

# The Role of Political Parties in Electoral Governance: Delegation and the Quality of Elections in Latin America

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## ABSTRACT

How does electoral governance affect the quality of elections? This article compares legislative elections in Latin America since re-democratization to verify the relationship between the models of electoral governance and the quality of elections. The logit panel analysis runs on an original dataset on electoral institutions to find that among other features of electoral governance, the delegation to non-partisan actors plays a critical role, being associated with institutional environments with no concerns about the fairness of elections. On the other hand, when political parties manage electoral competition, there is a greater likelihood of concerns about the fairness of the elections.

## INTRODUCTION

THE QUALITY OF ELECTIONS is a worldwide concern nowadays. The diffused practice of elections has been accompanied by the recognition that they are not always free and fair and that they can occur even under non-democratic regimes (Way and Levitsky 2002; Schedler 2006). In political science literature, there is an increasing concern about the fairness of elections and the risks to the integrity of electoral processes around the world. At the same time, electoral governance arrangements—the set of institutions and activities related to the management

and adjudication of electoral processes—have been focused on searching for ways to ensure the quality of elections and to avoid their failure. The main goal of this article is to identify which features of electoral governance institutions can improve on that quality.

The article mobilizes original data about the institutions of electoral governance in Latin American countries after re-democratization to describe their levels of delegation to non-partisan actors, bureaucratization, regulation, centralization, specialization, and independence from the government. The hypothesis is that these features, when fully present in the models of electoral governance, improve the quality of elections, thus reducing concerns about their fairness.

The statistical test shows that, among all dimensions, delegation to non-partisan actors is the one that plays a crucial role. The implications of this result pose some challenges to the perspective of power sharing in electoral management as a guarantee of electoral integrity. Power-sharing institutions are known for the important role they play in democratic consolidation, mainly in fragmented societies. Despite some debate in the literature (Horowitz 1985 apud Norris 2008; Horowitz 2003; Norris 2008), power-sharing arrangements such as

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proportional representation electoral systems, federalism, parliamentary systems, and freedom of the press have been shown to aid democratization (Norris 2008; Lijphart 2004). However, as perceptions of electoral integrity vary even among consolidated democracies with many of these features, searching for alternative explanations, like electoral governance institutions, is important. According to findings presented in the following sections, institutional solutions presented in one sphere of government do not necessarily work elsewhere: party power sharing inside electoral governance institutions does not have the same effects as power sharing within macro-institutions. Instead of encouraging consensus, negotiation, and compromise, partisan electoral management bodies (EMBs) increase concerns about electoral fairness.

### **QUALITY AND MANAGEMENT OF ELECTIONS: A SHORT REVIEW**

Fraud and manipulation in contemporary elections have drawn the attention of a growing number of researchers, academics and practitioners (ACE Project 2013, Norris 2013a), who use international agreements and international electoral observation mission reports as a resource for accessing the quality of elections (Birch 2011; Donno 2013). The ability to access information about electoral processes around the world has also allowed the development of comparative analyzes of various aspects of these elections. The rules and institutions that define the conduct of elections have been treated either descriptively (Sawer 2001; Marchetti 2008), as independent variables in studies of the quality of democracy (Lehoucq 2002; Hartlyn, McCoy et al. 2008), or as the dependent variable in studies on the origins of institutional design (Mozaffar 2002).

One of the many contributions of these studies is the comparison of EMBs among different countries. Responsible for legitimating political authorities and for the unambiguous definition of winners and losers in elections, these organs also end up being responsible for the production of trust in public opinion and ultimately for the credibility and legitimacy of the elections. The way they operate, their performance in the management of electoral processes, and their independence affect the reactions of the actors, their propensity to accept adverse out-

comes, and their support for the system and the rules of the game.

Recently, studies have focused on the performance and the institutional capacities of EMBs as an independent variable to explain the consolidation of new democracies and to analyze trust in democratic institutions (Molina and Hernandez 1998). However, the role of EMBs also needs to be seen within the broader institutional environment. Rules governing the transparency of electoral processes, such as campaign financing and the recruitment and selection of candidates, have also been mobilized in the discussion on the public role of political parties in the context of their declining representative functions (Peschard 2005). More specifically, Elklit and Reynolds (2005) list the characteristics of electoral governance models that are closely related to the functioning of party systems. Far beyond the EMB and the electoral system itself, the processes of election education, voter registration procedures, the complexity of the act of voting, and campaign regulation—among other things—are aspects of electoral governance that directly affect parties' actions.

It is true that the model of electoral governance is not enough to ensure the fairness of the electoral process because it operates primarily during election periods. Donno and Roussias (2012) have identified factors that operate before the election and which may compromise their competitiveness. Before and during the election campaign, some restrictions may deter opponents and skew the information voters receive, potentially affecting the decision of opposition parties to participate in the electoral competition. Examples of these restrictions are demanding candidate registration application processes and strict limits on campaign activities, in addition to the threats and the intimidation of opposition leaders, as well as voter and media repression.

Despite the increased attention the issue of electoral integrity is receiving, and the recognition that formal institutions are important in achieving it, electoral governance has not yet been sufficiently investigated to explain its variation. There are two previous pioneering studies that have made major contributions to the understanding of the relationship between electoral governance and the quality of elections. One is restricted to post-communist countries, mobilizes only a few aspects of electoral governance, and applies the Index of Electoral

Malpractices as the dependent variable (Birch 2007). The other analysis is limited to presidential elections in Latin America, also mobilizes only a few aspects of electoral governance, and operationalizes the quality of elections as a categorical variable, in terms of the election having produced acceptable results or not (Hartlyn, McCoy et al. 2008). This article builds on these two works to deepen the analysis in several ways. The research presented in this article expands on Birch's study by adding a suite of additional countries, and on Hartlyn, McCoy, et al. by adding legislative elections to the mix. The research also offers an alternative measure of quality of elections, and a better, more disaggregated measure of electoral governance.

### **POLITICAL PARTIES AS ELECTORAL MANAGERS**

Beyond being the target of regulations and governance arrangements, political parties are also the actors and authors of those regulations, performing electoral governance activities at all levels (rule making, rule application, and rule adjudication) while also being members of electoral governance institutions.

The role of political parties in the management of elections varies around the world, and their role in promoting electoral integrity is controversial. The classic model of electoral governance, which is still present in many advanced democracies, leaves the organization of elections to the executive branch and gives the prerogative of their certification to parliament (Lehoucq 2002). In new democracies, however, electoral management is usually the responsibility of specific institutions, independent from government and the legislature. These institutional features illustrate the current concerns about the autonomy of electoral management bodies as an instrument to ensure the electoral fairness and democracy. Many Latin American electoral management bodies, despite being formally independent of executive and legislative branches, still involve political parties as crucial electoral managers through the appointment of their members.

Some scholars see the presence of political parties or their agents in electoral management as a mechanism to check and balance each other's ambition (Estevez, Magar, et al. 2008; Norris 2014a). In new democracies, where trust in the impartiality of

any political actors is fragile, a multiparty composition of electoral management institutions can be the only alternative as a way to share power to produce consensus (ACE Project 2012). According to this interpretation, sharing electoral management power among the political parties is expected to produce trust and confidence, as all relevant actors are included in the decision processes.

In contrast, other authors associate the partisanship of electoral management with partiality, lack of credibility, and the poor quality of electoral processes (Molina and Hernandez 1998; Lehoucq 2002; Hartlyn, McCoy, et al. 2008). A multiparty composition of electoral institutions can make the decision-making process difficult, and the exclusion of minor parties can generate distrust (ACE Project 2012). In this view, the delegation of electoral governance to non-partisan actors is expected to reduce the impasses caused by partisan clashes, keep stakeholders away from the decision-making process, increase confidence in impartiality, avoid partisan favoritism and the curtailment of opponents, and thus increase electoral integrity. The lack of that delegation, therefore, would be one of the possible vulnerabilities to fraud and manipulation, which can be found in different models of electoral governance. The central hypothesis of this article, therefore, is that the partisanship of institutions of electoral governance is a vulnerability that can pose risks to electoral integrity.

In post-transition Latin American countries, almost 70% of elections have been conducted by non-governmental EMBs (122 out of 178), as can be seen in Table 1. However, among the independent EMBs there is a huge variation in the degree of partisanship. Table 2 shows that partisanship can limit autonomy in almost 60% of elections conducted by non-governmental EMBs.

Previous work (Tarouco 2014b) has shown a strong association between post-electoral protests by opposition parties and the degree of vulnerability to fraud and manipulation of different models of electoral governance in Latin America. Those results suggest that political actors (especially political parties) behave according to incentives provided by the electoral governance institutions: where elections are managed by autonomous institutions, political parties tend to accept electoral results peacefully; where institutions are vulnerable to fraud and manipulation, they tend to resort to protests and riots. The aim of this article is therefore to

TABLE 1. ELECTIONS ACCORDING TO INDEPENDENCE OF ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BODIES

<i>Elections conducted by governmental EMBs (10.7%)</i>	<i>Elections conducted by partially independent EMBs (some members appointed by the government) (20.8%)</i>	<i>Elections conducted by EMBs that are fully independent from the government (68.5%)</i>
Mexico (1988) Nicaragua (1984) Argentina (1983–2013)	Bolivia (1989–2014) Chile (1993–2013) Costa Rica (1949) Ecuador (1979–1998) Mexico (1991) Nicaragua (1990–2011) Panama (1994–2014)	Brazil (1986–2014) Colombia (1958–2014) Costa Rica (1953–2014) Dominican Republic (1978–2012) Ecuador (2002–2013) El Salvador (1985–2012) Guatemala (1990–2011) Honduras (1985–2013) Mexico (1994–2012) Paraguay (1989–2013) Peru (1980–2011) Uruguay (1989–2014) Venezuela (1963–2005)

(N=178)

EMBs, electoral management bodies.

test that relationship in a multivariate way in order to identify which institutional features can explain the concerns about the fairness of elections.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Answering the questions raised in this article involves dealing with some fundamental concepts. They are the concepts of electoral governance, the vulnerability of models of electoral governance, and quality of elections.

### *Electoral management and electoral governance*

Political science literature has approached electoral management with a focus on the institutional

features of EMBs. There are several approaches and different ways to classify EMBs, all of them related to the autonomy of those bodies. The first was proposed by Pastor (1999) who identified five different models of EMBs: they could be located in or outside of government; they could be partisan or non-partisan, and composed of judges, bureaucrats, or scholars. Several other ways of assessing independence and autonomy were proposed, either as categorical classifications (López-Pintor 2000; Mozaffar 2002; Schedler 2003; Birch 2008) or as indices of partisanship and independence (Hartlyn, McCoy, et al. 2008; Rosas 2010).

The concept of electoral governance (Mozaffar and Schedler 2002), in turn, disaggregates the notion of autonomy into its distinct components,

TABLE 2. ELECTIONS CONDUCTED BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BODIES, ACCORDING TO THE PARTISAN APPOINTMENT OF THEIR MEMBERS

<i>Elections carried out by fully delegated (non-partisan) EMBs (31.1%)</i>	<i>Elections carried out by partially partisan EMBs (only some members appointed by political parties) (9.0%)</i>	<i>Elections conducted by fully partisan EMBs (59.8%)</i>
Brazil (1986–2014) Costa Rica (1953–2014) Ecuador (2009–2013) Paraguay (1998–2013) Peru (1980–2011)	Guatemala (1990–2011) Venezuela (1998–2005)	Colombia (1958–2014) Dominican Republic (1978–2012) Ecuador (2002–2007) El Salvador (1985–2012) Honduras (1985–2013) Mexico (1994–2012) Paraguay (1989–1993) Uruguay (1989–2014) Venezuela (1963–1993)

(N=122)

adding aspects related to the regulation and adjudication of electoral processes, and hence going further than simply the institutional structure of EMBs. The intent was to develop an analytical tool able to incorporate the various elements that affect elections into comparative research on democracy and transitions, but which were usually treated separately (Mozaffar and Schedler 2002). The authors identify six dimensions in which institutional choices along which electoral governance should be analyzed:

- 1) the independence of electoral institutions from the government: in some countries elections are administered by ministries linked to the executive or by local government authorities, in others, by agencies completely independent of the executive organ. Independence matters as it avoids electoral manipulation by the government, which always has an interest in the dispute (Lehoucq 2002; Mozaffar 2002).
- 2) centralization in the conduct of elections: in some countries the management of all electoral processes is the responsibility of a national body, in others, it is exercised by decentralized institutions, by the states or provinces. Centralization matters because it withdraws power over the electoral process at the local level from local bosses and also because it allows uniformity of rules and procedures (Mozaffar and Schedler 2002).
- 3) bureaucratization of the institutional apparatus in charge of the process:<sup>1</sup> in some countries the administration of the electoral process is conducted by temporary committees formed just for this purpose (*ad hoc*), in others, by professional bodies with permanent members. Bureaucratization here could be understood as equivalent to professionalization and it matters because it allows the identification of the long-term responsibilities and also it provides a technical approach to the electoral processes, in opposition to a personalized one (Mozaffar and Schedler 2002).
- 4) delegation to non-partisan actors: in some countries, at the historical moment of institutional choice, political parties delegate the organization of elections to non-partisan agencies, in others, this activity is carried out with the participation of committees formed by representatives of political parties. Delegation

matters because even when the partisanship of EMBs means sharing and balancing the power of decision, it still allows competitors to use election management in its interests (Lehoucq 2002).

- 5) specialization of institutions by functions to be performed: in some countries both the administration of the electoral process and the adjudication of conflicts are driven by the same institution, in others, in contrast, separate organs specialize in each function. The institutions responsible for the adjudication of issues and conflicts are called electoral dispute resolution bodies (EDRB). Specialization matters because it allows competitors the right to contest the electoral management itself (Orozco-Henriques 2010).
- 6) level of the regulation of procedures and relationships between the actors: in some countries the electoral processes are regulated in detail, with the provision of routines, detailed procedures and decision criteria previously established, in others, managers have more discretion. Regulation matters for two reasons: firstly, more regulated models limit discretion and, therefore, the chance of *ad hoc* decisions; secondly, constitutional norms are not easily changed by the actors who have immediate interests (Chernykh et al. 2014).

Only two out of these six dimensions are dichotomous: specialization and regulation. All the others are ordinal variables, which means that we can find models partially independent, delegated, centralized, or bureaucratized. As the concept of vulnerability is a complex combination of those dimensions, it is also better understood as a continuum instead of a dichotomous one. For the purpose of this article, however, the concept of vulnerability is disaggregated and the effect of each one of its dimensions is tested.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This dimension refers mostly to the professionalization of institutions. The word bureaucratization has been maintained in order to match the vocabulary in the theoretical framework (Mozaffar and Schedler 2002).

<sup>2</sup>To build an index of the robustness/vulnerability of electoral governance models requires broader theoretical work, which is an important avenue for future research.

### *Vulnerability of the electoral governance model*

A model of electoral governance may be more vulnerable to fraud and manipulation, or more robust, according to the configuration of each of the six dimensions listed above. I define vulnerability as the institutional setting that allows any of the following conditions:

- a) the discretion of local officials and managers (decentralized models with *ad hoc* committees and fewer regulations);
- b) interference by the executive branch (not independent electoral bodies);
- c) influence of political parties (models without delegation to non-partisan actors);
- d) interference between the administrative operations and conflict resolution functions (not specialized institutions).

In contrast, systems more protected against fraud and manipulation would be those in which the model of electoral governance is centralized, bureaucratized, non-partisan, independent of the executive, with separate institutions specialized in administrative and adjudication functions, and with extensive regulation.

### *Quality of elections*

Elections may occur with greater or lesser degrees of justice, freedom, fairness, and transparency. The types of problems that can compromise the quality of the election also vary: fraud in the vote count, discretion in voter registration, manipulation of the rules, repression and intimidation of competitors, the biased distribution of resources, the exclusion of groups of citizens, and even operational mistakes due to inefficiency or negligence.

There are several projects measuring the quality of elections from reports of international observers (Birch 2012; Donno 2013), opinion surveys (Rosas 2010; Birch 2008, Elklit and Reynolds 2002; Birch 2010) and from the evaluation of experts and secondary sources such as NELDA—National Elections Across Democracy and Autocracy (Hyde and Marinov 2012). A more recent approach, which seeks to cover the electoral process as a whole, is the perspective that evaluates electoral integrity according to international standards (Norris 2013a, 2014a). Recently, this concept has been refined and operationalized through the Perception of Electoral Integrity Index (PEI), which is also

based on an expert survey. All these measures are alternatives to NELDA data and could be mobilized as a dependent variable to operationalize quality of elections. However, none of them includes enough elections to allow a multivariate analysis, as the NELDA dataset does.

## DATA AND METHOD

In Latin America, the quality of elections since re-democratization and the models of electoral governance have varied greatly. This article explores the relationship between both these variables through an analysis of legislative elections for the lower chambers and for constituent assemblies conducted in 18 Latin American countries since the transition to democratic or semi-democratic regimes, in accordance with criteria in Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñan (2013).<sup>3</sup> The quality of elections was measured using data from the NELDA database (Hyde and Marinov 2012),<sup>4</sup> specifically using the coding for the following question: “Before elections, are there significant concerns that elections will not be free and fair?” The list of elections included can be seen in Table 3.

An election can be seen as more reliable or as less reliable by political actors and experts. In Latin American elections, suspicions as to the fairness of elections have not been rare, reaching 17% of all 159 legislative elections in post-transition Latin American countries coded in the NELDA dataset.

As discussed above, the hypothesis of this article derives from the literature on models of electoral governance (Lehoucq 2002; Mozaffar 2002; Mozaffar and Schedler 2002; Schedler 2003; Hartlyn, McCoy, et al. 2008; Monte 2011) and involves the

<sup>3</sup>The authors’ criteria in coding a country as a democracy includes: 1) the head of government and the legislature must be chosen through open and fair competitive elections; 2) the franchise must include the great majority of the adult population; 3) political and civil rights must be protected; 4) elected authorities must exercise real governing power (not being overshadowed by nonelected actors) (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñan 2013).

<sup>4</sup>National Elections Across Democracy and Autocracy (NELDA) dataset is maintained by a research team at the Department of Political Science, Yale University, and provides detailed information on elections around the world from 1945 to 2010. Data are collected from multiple sources, coded as a set of dozens of variables related to the quality of those elections, and available at <<http://hyde.research.yale.edu/nelda/#>>.

TABLE 3. COUNTRIES AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS ANALYZED

Country	Number of elections conducted	Period	Elections covered by NELDA dataset
Argentina	17	1983 to 2013	15
Bolivia	9	1985 to 2014	8
Brazil	8	1986 to 2014	7
Chile	6	1993 to 2013	5
Colombia	20	1958 to 2014	19
Costa Rica	17	1949 to 2014	16
Dominican Republic	10	1978 to 2012	9
Ecuador	15	1979 to 2013	14
El Salvador	10	1985 to 2012	9
Guatemala	7	1994 to 2011	6
Honduras	7	1985 to 2013 <sup>1</sup>	6
Mexico	9	1988 to 2012	8
Nicaragua	6	1984 to 2011	5
Panama	5	1994 to 2014 <sup>2</sup>	4
Paraguay	7	1989 to 2013	6
Peru	8	1980 to 2011 <sup>3</sup>	6
Uruguay	6	1989 to 2014	5
Venezuela	11	1963 to 2008 <sup>4</sup>	11
Total	178	1949 to 2014	159

<sup>1</sup>Excluding the 2009 election, conducted during an authoritarian period.

<sup>2</sup>Excluding the 1991 election, conducted to fulfill nine seats remaining from the 1989 election.

<sup>3</sup>Excluding the authoritarian 1992–1994 period.

<sup>4</sup>Excluding the 2010 election, conducted during an authoritarian period. NELDA, National Elections Across Democracy and Autocracy.

institutional incentives that affect the behavior of the parties in electoral competition. Thus, this article aims to test the following hypothesis:

Elections conducted under more robust models of electoral governance (centralized, independent, delegated, bureaucratized, specialized, and highly regulated) are less likely to generate concerns about their fairness than elections conducted under models more vulnerable to fraud and manipulation (decentralized, governmental, partisan, *ad hoc*, non-specialized, and with limited regulation).

After re-democratization, most Latin American countries rebuilt their electoral governance institutions in ways that varied widely among countries and also between elections in the same country. In some countries, reforms to the model of electoral governance were made through new ordinary electoral laws. This occurred in Bolivia in 1991; the Dominican Republic in 1992; Mexico in 1990; Paraguay in 1990, 1995, and 1996; Peru in 1997; and Venezuela in 1970 and 1997. In other countries reforms resulted from constitutional amendments, as

in Mexico in 1993, or from the adoption of a new Constitution, like in Colombia in 1991, Costa Rica in 1949, the Dominican Republic in 1994 and 2010, Ecuador in 1998 and 2008, Nicaragua in 1987, Paraguay in 1992, and Venezuela in 1999. Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Uruguay, and Brazil had no change in their models of electoral governance during the entire period.<sup>5</sup>

## MODELS OF ELECTORAL GOVERNANCE

Political parties can play several different roles in electoral governance. In every democracy, political parties are the main rulemakers, choosing, through the legislature, the rules of electoral competition. However, in some democracies, political parties can play additional roles in electoral governance, whether they take part or not in electoral management and electoral adjudication tasks. Presenting the results of the analysis, the following paragraphs describe each one of the six dimensions that were in force at the time of each legislative election (for the lower chamber) in the 18 Latin American countries since re-democratization. The first four dimensions are ordinal variables, coded as absent, partial or full. The last two dimensions are binary variables.

### *Independence from the executive branch*

Some countries locate the management of elections in a government ministry, as in Argentina, whose EMB—the *Dirección Nacional Electoral*—is part of *Ministerio del Interior*. This is an example of no independence, which also occurred in elections of 1984 in Nicaragua and 1988 in Mexico. In other countries electoral management is performed by institutions formally independent of executive branch, as is the case in Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador since

<sup>5</sup>In addition to these substantive changes, some other formal changes were made but which did not modify the governance models. Bolivia changed the name of its electoral management body (EMB) in 2009 from *Corte Nacional Electoral* to *Tribunal Supremo Electoral*, but the model remained the same. Similarly, Colombia changed the name of its EMB from *Corte Electoral* to *Consejo Nacional Electoral* in 1985, El Salvador changed the name of its EMB from *Consejo Central de Elecciones* to *Tribunal Supremo Electoral* in 1992, and Mexico changed the name of its jurisdictional body from *Tribunal Federal Electoral* to *Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación* in 1996.

1998, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico since 1994, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Models with EMBs not belonging to the executive branch, but with some members appointed by the government, were classified as partially independent. This is the case in Ecuador before 1998, Mexico in 1991, Bolivia, Chile, Nicaragua, and Panama.

### *Centralization*

Some countries, like Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Guatemala, concentrate the management of all elections in one central EMB, even where there are local commissions, but the central EMB holds all power through its local delegates. In this sample, there is only one case of decentralized electoral management: the Dominican Republic before 1992. In all the other countries, there are decentralized agencies in the districts, which have responsibilities for local elections. These models combine a central institution with national jurisdiction and local institutions with at least some autonomy. They were coded as partially centralized.

### *Bureaucratization*

In many countries, even those with stable and professionalized staff, the members of the EMBs have temporary terms. As such, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic since 1998, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico since 1990, Panama, Paraguay before 1996, and Venezuela before 1999 were coded as partially bureaucratized. Bolivia, the Dominican Republic until 1994, El Salvador, Mexico in 1988, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela before 1970 and after 1999 are examples of non-bureaucratized EMBs, because they are composed at each election. Among the cases analyzed here, only Paraguay, after 1996, is coded as fully bureaucratized.

### *Delegation to non-partisan actors*

The level of partisanship of the electoral institutions varies among the cases analyzed here. In Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador after 2008, Paraguay after 1996, and Peru, the management of elections is delegated to non-partisan actors (such as the judiciary, for example). In other countries, there is no delegation, and the political parties themselves, directly or through the legislature, appoint the members of the electoral organizations. This is the case in Bolivia before

1991, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador before 2008, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay before 1996, Uruguay, and Venezuela before 1997. Models where only some of the members of the electoral institution are appointed by parties or the legislature, as in Bolivia after 1991, Guatemala, Panama, and Venezuela after 1997, were coded as partially delegate systems.

### *Specialization*

Some countries separate the administrative and judicial functions between different institutions, like Argentina, Chile, the Dominican Republic since 2010, Mexico, Paraguay between 1990 and 1995, Ecuador since 2008, Peru since 1997, and Venezuela since 1999. In other countries, the same institution performs both tasks, like in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic before 2010, Ecuador before 2008, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay before 1990 and after 1995, Peru before 1997, Uruguay, and Venezuela before 1999. This is a binary variable.

### *Regulation*

Some countries put electoral management norms into their constitutions in addition to ordinary laws, as in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia since 1991, Costa Rica after 1949, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador since 1998, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay since 1992, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela since 1999. In other countries all the electoral management procedures are regulated by ordinary law, as in Argentina, Colombia before 1991, Costa Rica in 1949, Ecuador before 1998, Guatemala, Nicaragua in 1984, Paraguay before 1992, and Venezuela before 1999. This is a binary variable.

Figure 1 describes the distribution of all six dimensions.

With a multivariate panel logit model, it is possible to see which of those dimensions affect the quality of elections, as shown in Table 4.

The statistical model estimates the effect of each variable on concerns about electoral fairness, holding everything else constant. The explanatory variables are those dimensions described in the previous section,<sup>6</sup> plus the time (in years) of duration of the

<sup>6</sup>There is no multi-collinearity among the six institutional variables. A correlation test is presented in the methodological appendix.



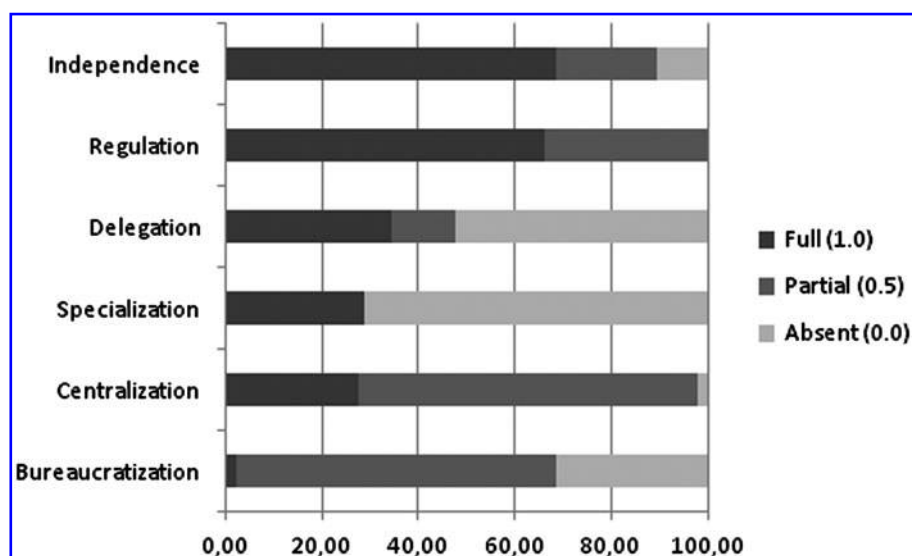


FIG. 1. Percentage of legislative elections under each category/dimension of electoral governance. ( $N=178$ ).

model and an economic indicator.<sup>7</sup>  $P$ -values in the 5th column smaller than 0.05 indicate statistical significance, that is, good evidence of the hypothesis. Negative signs indicate that a variable reduces the probability of concerns about fairness of elections, while positive ones increase it.<sup>8</sup>

The results show that not all dimensions of electoral governance affect the quality of elections. Besides this, the signs of the effects of independence, centralization, bureaucratization, and specialization are opposite to the expected directions.<sup>9</sup> However, two variables have significant results: delegation and the endurance of the model. This means that despite the other dimensions not being important, the delegation of electoral management to non-partisan actors reduces the probability of concerns about electoral fairness. Similarly, the more time the model of electoral governance is in force, the smaller the probability of suspicion about the fairness of elections.

The negative and significant impact of delegation on integrity concerns means that when political parties are excluded from electoral governance, elections are less likely to be seen as suspicious. The role played by parties in electoral management does not produce trust or confidence in electoral fairness. Delegating electoral governance to non-partisan actors, on the other hand, improves perceptions of electoral integrity. The negative and significant impact of endurance on integrity concerns means that established and familiar insti-

tutional models of electoral governance facilitate elections with less probability of raising suspicion than newer institutional arrangements.

There is no support for the hypotheses regarding the other dimensions of electoral governance. This means that in Latin America the conduct of free and fair elections does not seem to depend on the governmental nature of the EMBs, their decentralization, their cumulative functions, their temporary nature, or their constitutional regulation. Instead, the quality of elections is at greatest risk when the EMB's members are partisan appointees.

<sup>7</sup>As all cases analyzed are Latin American countries, there is no need to include control variables for political systems that would otherwise be important in comparing Latin America with countries from other regions in the world. For other variables that could be added, see Norris (2015).

<sup>8</sup>The statistical model is a cross-section time-series analysis in order to control for unobserved country variables, as there are several elections for each country. It accounts for random effects instead of fixed-effects because we expect that the countries in Latin America are relatively similar to one another, so the variation in the independent variable is primarily within countries. Additionally, the Hausman test was not significant, indicating that the random-effects model should not be rejected in favor of the fixed-effects model (see the methodological appendix).

<sup>9</sup>The positive signs mean that non-governmental, decentralized, temporary, and non-specialized models of electoral governance increase probability of concerns about fairness of elections. These results counter the expected trend. More research work is necessary before we can explain these surprising results.

TABLE 4. PANEL LOGISTIC REGRESSION ON VARIABLE NELDA 11: BEFORE ELECTIONS, ARE THERE SIGNIFICANT CONCERNS THAT ELECTIONS WILL NOT BE FREE AND FAIR?

<i>NELDA 11</i>	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. err.</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>P &gt;  z </i>	<i>[95% Conf. interval]</i>	
Independence	.5593051	.8849848	0.63	0.527	−1.175.233	2.293.843
Centralization	.069924	1.106.937	0.06	0.950	−2.099.634	2.239.482
Bureaucratization	.4196902	1.174.529	0.36	0.721	−1.882.344	2.721.725
Delegation	−1.475.437	.7132844	−2.07	0.039	−2.873.449	−.077425
Specialization	.3743842	.6263614	0.60	0.550	−.8532616	160.203
Regulation	−.6681188	1.165.163	−0.57	0.566	−2.951.797	1.615.559
Endurance	−.1747189	.0682439	−2.56	0.010	−.3084745	−.0409632
GDP per capita	−.0001279	.0001414	−0.90	0.366	−.0004049	.0001492
_cons	−.2973191	1.376.346	−0.22	0.829	−2.994.907	2.400.269

Concerns about electoral fairness = 1; otherwise = 0.

Random-effects logistic regression number of obs. = 154.

Group variable: country code; number of groups = 18.

Random effects  $u_i \sim \text{Gaussian}$ ; obs. per group: min = 4; avg = 8.6; max = 17.

Wald  $\chi^2(8) = 14.45$ .

Log likelihood = −59.477227; prob. >  $\chi^2 = 0.0709$ .

GDP, gross domestic product.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RESEARCH AGENDA

A better understanding of the mechanisms by which partisan EMBs affect electoral integrity depends on qualitative country case studies, which remain to be developed. Future research might also include interactive terms in the model to search for probable effects of combinations among the dimensions. As that procedure would increase the number of variables considerably, better results would be achieved when more elections are also added to the dataset.

From the research presented in this article, it is evident that not all kinds of vulnerabilities to fraud and manipulation are equally relevant for electoral integrity in Latin America. The autonomy of EMBs is important for the quality of elections, exactly as is stated by most of the literature. However, this autonomy should not be assessed only in terms of independence from government. As has been shown, the management of elections by competitors is associated with reasonable concerns about electoral integrity.

Partisan electoral institutions may be less capable of performing their main role: to ensure trust on the overall electoral process. If political parties are the managers of the electoral process, this can be seen as a vulnerability because they will probably behave as stakeholders instead of as impartial judges, thus, reducing uncertainty instead of ensuring it. These concerns make sense particularly in

recently democratized countries, where trust and confidence among political actors is still being built, exactly as predicted in the literature on electoral governance in new democracies mentioned above.

These particular findings refer to Latin America, but their implications can contribute to an understanding of the quality of elections in any new democracies for two reasons: first, the effect of country specificities are random, not fixed; second, because the causal mechanism could quite reasonably apply to any new democracy. Wherever a democratic transition creates a situation of weak trust and fragile commitments, we can expect to find more concerns about electoral fairness if political parties are entrusted with electoral management than if that task is delegated to non-partisan actors.

Political parties that rule electoral processes exercise a critical role, especially in the context of the decline in their other traditional roles. However, when parties delegate those responsibilities to non-partisan bodies they show their commitment to electoral integrity and in doing so they can improve the general credibility of the entire process and ensure the continuity of a peaceful competitive democracy. As far as we can learn from the case of Latin America, the institutional arrangement of electoral governance management does matter for perceptions of electoral integrity, but only in a few ways: the length of endurance of the model and how safe it is from partisan influence.

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## METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

TABLE A1. HAUSMAN TEST FOR FIXED EFFECTS

	(b) fixed	(B) random	(b-B) Difference	$\sqrt{\text{diag}(V_b - V_B)}$ S.E.
Independence	−3.580.192	.5593051	−3.636.123	3.267.978
Centralization	−7.739.228	.069924	−7.809.152	5.071.716
Bureaucratization	2.914.769	.4196902	2.495.079	2.933.778
Delegation	−2.199.165	−1.475.437	−.723728	1.843.613
Specialization	202.499	.3743842	1.650.606	1.549.385
Regulation	312.901	−.6681188	3.797.129	1.897.954
Endurance	−.1760493	−.1747189	−.0013304	.0526314
GDP	−.0002438	−.0001279	−.000116	.0002256

b = consistent under  $H_0$  and  $H_a$ ; obtained from xtlogit.

B = inconsistent under  $H_a$ , efficient under  $H_0$ ; obtained from xtlogit.

Test:  $H_0$ : difference in coefficients not systematic.

$\chi^2(6) = (b-B)'[(V_b - V_B)^{-1}](b-B)$

= 7.92

Prob >  $\chi^2$  = 0.2440

S.E., standard error; GDP, gross domestic product.

TABLE A2. SPEARMAN CORRELATION AMONG DIMENSIONS OF ELECTORAL GOVERNANCE

	Independence	Centralization	Bureaucratization	Delegation	Specialization	Regulation
Independence	1.0000					
Centralization	0.2232 (0.0027)	1.0000				
Bureaucratization	−0.0444 (0.5559)	0.2637 (0.0004)	1.0000			
Delegation	−0.2348 (0.0016)	0.0178 (0.8136)	0.3014 (0.0000)	1.0000		
Specialization	−0.3147 (0.0000)	−0.3488 (0.0000)	0.0317 (0.6742)	0.2354 (0.0016)	1.0000	
Regulation	0.3197 (0.0000)	−0.1387 (0.0649)	−0.3406 (0.0000)	0.0635 (0.3994)	−0.0213 (0.7781)	1.0000

Rho

(sig. level)

N = 178.