cast and counted in the election, down from around three quarters of all Americans a decade earlier⁶. Among Republicans, the proportion who were confident dropped to around half, the lowest level which Gallup has ever recorded in a series of surveys. Public perceptions of fraud, whether based on true or false allegations, depress turnout and damage confidence in democracy (Norris 2014). Standard theories of cognitive learning processes in social psychology, political behavior, and communication studies suggest that information per se requires many conditions before it shapes voting choices or stimulates active engagement by citizens (Lieberman, Posner, Tsai 2014).

To be effective in strengthening the integrity of electoral governance, we argue that transparency ideally needs to be accompanied by accountability (identifying the underlying reasons for any incidents of electoral maladministration and responsibility for any flaws which occur) and also mechanisms ensuring compliance to improve performance (including the use of incentives and sanctions) (Fox 2007). This nexus is depicted schematically in Figure 1.1. In this regard, we treat transparency and accountability as separate but complimentary concepts. Both can exist in isolation, but, together with mechanisms of compliance, they are more likely to generate good electoral governance.⁷ Without accountability, information about
electoral flaws and failures can commonly be ducked by bureaucrats and politicians through blame avoidance (Hood 2013). False information about ‘stolen ballots’, ‘fraudulent votes’, or ‘biased officials’ are commonly spread by losing party leaders in the aftermath of contentious elections, to excuse their poor performance – and the beliefs of their supporters are shaped by these cues (Beaulieu 2014). Even if the allegations are true, reports about common electoral malpractices alone, without identifying and implementing effective solutions or avenues of redress, can fail to catalyze corrective actions by public officials and elected representatives. In the economic marketplace, consumers can adjust their actions in the light of new information, for example, environmentalists can choose not to buy VW diesel cars after learning that the company cheated on their reported levels of gas emissions. Owners of Samsung Galaxy Note 7 phones can dump these when learning that their batteries can burst into flames. In electoral governance, however, where there is a monopoly supplier of services (the electoral management body), citizens have no such option for direct action, if dissatisfied, beyond mobilizing public protests and legal appeals through the courts (voice) or else withdrawal (exit). Rather than fueling credible results, reports about widespread electoral malpractices, fraud and vote rigging can thereby undermine public confidence in voting processes, depress civic engagement, and encourage growing cynicism about the official authorities and the electoral process (Bauhr and Grimes 2014). Even worse, if faith in the rules of the game is systematically undermined, in contentious elections and fragile states, opposition political parties, disaffected groups and their followers may respond by mounting election boycotts and/or resorting to electoral violence (Norris, Frank and Martinez i Coma 2015).

When transparency is coupled with both accountability and effective compliance mechanisms providing punishments or rewards for administrative performance, however, then we believe that information is more likely to strengthen electoral integrity. This process can be understood as a three-step transparency-accountability-compliance sequence; information provides the foundation which precedes and facilitates the accurate identifications of any malpractices and their potential solutions. In turn, compliance uses rewards and sanctions designed to ameliorate problems and encourage the implementation of remedies leading towards improved performance by electoral officials. This sequential understanding is hardly radically novel, yet it is often overlooked or neglected by enthusiastic but naïve proponents of the transformative power of open electoral government alone. A more critical understanding of the power of transparency, and the underlying conditions under which it can help to transform electoral integrity, provides a useful corrective.

[Figure 1.1 about here]
Multiple channels of transparency-accountability-compliance

Secondly, however, the straightforward narrative story of the chain of transparency-accountability-compliance nexus is more complicated in electoral administration than in many other areas of public sector management. The traditional model of political accountability suggests that central, provincial and local government departments and public sector agencies are typically delegated with the responsibility for managing public goods and services, operating under the oversight of government ministers and elected representatives, for example when regulating environmental protection, issuing drivers’ licenses, or managing health care services. There are also vertical channels of bureaucratic accountability within public sector organizations, typically involving a chain-of-command linking local, regional and central agencies. Where investigative commissions, news stories, or social audits reveal abuses such as corrupt practices or maladministration by official bodies, in democratic states this can spur public pressure for government ministers and representatives to respond by seeking remedial actions or reforms, such as by launching further inquiries to establish the facts, firing the top officials in the agencies responsible for delivering these services, and/or implementing new legal reforms or administrative guidelines. Bureaucracies can also respond by tightening procedures or reforming administrative processes within the hierarchy of electoral management, such as how registers are compiled, security services deployed, or local polling staff are trained. If politicians fail to act to curb serious problems of maladministration, then in parliamentary democracies, senior ministers may be replaced and ordinary citizens have the ultimate power to ‘throw the rascals out’ and replace governing parties at the next election. This is the standard ideal chain of electoral accountability with a hierarchy of delegated authority from civil service bureaucrats to ministers to elected representatives to citizens which Strøm identifies as operating in parliamentary democracies (Strøm 2000; Jarvis 2014; Franklin, Soroka and Wlezien 2014).

In all democracies, elections are admittedly fairly blunt instruments of political accountability: voters have to bundle preferences to match the limited party choices available on the ballot paper and citizens also need to counterbalance retrospective evaluations of government performance against prospective promises, where opposition parties pledge to remedy past defects and do better (Przeworski, Stokes and Manin 1999).

Nevertheless, in parliamentary democracies citizens have an opportunity to use contests to throw their leaders out if elections are seriously mismanaged and even deeply flawed, such as by a major financial scandal involving government ministers, by unconstitutional attempts to manipulate the electoral law, or by outbreaks of electoral conflict. Elections serve as a pressure valve.
In presidential democracies, more complex relationships and attenuated chains of electoral accountability can be identified, where responsibility runs from public sector bureaucrats to appointed secretaries of state who are directly accountable to the president, and indirectly to the legislature, and thus the electorate. Although electoral accountability is thereby attenuated, presidential systems separate powers so that stronger horizontal checks and balances exist among diverse branches of government.

Multi-level governance adds additional layers in long chains of accountability; in federal and decentralized systems parallel mechanisms operate at provincial or state levels. Further complexities in how far citizens can reward or punish elected officials via the ballot box also arise from contrasts in electoral systems between majoritarian arrangements (producing single party governments) and proportional representation (typically generating coalition governments) (Lijphart 1999).

In democratic states, chains of accountability and compliance may function in the ‘governmental’ model of electoral management, such as that used in France or Sweden, where contests are administered by civil servants working in government departments headed by a minister who is ultimately responsible to parliament and thus the electorate (Wall et. al 2006; Norris 2015). For example, in Western Australia, when some ballot boxes were lost requiring a do-over in the 2013 Senate elections, the government responded by sacking the chief of the Federal Electoral Commission (Poloni 2015; Douglas 2014). Similarly, when allegations about electoral fraud arose in the UK in 2012, the Electoral Commission launched an investigation, collecting evidence from the police and multiple stakeholders, and the report presented to parliament recommended several reforms, such as publishing a new Code of Conduct for parties and candidates and tightening up registration and balloting procedures (The Electoral Commission of the United Kingdom 2015).

At the same time, however, any serious malpractices break the conventional channels of electoral accountability which connect public sector officials with ministers, elected representatives, and thus citizens in democratic states. If the vote count favors incumbents, ballots are stuffed, or boundaries gerrymandered, so that the result fails to reflect the genuine will of the people and incumbents are unfairly reelected, then citizens are unable to use the ballot box to punish politicians and/or public officials who manipulate contests and violate international standards of electoral integrity.

Moreover in states with the ‘agency’ model of EMBs, authority for administering elections is delegated to autonomous administrative agencies which operate at arms length from the executive. The independence of EMBs is commonly recommended in states with weak horizontal checks and balances, where judicial and legislative actors are unable to curb the potential abuse of powers by the executive. The arms-length
autonomy of electoral authorities is designed to insulate them as umpires from the potential risks of undue influence (and the appearance of undue influence) by ministers, elected politicians, and political parties, all of whom have a direct interest in the partisan outcome of elections. Independence serves to protect the electoral authorities from challenges to electoral processes and results which arise on illegitimate grounds; for example, where sore losers have an incentive to propagate false complaints which stir up discontent among their supporters and thereby excuse a poor performance.

In addition, parties and politicians may well be the main perpetrators of any malpractices such as vote-rigging, ballot-stuffing, or intimidation, so there is a clear conflict of interest if politicians also have authority to oversee the work of electoral agencies, or powers over EMB appointments, tenure, or budgets. For example, if senior electoral commissioners are vulnerable to being replaced by politicians, without sufficient security of tenure, or if their authority is undermined by political pressures, officials may lack the power and willingness to address persistent problems of electoral manipulation. Yet on the other hand, if the officials in electoral management bodies are too strongly insulated from responsibility for any incidents of maladministration, and if they are unaccountable to elected politicians (and thus the public), then any flaws or failings are likely to persist. A fine line therefore needs to be drawn; election management bodies which operate as autonomous administrative agencies ideally need to retain a degree of decision-making authority which is independent from partisan interests in both the executive and the legislature, while also remaining accountable to the public interest (Thatcher 2002).

Therefore, for both the governmental and the agency models of electoral management bodies, it is important to supplement the conventional chain of electoral accountability in democratic states by multiple channels designed to provide further safeguards strengthening mechanisms of transparency, accountability, and compliance. Many stakeholders may serve to expand information: international monitors, domestic election watch groups, community associations, party workers, and independent journalists in the news media can all help to strengthen public scrutiny of electoral processes and electoral management bodies, revealing any incidents of partisan manipulation or maladministration. In turn, citizens and activists can utilize collective action through mobilizing grassroots protests and mass demonstrations in civil society and litigation through the courts designed to pressure the electoral authorities and governments to address malpractices. Judicial review (through legal appeals in the courts), ombudsmen, and parliamentary scrutiny (such as establishing official commissions to hear expert testimony, parliamentary questions, debates over proposed reforms, and legislative committee inquiries)
provide further critical horizontal safeguards to weigh legal challenges to electoral procedures and outcomes, such as assessing the constitutionality of proposed reforms to voting rights and procedures.

The broken channels of transparency-accountability-compliance in autocracies

Finally, of course, the situation differs in hybrid regimes and in electoral autocracies. Today elections have spread to all but a handful of states worldwide so that numerous contests occur in diverse types of regimes (Norris 2015). Hybrid regime are characterized by weak institutions of horizontal accountability within the state, typically with poor rule of law where the judiciary, ineffective electoral tribunals, and constitutional courts lack the independent capacity to constrain electoral malpractices by ruling parties holding executive office. In this context, parliaments also commonly serve as rubber-stamp institutions, endorsing and legitimizing executive decisions, but unable to scrutinize or challenge actions by the government.

Moreover, as discussed in chapters 9 and 10, alternative downwards channels of social accountability to citizens are also characteristically weak, including civic society organizations, grassroots reform movements, and the independent press. Without these safe-guards, evaluation reports issued by international election monitors and cross-national ranking indices become particularly important to reveal any electoral malpractices and to attribute responsibility for any failures which occur. Domestic reform movements in civil society can mobilize grassroots pressures designed to strengthen human rights, using international reports published by external monitors and ranking indices as advocacy materials to support their claims (Fox and Brown 1998; Simmonds 2009). Here again, as discussed further in chapter 3, there is evidence that international monitoring is most effective not by itself but when coupled with mechanisms of accountability and compliance (Donno 2013). To advocate reforms, and to ensure compliance with international standards of electoral integrity, multilateral intergovernmental organizations and bilateral donors typically use several mechanisms, ranging from ‘soft’ to ‘hard’ power. This includes seeking to secure agreement over international norms in inter-governmental and regional forums, providing technical assistance to electoral authorities and civil society organizations, and applying diplomatic pressures to recalcitrant states, including deploying trade sanctions, and implementing aid conditionality. But the advocacy role of international actors is muted, and the transparency-accountability-compliance nexis is attenuated, in the absence of effective horizontal accountability mechanisms among counter-balancing institutions within hybrid regimes and repressive autocracies, constraining upwards pressures from reform movements in civil society.
Channels of accountability

To develop this argument further, this introduction develops the book’s central theoretical framework which identifies three alternative channels of accountability for electoral management bodies (EMBs), the core administrative agencies charged with running elections. As depicted schematically in Figure 1.2, channels of accountability flow upwards from EMBs towards the international community, including multilateral agencies and bilateral donors; horizontally, outwards to other core state institutions providing checks and balances on the power of electoral authorities, including the courts and legislature; and downwards towards the news media, NGOs, and political parties in civil society, as well as ultimately to ordinary citizens in the electorate. How do these processes work in diverse contexts and types of regimes?

Attention in the research literature has focused on upwards accountability to international observers, and downwards accountability to civil society has also been widely advocated within the development community, little is known about the effectiveness of these alternative channels of accountability in electoral governance. To understand this process and expand the argument, the next section describes the structure and accountability of different types of electoral management bodies, the front-line agencies responsible for providing electoral services. The final section provides a roadmap for the plan of the book, including explaining how this theoretical framework applies to each of the subsequent chapters.

II: The structure and accountability of electoral management bodies

Recent years have seen growing attention to problems of electoral maladministration – and the role of electoral management bodies as the core actors in this process (Mozaffar and Schedler 2002; Fall et al. 2011; Gazibo 2006; Kerr 2014; Hartlyn, McCoy, and Mustillo 2008). Ideally for contests to meet global norms, electoral officials should ensure that they deliver public services meeting international standards (Alvarez, Rae Atkeson and Hall 2013). Typically the primary electoral agency at nation level is charged with implementing a wide range of tasks which may include issuing detailed administrative guidelines and codes governing the conduct of staff, candidates, political parties, and agents; validating and registering the nomination of political parties and candidates for elected office; determining qualifications and maintaining electoral registration databases; regulating procedures and facilities for polling; monitoring the vote tabulation process and compiling nation-wide results; and authorizing the official declaration of the vote and seat distribution. The EMBs may also be authorized with a broader mandate including multiple additional responsibilities. Alternatively, several functions may be delegated to a range of specialized independent administrative and regulatory agencies, such as boundary commissions
responsible for delimitation, regulatory bodies tasked with registering political parties and monitoring campaign finance, broadcasting authorities allocating any party political broadcasts, security forces charged with maintaining peaceful processes, and courts, tribunals and ombudsmen resolving electoral complaints and disputes (López-Pintor 2000; Wall et al. 2006). Unitary and federal states also differ in the decentralization of powers to officials responsible for administering elections at provincial, municipal, and district levels.

Unfortunately, too often the process of administering elections appears to fall foul of simple human errors, technical malfunctions, and logistical failures, even in several long-established democracies. Problems occur where polling stations run out of ballot papers. Poorly trained poll workers are unfamiliar with procedures. Dead people are listed on voter registers. Other legitimate citizens are turned away. Electronic voting machines break. Indelible ink washes off fingers. Ballot boxes have broken seals. Officials fail to check voter identification. Long lines delay closure. Electoral legitimacy can be damaged by accidental maladministration and indeed official incompetence may facilitate intentional acts of partisan fraud and manipulation. Moreover, if administrative flaws arise on polling day, there are often minimal opportunities to correct them in a timely fashion, potentially damaging confidence in the electoral process and authorities (Rosas 2010; Norris 2015).

In seeking to rectify these problems, and avoid future flaws, a series of international guidelines have emphasized that transparency and accountability are important principles designed to ensure that elections should be administered fairly and efficiently by an impartial body (Wall et al. 2006; Thomas and Gibson 2014, 9; The Venice Commission 2002). For example the Venice Commission for the Council of Europe Code of Good Practice endorses several principles for EMBs: “Only transparency, impartiality and independence from politically motivated manipulation will ensure proper administration of the election process, from the pre-election period to the end of the processing of results” (The Venice Commission 2002). Similarly the International IDEA Handbook on Electoral Management Design emphasizes: “Transparency in operational and financial management lays out for public accountability the decisions and reasoning of the EMB. Transparency is a basic good practice for all EMB activities. It can assist an EMB to combat perceptions and identify actual financial or electoral fraud, lack of competence or favoritism towards particular political tendencies, and can enhance EMB credibility” (Wall et al. 2006) This argument draws on the almost unquestioned liberal assumption that good governance is strengthened through transparency – the provision of public information – and accountability – identifying the reasons for any administrative short-fails (Hood and Heald 2006; Bovens, Goodin and Schillemans 2014).
But are these claims valid? And how important is the principle of transparency for electoral governance compared with, for example, the values of professionalism, impartiality and autonomy? A large body of work has described transparency and social accountability initiatives seeking to strengthen different dimensions of ‘good’ governance, such as aid, budgets and corruption (Kosack, Tolmie and Griffin 2010; Gaventa and McGee 2013; Joshi. 2013). Another related literature has sought to understand the most common form of transparency in electoral governance arising from international electoral observation missions and the effects thought to arise from this process in deterring illegal malpractices, fraud, and ballot stuffing in the balloting and count (Hyde 2011; Kelley 2012). Nevertheless, international observers are only one source of information in any contest. Far less systematic comparative knowledge has been established about the roles of the wider range of actors who also contribute towards transparency in electoral governance throughout all stages of the electoral cycle, the multiple mechanisms and channels of accountability which provide information about this process, and the impact of transparency, accountability and compliance on the quality of electoral governance.

Electoral bodies are required to account for their conduct most directly to executive and legislative oversight bodies, including ministers and elected representatives, and also indirectly to multiple forums and in a variety of ways. Hence information about the performance of electoral authorities can be revealed through diverse initiatives by the activities of unaffiliated domestic election watch groups and crowd-sourcing social media, political party representatives observing the count, EMB organizational performance reports and indices, campaign coverage by the international and domestic news media, post-election vote audits and investigations, legislative hearings, debates, and parliamentary over-sight, ranking performance indicators, investigative reports by official commissions, and processes of redress by ombudsmen, complaint offices, prosecutors, and judicial review. Through mechanisms of transparency and accountability, theories suggest that electoral management bodies are restrained from the abuse of power and the sins of clientalism, arbitrariness, and corruption, in a self-regulatory or ‘self-enforcing’ process of checks and balances (Schedler 1999; Fearon 2011). At the same time, however, elections are something of a special case, since a fine balance has to be maintained to prevent accountability to partisan interests from eroding the impartiality, authority, independence, and legitimacy of the EMB.

The variety of alternative levels of accountability for election management bodies are depicted in Figure 1.2. This heuristic model identifies three alternative channels of accountability: upwards from the state towards the international community; horizontal mechanisms outwards connecting electoral authorities with legislative and judicial branches of government within the nation-state; and downwards linkages to
agencies in civil society, including political parties, NGOs, and the news media, as well as, ultimately, ordinary citizens in the electorate.

**Upwards accountability to the international community**

The role of the international community, through deploying election observers, diplomatic pressures and aid conditionality, has attracted the most research in the literature in part because in fragile states many other political institutions and civil society organizations are typically weakly consolidated, and thus unable to provide a robust check on the EMB. In authoritarian states, as well, opposition parties and reform movements are often unable to exert pressure on the executive, so that in this context the international community has a special responsibility to provide oversight by monitoring contests. In more democratic states, however, domestic actors such as the courts, ombudsmen, news media, and election watch NGOs can be expected to play a more important role in highlighting any problems of electoral maladministration as well as ensuring compliance.

Since the end of the Cold War era, electoral observation has become a widely used tool for monitoring electoral integrity (Hyde 2011; Kelley 2012). This activity involves many inter-governmental regional organizations, including the Organization for American States, the Organization for Security and Economic Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe, the African Union, the EISA. There has been growing diversity in the role of regional monitoring organizations, however, with ASEAN traditionally leaving this function to civil society organizations and networks (ANFREL), while the League of Arab States has only more recently sought to monitor elections (Daxecker and Schneider 2014). Other monitoring organizations include bilateral developmental agencies and NGOs, notably the National Democracy Institute, IRI, IFES, and the Carter Center.

Intergovernmental monitoring organizations regularly publish reports providing retrospective evaluations of the quality of elections, with the aim of highlighting malpractices and thereby deterring the potential abuse of power, as well as providing states with technical advice and development assistance designed to strengthen subsequent contests. For example, to achieve these goals, since 1962, the OAS has monitored over 200 elections in more than thirty countries, deploying more than 5,000 international observers. By contrast, the United Nations, which observed several elections during the early-1990s, later withdrew from this activity to avoid a potential conflict of interest between the provision of electoral assistance and the subsequent evaluations of the quality of electoral administration. The last UN observation mission was conducted in 2001.

The deterrence effects arising from the deployment of monitors to polling station on occurrences of local
fraud has been documented in a series of observational, experimental and quasi-experimental studies (Hyde 2007; Ichino and Schuendeln 2012). This literature is built in large part on the logic that observers provide information about the extent of any election fraud to international and domestic audiences. With regards to international audiences, this information can then trigger diplomatic pressures and the withdrawal of ‘democracy-contingent’ benefits (Hyde 2011; Donno 2013). This process can thereby deter potential malpractices. In terms of domestic audiences, negative reports increase the likelihood of mass protests and thus also raise the costs of cheating (Daxecker and Schneider 2014).

Nevertheless, many important question remain unresolved about the impact of this activity. In recent years the number of observer agencies has multiplied: do all consistently follow international norms and standards? Where they diverge in their assessments, does this dilute the impact of critical reports? And beyond deterrence, what is the prospective impact of the reform recommendations which organizations make in attempting to identify suitable remedies and improve subsequent contests?

Horizontal accountability to state actors

Election management bodies differ in their structure, function and resources – as well as in their channels of accountability. The organizational structures of EMBs vary worldwide and the most important differences are illustrated schematically in Figure 1.3. The most common classification of Election Management Bodies was first developed by López-Pintor (López-Pintor 2000). This typology was subsequently refined further in the comprehensive worldwide study produced by International IDEA. The conventional framework distinguishes three types of formal institutional structures which have been termed ‘governmental’, ‘mixed’, and ‘independent’ models. The original choice of terms, which have been widely adopted in the literature, unfortunately can confuse the de jure formal-legal independence of any body and its de facto autonomy from undue external interference, a matter which remains to be determined in the light of the empirical evidence. De jure or formal executive independence refers to the constitutional and legal instruments which govern the electoral authorities and how far these allow the authorities to make decisions without external interference or constraints from outside actors. De facto or actual executive independence, by contrast, refers to how far in practice electoral authorities make their decisions without external interference or constraints. Hence in this book, to avoid the risks of this potential conceptual slippage, the term ‘agency model’ is used to imply that the organization is established constitutionally or legally to operate at arm’s length from the executive branch.

Government model

In many established democracies, electoral administration was traditionally handled by local and national
government officials, with courts handling any disputes. The central authorities responsible for managing elections were typically located in the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Home Office, or equivalent department of state. The Treasury or Ministry of Finance allocates the EMB budget. Local authorities provide logistical services and staff for manning polling stations and the vote count. Police provide security. This arrangement persists today in several European states, such as the Swedish Electoral Authority, the German Ministry of Interior, the Swiss Federal Chancellery, and the Norwegian Ministry for Local Government and Regional Development. In these states, the civil service has a general reputation for professional neutrality and impartiality. This system was originally used to manage elections post-independence in many former colonies, such as in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Uganda, although there has been an increasing tendency towards transferring these responsibilities to independent administrative agencies (Mozaffar 2002). Among all countries worldwide, International IDEA estimates that around one quarter continue to use the governmental model for running elections (Wall et al. 2006).

In this model, a unit located within a central government department is responsible for administering elections, staffed by permanent civil servants and headed by a cabinet minister who is directly accountable to the legislature, and thus indirectly to the electorate. The Governmental Model exists in those countries: “where elections are organized and managed by the executive branch through a ministry (such as the Ministry of the Interior) and/or through local authorities. Where EMBs under the Governmental Model exist at national level, they are led by a minister or civil servant and they are answerable to a Cabinet minister. With very few exceptions they have no ‘members’. Their budget falls within a government ministry and/or under local authorities” (Wall et al. 2006). This model persists in several European countries, such as France (Massicotte, Blais and Yoshinaka 2004). The day-to-day administration of elections, such as maintaining voter registries, organizing balloting, running polling places, and counting ballots, is devolved to government authorities at provincial, state, municipal, and constituency levels. The national parliament retains the primary prerogative of law-making, establishing the statutory framework of electoral regulations. Regional and local officials are responsible for the detailed application and implementation of these procedures in each locality. Finally, parliament often exercises some general oversight over electoral authorities while the courts interpret the laws and adjudicate disputes.

Where electoral administration is the responsibility of civil servants working in central ministries or local authorities, and thus subject to executive control, the process is thought vulnerable to either the actual or the perceived abuse of power and the risk of manipulation to benefit the interests of the governing
party or parties. This is thought to be a particularly dangerous model in states with predominant governing parties, a fragmented opposition, and weak parliamentary and judicial oversight of the executive. Electoral officials need to be impartial and independent of government or other external influences from political parties, special interests, or the military if the process and results are to be trusted as credible, transparent, and fair. What works in Sweden, Belgium, and Denmark may therefore be far from appropriate in, say, the Prime Minister’s Office in Singapore, the Ministry of Interior in Syria, or the Election Council in Vietnam, all of which also have a governmental model of electoral administration.

Agency model

Recent years have seen several post-industrial countries adopting new public sector management reforms where several government functions are transferred from central department of state to specific arms-length administrative and regulatory agencies in the public sector (Pollitt and Bouckaart 2004). In several Anglo-American countries, including New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Australia, in recent decades the tendency has been to establish more specialized organizations for managing several public services, as well as decentralizing decision-making and administration from the center towards the periphery, thereby fragmenting responsibilities which used to be the province of large bureaucratic ministries. Similar trends towards new public management have been observed in Canada, France and the Netherlands, although they are thought to be less marked in Belgium, Finland, Germany, and Sweden (Pollitt and Bouckaart 2004). Independent regulatory and administrative agencies have been established in the public sector to provide delegated authority over many policy areas, such as environmental protection, food safety, pharmaceuticals, and telecoms. It is widely believed that this arms-length separation of specialized agencies from direct government control avoids political interference and potential conflicts of interest, as well as being more efficient, and thus strengthens the delivery of goods and services in the public interest (Hanretty and Koop 2013).

Reflecting this development, many countries transferred responsibilities for election management from government departments to legally-independent administrative agencies, with chief executives composed of experts or partisan members, which operate at arm’s length from the executive. The name of these bodies varies in different countries and they are often called ‘Electoral Commissions’, ‘Electoral Tribunals’, ‘Electoral Boards’, ‘Electoral Courts’, ‘Departments of Elections’, ‘Electoral Institutes’ or ‘Election Councils’, and so on, known generically as Election Management Bodies (EMBs) (Wall et al 2006). Agency models of electoral administration create ‘arms-length’ separation from the government through the mechanism of establishing de jure formal legal independence. The agency model has often been
established to run the first elections following regime transitions, such as the National Election Commission in Poland, the Independent Election Commission in South Africa, and the Central Election Bureau in Romania. The model has also become increasingly popular among established democracies; for example, through agencies such as the Australian Electoral Commission (since 1984), and the UK Electoral Commission (since 2000). This type of arrangement is described by International IDEA as one where “elections are organized and managed by an EMB which is institutionally independent and autonomous from the executive branch of government, and which has and manages its own budget. Under the Independent Model, an EMB is not accountable to a government ministry or department. It may be accountable to the legislature, the judiciary, or the head of state. EMBs under the Independent Model may enjoy varying degrees of financial autonomy and accountability, as well as varying levels of performance accountability. They are composed of members from outside the permanent civil service” (Wall et al., 7-16).

The organizational structure, legal mandate, and administrative functions of electoral agencies vary substantially from one country to another, however, as does the de facto autonomy and accountability of these agencies, according to their constitutional and legal status, their scope and mandate, provisions for the nomination, appointment, and removal of senior members, the capacity for external actors and other branches of government to overrule the agency’s decisions and oversee its operations, and the body’s financial independence. One major challenge facing analysts is how to distinguish formal from actual independence. The practice of how the law operates may differ sharply from the text on paper, not least given the Orwellian propensity of regimes to misappropriate positive terms in double-speak. Thus electoral authorities are categorized by International IDEA as formally ‘independent’ in autocracies such as the Central Election Committee in Kazakhstan, the Electoral Commission in Zimbabwe, and the Elections and Boundary Commission in Swaziland, all states ranked poorly on the overall summary PEI index of electoral integrity, as well as being given low rankings in expert evaluations of the fairness of electoral officials and the competence of election management. In Russia, the nominally independent Central Electoral Commission has been seen as bending to pressures from incumbent politicians (Popova 2006). Whether election agencies have sufficient resources and powers to manage contests effectively also varies around the world. In some transitional states, the international community has encouraged new regimes to establish formally-independent election agencies. In subsequent elections, however, the government has allocated limited staffing, restricted powers, or inadequate budgets to these agencies, so that officials are unable to build capacity or fulfil their responsibilities.
Mixed model

Finally, rather than falling neatly into just two categories, International IDEA also identifies a mixed or hybrid model of electoral management. In these, “there are usually two component EMBs, and dual structures exist: a policy, monitoring or supervisory EMB that is independent of the executive branch of government (like an EMB under the Independent Model) and an implementation EMB located within a department of state and/or local government (like an EMB under the Governmental Model). Under the Mixed model, elections are organized by the component governmental EMB, with some level of oversight provided by the component independent EMB” (Wall et al. 2006). Mixed models exist in countries as diverse as Portugal, Sri Lanka, Argentina, Slovakia, and Japan.

The structure of EMBs can be expected to have important consequences for their transparency, accountability, and mechanisms of compliance. Thus electoral integrity in governmental models relies primarily upon horizontal channels of accountability, requiring effective checks and balances provided by the legislature and courts. If malpractices in electoral administration occur, through the intentional abuse of power or more accidental procedural flaws, then other state agencies need to provide counterbalance to maintain electoral integrity, such as by striking down laws which restrict voting rights or favor incumbents. With agency models, however, as discussed earlier, it is more difficult to identify the appropriate balance between facilitating institutional autonomy from political pressures for electoral authorities, while also maintaining accountability for any errors which occur.

Downward social accountability to civil society

Finally, electoral officials are also subject to scrutiny by multiple organizations and groups in civil society, notably by political party representatives observing the vote count, election watch non-governmental domestic organizations using techniques of collective action, including social media networks, and journalists in the traditional news media. Most of these groups rely primarily upon transparency, coupled with grassroots forums for the expression of collective action, where there is limited access to formal mechanisms of accountability and compliance within the executive and legislature. Traditional and social media commonly seek to expose any wrong-doings or administrative incompetence by EMBs, such as revealing acts of corruption and partisanship, the production of inaccurate voter registers, or ineffective security provided in polling stations. Correlational evidence in several studies suggests that electoral integrity is usually stronger in societies with a free press capable of highlighting such flaws (Norris 2015; Birch 2011). Where the ‘long route’ to accountability via elections fails, advocates have suggested strengthening the ‘short route’ through innovative citizen-led activities such as Parallel Vote Counts,
citizen report cards, crowd-watch technologies, media watch groups, voter registration drives, public complaints mechanisms, and vote audits. Diverse tools of social accountability have been widely advocated within the development community both to throw sunlight on electoral abuses, as well empowering citizens through giving them a voice in the delivery of public services.

Nevertheless, whether information collected by citizens’ groups, party representatives, local NGOs and independent journalists actually pressures officials to implement concrete reforms which would improve electoral integrity in subsequent contests depends, we believe, on complex processes linking transparency with both accountability and compliance. For the reasons outlined earlier, in democratic states with freedom of expression and pluralistic outlets there is usually no shortage of domestic media headlines and social media communications about the most visible and high-profile problems which occur during and after polling day. Given rival partisan winners and losers, however, this information may not be regarded as credible, authoritative, and reliable. If electoral authorities are willing to use the information to engage in genuine reform efforts, and if they have sufficient resources, then this could help to identify problems and potential remedies, for example to establish the polling stations most vulnerable to violence and intimidation, where security services could be reinforced. If the electoral authorities (and their masters) are unwilling or unable to engage in reforms, however, then in the absence of horizontal accountability and legitimate mechanisms of compliance, transparency by itself is unlikely to prove effective. Social activism alone cannot compensate for accountability failures within the state. Civil society initiatives commonly use techniques of collective action, including peaceful demonstrations and violent protest, in attempts to pressure the electoral authorities and politicians. Perceived lack of electoral integrity is associated with protest activism (Norris 2014; Beaulieu 2014). Groups can also resort to litigation through the courts, or channel complaints through elected representatives and parliamentary parties, as well as collaborating with responsive EMBs, linking vertically with state institutions. Citizens can also use the ballot box to rid themselves of corrupt leaders (Ferraz and Finan 2008). But information revealing repeated patterns of structural electoral abuses (‘all politicians are equally corrupt’, ‘rich people buy elections’) which does not result in effective reform may also encourage a downwards spiral of fatalistic public cynicism which demobilizes civic engagement as much as generating public protests and rebellion.

III: The Plan of the book

Upwards accountability

Building upon these arguments, the second section of the book focuses upon the upwards accountability
mechanisms linking states to the international community, through the efforts of election monitors and audits.

Chapter 2, by Craig Arceneaux and Anika Leithner, focuses upon explaining the causes and consequences of divergent findings among reports issued by international electoral observer monitors. Several reasons could be behind these differences, including the foreign policy interests of bilateral donors, the methods used by each organization, and their political agendas and values. The chapter focuses upon the degree of professionalization of observer monitors to explain how missions arrive at their evaluations and the lack of standardization in the field, despite endorsement of a common code of conduct among over forty international observer groups. Where evaluations differ, this allows countries to appeal to different monitoring reports, reducing the overall effectiveness of efforts to enforce international standards of electoral integrity.

Chapter 3 by Daniela Donno examines issues at the heart of the transparency-accountability-compliance nexus, in particular how far the international community uses the tools of conditionality, diplomacy, mediation, and shaming in response to violations of norms of electoral conduct. The chapter employs an original dataset that records the use of conditionality and diplomatic engagement by 15 governmental and intergovernmental actors, in response to 668 elections in 119 countries. It finds, in short, that enforcement empowers opposition voices and increases pressure for states to implement electoral reforms, leading to improvements in electoral conduct. Regional organizations serve a particularly important role in this regard, through leverage and linkage which makes them effective compared with bilateral actors.

Different tools of international norm enforcement have different strengths, however. Conditionality is associated with improvements in electoral conduct and an increase in the probability of an opposition electoral victory over the longer-term. Diplomatic engagement, instead, appears to be best suited for shaping the course of events during the immediate aftermath of a flawed election: tools of mediation and shaming are associated with more effective opposition-led protests and an increased probability of post-election concessions by the incumbent. In this way, ‘upward’ mechanisms of accountability—whereby international actors place pressure on state actors—also help activate the ‘downward’ societal accountability mechanisms highlighted in this volume (see chapter 1).

Building upon this work, Chapter 4 by Ferran Martinez i Coma theorizes that international monitors can seek to improve electoral integrity through both deterrence effects (preventing malpractices from occurring), and prospective reforms (making recommendations for improvements in electoral laws,
administrative procedures, and practices). In this regard, monitors seek to share awareness of best practices and common policies, providing the basis for further technical assistance and advice. Most observer reports by international agencies contain a series of recommendations but the contents of these proposals, and their impact, have not been compared systematically in previous research. Focusing upon the activities of the Organization of American States, this chapter analysis the recommendations made in a series of reports in Latin American elections and whether these are linked with subsequent legal and administrative reforms in these countries.

In addition to monitors, Chapter 5 on electoral audits by Erica Shein and Chad Vickery examines the role of the international community when using audits as a way of settling disputes about election results. Examples include Afghanistan in 2009 and 2014, Haiti in 2010, Kosovo in 2009 and 2010, and Iraq in 2005. The aim of audits is to resolve allegations of fraud and mediate peacefully among disputing parties and to establish credible evidence about the results. This process is thought to be particularly important for peace-building in fragile states where governance structures and rule of law are weak and fraud allegations over election outcomes may easily trigger further conflict and violence. The chapter examines the standards which should be used in any audit process, including considering issues of ownership, clearly defined principles, rigorous, impartial and consistent methods to establish the factual evidence, and the need for a timely evaluation of the outcome and resolve disputes.

**Horizontal accountability**

This lays the foundations for Section III of the book which considers horizontal accountability among state actors, especially how far election management bodies are open and transparent through their online communication platforms, the role of the courts in reviewing electoral laws and adjudicating complaints, and the way that bureaucratic accountability within electoral management bodies links principals (senior electoral officials) with agents (local poll workers).

Chapter 6 by Holly Ann Garnett provides new evidence about the ways that electoral management bodies seek to inform the public through their official websites. Transparency concerns how far these platforms present comprehensive information about electoral laws and processes, such as informing citizens about voting rights and procedures, providing guidelines for ballot access and campaign spending for candidates and political parties, and presenting comprehensive breakdowns of the election results after each contest. Channels of interactive communications include the feedback mechanisms allowing users to contact electoral officials. The content analysis used in this study measures transparency in EMB websites in almost 100 countries during recent years and considers alternative explanations for the degree of
transparency, including factors such as development and democracy.

Chapter 7 considers the role of the courts, which is expected to be critical for electoral integrity, through upholding voting rights, examining legal appeals, petitions, and complaints in specific cases, as well as evaluating the constitutionality of electoral procedures. In the United States, for example, in recent years over thirty states have introduced new laws regulating registration and balloting procedures, but many of these attempts have been struck down by the courts as violating fundamental voting rights (Hasen 2012). In many countries, constitutional courts have often played a vital role in judging legal complaints about electoral malpractices, including cases of voter coercion, legal bans on party access to the ballot, or ballot box fraud (Orozco-Henríquez et al 2010). This process is expected to be particularly important in democratic states with an independent judiciary. By contrast, in autocratic states, the judiciary is often believed to be in the pockets of ruling parties, although this assumption has been challenged where the courts ruled against the government, for example by nullifying an election where irregularities have occurred. Chapter 7 considers the role and independence of the courts as a check and balance upon both the legislature and executive, examining cases in Eastern Europe.

Chapter 8 turns to consider internal channels of bureaucratic accountability within electoral management bodies, including using principal-agent theories to see how far local poll workers are accountable to mid-level and senior managers within these organizations (Alvarez and Hall 2006). Alistair Clark and Toby James examine a survey of poll workers in Britain – the front-line troops in electoral administration - to monitor their roles, background, training, and experience, and what forms of bureaucratic accountability and compliance exist for senior managers (sanctions and rewards) when problems arise and they seek to improve the local performance of poll workers.

Downwards accountability

In turn, Section IV examines the downwards forms of accountability from election management bodies to civil society, exemplified by representatives from political parties observing voting processes and counts, domestic election-watch non-governmental organizations, and the role of the independent media and investigative journalists in providing accurate, impartial and balanced coverage of electoral malpractices. Each of these can be regarded as providing another set of safeguards by expanding the transparency of electoral governance – although the mechanisms of accountability and compliance are more limited, especially outside of democratic states. Thus in contests with major malpractices, election watch organizations and opposition parties commonly mobilize deploying the techniques of collective action and social accountability, including using traditional mass and social media to organize election boycotts,
peaceful demonstrations, and violent protests. In some cases, exemplified by many of the ‘color’ revolutions, studies suggest that regimes are forced to respond by conceding to these pressures (Bunce and Wolchik 2006; 2010; 2011). In other contexts such as Egypt and Russia, however, collective actions have been unable to trigger significant positive reforms and instead repressive states have cracked down hard on protestors by imprisoning dissidents, banning opposition parties, and outlawing demonstrations lacking state permits.

While international monitors have been widely studied, far less attention has been given to domestic watchdogs. If observing is to be sustainable in the long-term, however, it is important to develop local capacity among citizens, rather than parachuting in foreign experts. Chapter 9 by Max Grömping analyzes the roles of domestic election observers who are monitoring contests in countries around the world where elections have been commonly flawed by malpractices such as clientelism, fraud, intimidation, and vote-buying. The study predicts that the formation and maintenance of domestic election watchdog groups depends primarily on a combination of grievances (incidents of serious electoral malpractice), and political opportunities (the freedom of civil society groups to mobilize around such issues). These factors are theorized to interact. As a result, domestic monitors are expected to be strongest in hybrid regimes which are neither established democracies nor electoral autocracies, displaying an inverted U-shape pattern across levels of democratization. The study presents evidence supporting this proposition drawing from a new dataset documenting the global distribution of domestic monitoring groups.

Chapter 10 by Alessandro Nai analyzes the quality of election coverage by the traditional news media. The author discusses a hierarchical model of influences that is expected to shape the fairness of election coverage, through a set of pressures and incentives, at three levels: the political and social structure, the media market, and the journalistic culture. Combining data from the 4.5 release of the Perceptions of Electoral Integrity dataset and recent data from the World of Journalism Study (Hanitzsch et al. 2011), the author shows that the fairness of elections coverage is lower when the content of information is distorted by pressures from exogenous actors such as politicians and pressure groups, when the media market faces a hyper-commercialization, and when journalists see their role redefined towards infotainment journalism that creates the conditions for a strong shift towards soft news. On the other hand, the quality of elections coverage by traditional news media is higher when media outlets are dispersed across multiple and competitive institutions, which promotes inclusiveness and sets up safeguards against the emergency of media oligopolies. The societal relevance of political journalism - in terms of news media being able to function as watchdogs, agenda-setters or gatekeepers - and a greater
autonomy of journalists to decide the content of their work do not affect the quality of election coverage. The analyses discussed in the chapter portray a rather bleak picture, where the room for manoeuvre for fair election coverage is seen as an increasingly shrinking space, cross-pressured from burdens at different levels.

Finally the conclusion presented in Chapter 11 looks at the links connecting transparency, accountability and compliance. In particular, in democratic states with multi-party competition the standard electoral chain of accountability is expected to be strengthened if transparency and accountability about electoral abuses leads ordinary citizens to become concerned about these issues, so that they are willing to blame the governing party for any perceived failure of performance, and if voters then seek to ‘throw the rascals out’ in the subsequent contest. Certainly mass protests about electoral malpractices observed in societies as diverse as Thailand, Ukraine, and Mexico suggest that in some circumstances, this issue is high on the public’s agenda and ordinary people seem to care deeply about major problems of electoral integrity. Direct evidence from public opinion polls also suggests the salience of this issue. Yet it is unclear whether dissatisfaction with the conduct of elections translates into voting preferences at the ballot box and there are many conditions under which this ideal model fails, even in democratic states, for example if opposition parties but not the government are seen as responsible for any malpractices which occur; if the public regards any irregularities as minor matters which are less salient than bread-and-butter concern about issues such as the economy, crime, or social problems; or if all politicians and parties are regarded as equally venal or corrupt, so that there is no choice or policy solutions, and disillusioned citizens may simply choose to ‘exit’ and stay home. The electoral accountability mechanisms is also broken hybrid regimes and repressive electoral autocracies. To consider how this process works, the conclusion compares some selected case studies, including Watergate in the United States, the Fujimori scandal and the Peruvian general election in 2000, and the Recruit scandal and Japanese elections in 1993. Finally, the conclusion assesses the more general lessons arising from contributions to this book, considers the broader consequences of the transparency-accountability-compliance nexus for understanding processes of electoral integrity and malpractice, and identifies some of the key policy implications which follow from the analysis.
Figure 1.1: The transparency, accountability and compliance chain in electoral integrity
Figure 1.2: Levels of accountability in electoral governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Upwards Accountability</th>
<th>International NGOs e.g. IFES, HRW, TI, Amnesty International</th>
<th>Inter-governmental agencies e.g. OAS, OSCE, UN, IDEA</th>
<th>Bilateral donors e.g. USAID, NDI, DFID, CIDA, Norad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal accountability within the state</td>
<td>Legislative oversight</td>
<td>Electoral management bodies</td>
<td>Courts and judicial review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downwards accountability to civil society</td>
<td>Domestic NGOs e.g. election watch groups</td>
<td>Political parties and the electorate</td>
<td>News media and social media</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1.3: Types of electoral management bodies

- **Government model**: Legally an administrative unit within a government department. Headed by a minister and staffed by permanent civil servants and local government officials. Budget and spending are controlled by the executive.

- **Mixed**

- **Agency model**: Legally an independent administrative agency. Members and chair are selected by more than one parliamentary party and/or the judiciary. Budget and spending are controlled by the legislature.
References:


*Development in Practice* 17(4): 663-71.


Endnotes


2 “Public confidence in each step of an election process is critical to the integrity of the election. Citizens not only have a right to participate in elections, they have a right to know for themselves whether the electoral process is valid. Access to information about each phase of the election process is fundamental to creating and reinforcing public confidence in elections” (The National Democracy Institute 2016).

3 By September 2016, it is estimated that 113 countries have implemented access to information provisions through laws or constitutional provisions. [http://www.right2info.org/]

4 See The Carter Center. Election Obligations and Standards Database. [https://eos.cartercenter.org]

5 [http://indicators.ohchr.org/]

6 See [http://www.gallup.com/poll/195371/six-confident-accuracy-votecount.aspx?g_source=Politics&g_medium=newsfeed&g_campaign=.tiles]

7 In this regard, we see transparency, accountability and compliance as ‘matching parts’, although in practice there may well be trade-offs and tensions among these values (Hood 2010).

8 There were reports that the missing ballot boxes may literally have fallen off the back of a truck or else been mistaken for rubbish and discarded (Poloni 2015; Douglas 2014).