Rev Int Organ (2016) 11:247–282
DOI 10.1007/s11558-016-9249-9

Resisting democracy assistance: Who seeks and receives technical election assistance?

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Published online: 6 May 2016

Abstract Why are some developing countries less open to technical election assistance than to election observation? My argument about who seeks and receives technical election assistance is two-fold, taking into account the incentives of recipients and providers. On the recipient side, governments are less likely to request technical assistance when the political costs are high (autocracy) or the benefits low (strong electoral institutions). On the provider side, international organizations are less likely to provide such technical assistance when the government appears to lack political will for reform and full project implementation is unlikely. Statistical analyses of global data on technical election assistance by the United Nations covering 130 countries from 1990 to 2003 support this argument about political cost-benefit calculations in considering technical assistance. Case examples from Guyana, Indonesia, Haiti, and Venezuela illustrate some of these dynamics. My findings suggest that seemingly complementary international interventions (observation and technical support) can create different incentives for domestic and international actors. This helps explain why some countries tend to agree more often to election observation than to technical election assistance.

Keywords International organizations · United Nations · Developing countries · Elections · Democracy promotion · Technical election assistance

JEL Classification F53 · F55 · D2 · D72 · O19

Electronic supplementary material The online version of this article (doi:10.1007/s11558-016-9249-9) contains supplementary material, which is available to authorized users.

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Why do some governments in developing countries resist international democracy assistance? Government resistance to external democracy promotion is not a new phenomenon. While government restrictions have increased in recent years,[1] especially in the case of foreign funded NGOs,[2] resistance to democracy promotion predates these recent measures and has also occurred in other democracy assistance fields. The field of election assistance provides an opportunity to document this government resistance both by comparing two types of election assistance (observation versus technical election assistance) and by comparing resistance to one type (technical election assistance) across countries in more depth.

Seemingly complementary international assistance programs can create quite different incentives for domestic and international actors. At first glance, the two types of election assistance – observation and technical support – share many similarities. Both open up the domestic political process to external scrutiny and seek to improve election quality. In particular, both election assistance types aim to reduce manipulation, which should increase post-election legitimacy and stability. Further, both tools of election assistance came of age in the 1990s around the world. Despite these similarities, however, these two interventions generate quite different domestic and international incentives.

While election observation has become widespread,[3] developing countries are much less open to technical election assistance, i.e. the provision of international expertise and resources designed to improve the election institutions in the host country.[4] Governments have requested technical election support for only about a quarter of their elections, compared to more than two-thirds of elections for observation. This contrast is illustrated in Fig. 1, which compares observation and technical assistance in terms of requests and provision for 130 non-advanced democracies from 1990 to 2003.[5] International election observation is characterized by high rates of requests and provision: most developing countries invite observer groups, which respond to almost every call for assistance.[6]

In contrast to the world of observation, however, requests and provision are substantively lower for technical election assistance. Developing democracies requested technical support for only 28 % of their elections, compared to 68 % for election

[1] See Carothers 2006; Carothers and Brechenmacher 2014.

[2] See Christensen and Weinstein 2013; Dupuy et al. 2015a, b; and Gershman and Allen 2006.

[3] See Hyde 2011a and b; Carothers 1997; Santa-Cruz 2005; Kelley 2008.

[4] For details on technical election assistance, see Section 1. In this paper, I use the terms technical election assistance, technical assistance, and technical support interchangeably.

[5] Author's calculation based on data from Hyde and Marinov 2012 (nelda45, nelda49), Ludwig 2004b. The number of observer requests being refused (nelda49) is likely even higher than shown because these data are primarily coded from news sources; countries have no incentives and IO observers few incentives to publicly announce refusal to attend. Following prior research, I exclude 23 long-term developed democracies because they are unambiguously democratic and rarely request assistance (see footnote 74; Hyde 2011a, 74–75).

[6] While usually not every invited observer group sends a mission, at least one observer group usually attends.

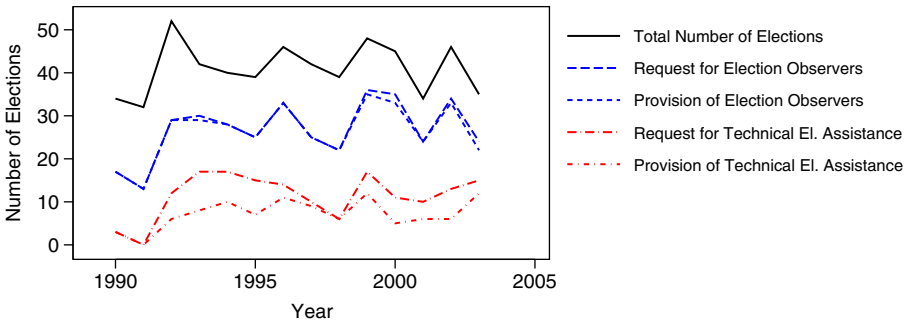

Fig. 1 Election Assistance Requests and Provision

observation. Further, technical assistance was implemented in only 18 % of elections, compared to 67 % for observation.[7] What explains this dramatic difference in the use of these two types of election assistance?[8]

This under-utilization of technical assistance is puzzling. Why do some developing countries resist technical election assistance? And why do international organizations (IOs) at times refuse to provide such assistance? I propose an explanation for who seeks and receives technical assistance centered around the government's and IO's incentives in terms of costs and benefits.

In terms of country requests, political costs are differentiated by government type. Technical election assistance essentially aims to level the playing field, and this is more costly for autocrats than democratically-leaning incumbents. That is, an incumbent with an interest in democratization or willing to allow a somewhat fairer playing field faces fewer political costs and higher benefits from technical support than an electoral autocrat. For autocrats who only hold elections for window dressing, leveling the playing field or reforming electoral institutions could be quite costly, potentially increasing the opposition's chances at winning in current or future elections. Therefore, the autocrat's costs often exceed the benefits associated with technical support. Governments have more incentives to request assistance when the benefits exceed the costs: when the expected capacity boost from technical assistance is large (i.e. election administration is weak) and when they lead a somewhat democratic (rather than autocratic) regime.

In terms of provision, the IO provider is interested in fulfilling its institutional mandate and, more specifically, improving electoral processes. As the leading provider of technical election assistance[9] and a relatively neutral bureaucratic organization, the UN is unlikely to have political preferences about which countries'

[7]Difference in means test of provision yields $p > 0.000$.

[8]Both types of election assistance have become more widespread since 2003 but the significant gap between them has persisted. See footnote 114.

[9]See Section 1 for details.

requests to fulfill, everything else being equal. However, the UN is interested in maximizing the return on its investment. Lead times – the number of months between the request and the election date – are important here because they enable full project implementation and can signal the degree of domestic political will for reform. Domestic political will is an important condition for success, since the implementation and effectiveness of technical assistance depends crucially on cooperation with host country authorities. Consequently, UN provision of technical election assistance is more forthcoming when lead times are longer.

Using global data on technical election assistance by the United Nations (and other IOs) from 1990 to 2003, I find support for this argument about who seeks and receives technical election assistance. Governments are *less* likely to request such assistance when the political costs are high (staunch autocracies) or the benefits low (high administrative capacity). From its perspective, the UN is *less* likely to provide such democracy assistance when its expected return on investment is low. The UN tends to refuse technical assistance to governments appearing to lack political will for reform and allowing little time for project implementation, as indicated by the short lead times. As a result, technical election assistance is more likely to be implemented when the requesting country has low administrative capacity, is a hybrid regime rather than autocratic, and asks for assistance with sufficient lead time.

These findings are important for research on IOs and elections in developing countries, as well as research on strategic interactions at the international-domestic nexus. Governments' relative enthusiasm for observation but resistance to technical assistance is of great importance to scholars and policymakers alike. Some regimes want the façade of holding elections but do not wish for meaningful elections. Technical election assistance often encourages regimes to undertake pro-democratic institutional reforms. Election observation may allow political elites to "play nice" for the brief period of time that observers are present. Observation has been going on long enough that some autocrats or non-democratic regimes may shift fraud and other manipulation to different times, different locations, or different means.[10] Consequently, "clever" regimes can potentially receive the stamp of approval from international observers without holding fair elections. At the same time, these governments may resist technical election assistance likely because it would arrive in the country much earlier[11] and possibly induce changes that could heighten the risk of losing power. Thus the potentially higher cost associated with technical election assistance – institutional reforms and lower manipulation chances – can help explain the large difference in requests for election observation versus requests for technical election assistance.[12]

[10] See, respectively, Hyde and O'Mahony 2010; Ichino and Schündeln 2012; and Simpser and Donno 2012.

[11] Conditional on requests, the UN has provided technical election assistance to countries six months before election-day (on average), and in some extreme cases up to three or four *years* in the run-up to elections (e.g. Liberia 1997).

[12] Examples of governments inviting observers but not technical election assistance include Azerbaijan (1993, 2003), Cameroon (1997, 2002), Swaziland (2003), Equatorial Guinea (1993, 1996, 1999, 2002), Venezuela (1993, 1998, 2000), and Zimbabwe (1990, 1995, 2002).

Further, this paper contributes to research on democracy assistance by providing a selection model of democracy assistance. I model government requests and IO provision as two separate processes rather than inferring them from the eventual outcome (assistance or not), which helps clarify the strategic interaction between IOs and developing countries. This has been a glaring omission in the literature: we have little systematic empirical knowledge about the dynamics of who seeks and receives democracy assistance, and – specifically – the *non*-provision of such assistance. Understanding these dynamics is critical for evaluating effectiveness as well as the strength of governments' democratic commitment.

Additionally, this paper contributes to research on international democracy promotion. While democracy promotion encompasses a wide range of strategies – technical election assistance, observation, party work, civil society support[13] – most quantitative research has either statistically analyzed aggregate measures[14] or one particular component of this arsenal: observation.[15] We know surprisingly little about the causes and consequences of technical election assistance.

The paper proceeds as follows. The next section provides background information about technical election assistance and its emphasis on increasing the capacity and credibility of election commissions, effectively opening up the inner workings of electoral commissions to greater external scrutiny. Section 2 reviews existing work on who seeks and receives democracy assistance to highlight the contribution of this paper in empirically evaluating both components – requests and provision – rather than relying only on the ultimate outcome (provision). Section 3 presents my argument about the drivers of government request and IO provision. Section 4 outlines the research design to test the hypotheses, and Section 5 discusses the results. The final section concludes.

1 Background on technical election assistance

The broad umbrella of election assistance covers both election observation and technical election assistance.[16] Technical assistance focuses on improving election management and boosting administrative capacity, which can entail filling equipment gaps (purchasing ballot boxes, ballots, staining ink) and building institutional

[13] See Carothers 1997, 112–115; and Burnell 2000, 29–30.

[14] See Finkel et al. 2007, Savun and Tirone 2011, Scott and Steele 2011, Dietrich and Wright 2015, Bush 2015, and Savage 2015. For example, Finkel et al. use as the smallest USAID democratic governance category "elections and political processes," which includes observation, technical election assistance, and political party support.

[15] See, e.g., Hyde 2011a, Kelley 2012.

[16] See Carothers 1999, 125–128; Bjornlund 2004, 60–62. Political party support is separate and can at times complement electoral assistance. Observation is provided by a host of entities (e.g. Carter Center, NDI, IRI, EU, OSCE, OAS, AU, Commonwealth, OIF) while political party support is usually provided by German *Stiftungen*/party foundations, or subsequent US equivalents (NDI, IRI). Lopez-Pintor 2007, 23.

and human capacity.[17] The ultimate goals of technical assistance are domestic capacity building, credibility, and sustainability:[18] ideally, election management bodies ("EMBs") become more capable and credible, so that over time successful technical election assistance will render itself irrelevant. Technical election support can entail various services but usually involves the national election commission or EMB,[19] trying to build its capacity (through legal advice, voter registration, logistical/material support, and staff training) and increase its engagement with civil society, especially voter education.[20]

Since 1990, the leading international organization providing technical election assistance has been the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).[21] Other providers have joined the field of technical election assistance – notably the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)[22] – but have been less active in terms of the number of elections assisted, especially during the timeframe of this study (pre-2003).[23] Since the first UN General Assembly resolution on "enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections" in 1988 (res. 43/157), the General Assembly has re-affirmed the UN's mandate for election assistance on a biennial basis.[24] As a result of the UN's unique position and comparative advantages,[25] member states' requests have increased since the late 1980s, and the UN has helped member states across the world in a range of election-related projects. In practice, the UN has specialized in technical election assistance and usu-

[17] Interview 6; all interviews are listed with interviewee position title, organization information, and interview date (see Appendix). In some cases, filling equipment gaps makes the election possible at all. Recent examples include Afghanistan 2004 and Sudan 2010. Norad 2014, 30.

[18] Kennedy and Fischer 2000, 300.

[19] Interviews 3 and 5; Lopez-Pintor 2007, 23, 25; UNDP 2013, 38.

[20] See Lopez-Pintor 2007, 30; Ponzio 2004, 217–219; Ludwig 1995a, 342; Ludwig 2004a, 173; and Kennedy and Fischer 2000, 301–302.

[21] Definite numbers by all alternative providers are discussed below but difficult to establish beyond doubt. The available documentation and experts overwhelmingly point to the UN as the major provider. Interviews 3 and 5; Bjornlund 2004, 54; Pintor 2007, 23; Ludwig 1995a, 342–343; UNDP 2012, 135. Also see Section 4. In addition to the UNDP, other UN agencies providing technical election assistance – depending on country context – include the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UN Volunteers, the Office for Project Services, and the Center for Human Rights. The Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) within the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) is the focal point for policy decisions and needs assessments.

[22] IFES is a Washington-based NGO specializing in international election assistance; it engages in technical support to EMBs, participation-boosting measures (especially for marginalized groups), field-based research, and audits/assessments. See IFES website; interview 8.

[23] Interviews 3, 4, 5, and 6; Diamond 2008, 123. Also see Section 4.

[24] Promoting democratic governance constitutes one of three focus areas at the UNDP. For a historical overview of the UN's election assistance, see Ludwig 2004b, 173–176.

[25] The UN has several comparative advantages over other election aid organizations, including (i) it is seen as more neutral, partly because its funding generally does not depend on a single country; (ii) it can usually provide more resources in terms of project length and equipment; (iii) it tends to have more access and local knowledge due to UNDP field offices in host countries. Interviews 2 and 5; Norad 2014, 30.

ally refers requests for observation to relevant regional organizations.[26] Within the field of UN technical assistance, the most common components are strengthening electoral administration and civic/voter education.[27]

States wishing to obtain UN technical support must place a formal request with the UN several months prior to election-day.[28] This request has to come from the government or at least be government-approved.[29] Following the government request, the UN conducts a needs assessment mission (consisting of two experts in country for about ten days) or a desk review (in the case of peacekeeping or otherwise extensive experience in the country).[30] The UN's decision about whether to provide assistance is based on the type of assistance requested, domestic political conditions, the viability of the electoral process, sufficient lead time, and IO budget constraints.[31] If the UN decides to offer assistance, it usually puts forth a package of components (e.g. voter education, voter registry, staff training, budget support) based on its assessment of country need and UN capacity. The host government cannot negotiate these components.[32]

To examine the dynamics of who seeks and receives technical election assistance, the UN is an ideal candidate for three reasons: theoretical logic, data, and prominence. First, the theoretical argument proposed in this paper about strategic incentives on the side of the government and the IO requires information on both requests and provision; the UN offers a unique test case because it is involved in both processes. At other, minor organizations the process of receiving technical election assistance differs because it usually involves a third actor – an external funder – which complicates

[26] See Bjornlund 2004, 62; and UN Secretary General report 2013, 3. It would be a conflict of interest for an organization to *both* provide technical support *and* observe/assess the election's quality, effectively evaluating its own success (Interviews 5 and 8). Of the seven types of UN election assistance, four have been quite rare (supervision, verification, follow and report, organization and conduct), and support to observers (coordination of internationals, training of domestic observers) has also been far less frequent than technical election assistance. See Bjornlund 2004, 62; Ludwig 2004a, 173–176; Ludwig 1995a, 342.

[27] UNDP 2012, 23.

[28] Ludwig 2004a, 171. In rare cases - when the UN already has a peacekeeping mission in the country – the process begins with a mandate from the UN Security Council. Interview 5; UNDP 2012, 17. In some cases, governments consult senior UN officials in country before formally submitting a request; interview 11.

[29] It is not possible for government agencies, an independent EMB, or opposition parties to request technical support from the UN without government confirmation. UN Secretary General report 2001, 24; interviews 2, 3, and 5. For more detailed procedures, see UN Secretary General Report 2001, annex II.

[30] For more information, see UN EAD Ludwig (2004b).

[31] Ludwig 1995a, 342; Ludwig 2004a, 171–173. The UN's Election Assistance Division (EAD) is responsible for policy decisions on whether to provide election assistance. When assistance missions are not granted, the UN usually cites "insufficient lead time" and, more rarely, "the absence of enabling environment." Ludwig 2004b, 133-161.

[32] The requesting government can try to influence the mix of components by communicating specific gaps during the needs assessment mission, but the final decision on project components lies with the UN. Interviews 1, 3, and 5.

the dynamic.[33] Second, information on both requests and provision for UN assistance is "in house" and has been documented consistently for over a decade. Third, the UN is the leading provider in this field across time and space, thus capturing the vast majority of technical election assistance. Therefore I focus the theoretical discussion and empirical analysis on the UN, while controlling for other providers in the empirical analysis. The next section reviews existing work on democracy assistance' request and provision to highlight the contribution of this paper.

2 Existing work

Research on who seeks and receives democracy assistance is still in its infancy: we have theories about each component but no systematic empirical tests of each component. Over the last three decades, democracy promotion has become widespread in developing countries[34] but has also encountered some resistance in recent years.[35] Research has primarily focused on one particular type of democracy promotion – election observation – thanks to comprehensive data on where it has occurred.[36] This research has *theorized* that government requests for observers is driven by the need for domestic and international legitimacy and the associated democracy-contingent benefits (e.g. aid, trade).[37] Observer organizations' decision on whether to send missions appears to be driven by interest in democracy promotion and organizational survival. Also, IOs are more likely to grant assistance to countries "from the middle" of the democracy range (i.e. hybrid regimes).[38]

In contrast to *theorizing* about country requests and IO provision, *empirical* analyses focus on the aggregate outcome (i.e. whether or not assistance took place) rather than examine its component parts (request and provision) separately.[39] This is largely due to the lack of systematic data on invitations to observers. Just like technical support, observer deployment is a function of invitations and provision. However, we cannot infer component parts (request and provision) from the aggregate outcome (eventual deployment) because we lack information on un-fulfilled requests.

[33] In such cases, states may not initiate the process with a request to the provider directly (e.g. IFES) but rather through an agreement with the funder, e.g. the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) or the British Department for International Development (DFID). For example, implementing partners often bid on a specific solicitation or request for proposals from funders in order to receive funding. These proposals have already undergone donor vetting and specifications, so that project conditions and components are often stipulated there, rather than the independent decision of the implementing agency. Interview 7.

[34] Carothers 1997; McFaul 2004; Santa-Cruz 2005; Kelley 2008; and Hyde 2011a.

[35] Carothers and Brechenmacher 2014; Risse and Babayan 2015; Burnell 2010; Gershman and Allen 2006.

[36] Hyde and Marinov 2012; Kelley 2010.

[37] See Hyde 2011a, 89–125; Hyde 2011b; and Kelley 2009, 6.

[38] Kelley 2009, 4.

[39] See Kelley 2009, 19; Hyde 2011a, 77; and 2011b, 365.

If an election was not observed, it often remains unclear whether the government did not invite any observer groups or whether all observers turned down the government's request. In other words, given only data on deployment of observers, we do not know whether non-deployment is due to a lack of government invitation or a lack of IO provision. This is why existing research on observation focuses on the aggregate outcome instead.[40] This dissonance in outcome variables between theories (request/provision) and empirical tests (deployment) also applies to the study of UN peacebuilding.[41]

This paper deepens prior analyses of democracy promotion – and IO involvement in developing countries more broadly – in two ways. First, I examine the component parts of assistance invitation and provision separately. Second, I broaden the focus of quantitative research on democracy promotion beyond observation to technical election assistance. In contrast to policymakers, who have long pursued technical assistance,[42] this particular strategy of democracy promotion seems to have largely escaped academic attention, especially compared to the wealth of studies on election observation. Despite some case reports and analyses,[43] there is virtually no quantitative work on technical election assistance.

3 Argument

International democracy assistance often involves a strategic interaction between the host country and the provider.[44] Technical election assistance involves request and provision and is a strategic interaction between the host country and the UN. Both actors face certain costs and benefits by engaging in technical support. The host country's government can benefit by gaining a boost in its administrative capacity and potentially more credible, legitimate elections. Depending on whether the government is autocratic or democratically-leaning, this benefit may or may not outweigh the political cost of institutional reforms, i.e. less room for manipulation. Note that

[40] In an ideal world of infinite research resources, it might be possible to systematically document country requests for observation; the variable nelda49 gives some sense of this but is likely an under-estimate, as explained in footnote 5. However, two hurdles remain. First, data collection is hampered by the seeming hesitation of some observer organizations to share these data on (un-fulfilled) invitations. Second, utilization of these data would operate on the strong assumption that the institutional memory about requests is consistent within and across organizations.

[41] Fortna (2008, chapter 2) seeks to empirically get at the request vs. provision issue by comparing deployment of consent-based chapter 6 missions (peacekeeping) to non-consent based chapter 7 missions (peace enforcement); the latter do not technically require consent from local parties. However, that means we infer request/provision drivers from deployment differences between intervention types; this approach does not examine peace operations' request and provision separately.

[42] See UNDP 2002; IFES 2012; USAID 2000, 78–80.

[43] See UNDP 2010, 13–49; IFES various years; USAID 2014, 7–10; and Kandeh 2008.

[44] At times a third actor, the funder, can also play a role.

this argument does *not* assume that technical assistance always works, or always levels the playing field. It remains possible to steal an election even after the election body was strengthened, the voter registry was updated, the voters educated about their rights etc. However, the government likely expects a different environment (i.e. chances for winning) in current and future elections depending on whether technical assistance was provided, which can influence its decision about whether to request such assistance.[45] From the UN's perspective, providing technical assistance is beneficial when lead time to the election is sufficiently long, allowing an assessment of country needs and full project implementation. The UN's cost of providing assistance is partly a function of its budget, with more country requests possibly lowering the chances of support in individual cases. This section outlines each of these cost-benefit elements.

From the host government's perspective, the main benefit of technical election assistance is a potentially higher quality election process, leading to potentially greater credibility, legitimacy, and stability. Developing countries can be overwhelmed by the difficulty of conducting a technically smooth election, given the numerous administrative and logistical challenges.[46] EMBs often encounter "serious problems registering voters or delivering election materials to the correct polling sites [and] officials are rarely well-trained."[47] Yet all these elements are important for a legitimate election. In the words of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, "successful elections require credible and transparent technical operations."[48] For example, electoral capacity problems in Guyana have prompted the government to request UN assistance. Administrative shortfalls in Guyana's 1997 and 2001 election caused long delays in the tabulation of results, which sparked rumors of manipulation and post-election violence. To speed the tabulation process and update other aspects of the electoral system, the government requested UN technical support in the run-up to its 2006 election. Technical election assistance helped shorten the period between election day and results announcement to three days (instead of 6 days after 2001 and 15 days after 1997), reducing the opportunity for rumors and frustration to spread.[49]

Facing up to the election challenge in developing countries, supporting EMBs has emerged as the most successful aspect of UN election assistance.[50] As detailed above, technical assistance supports country-specific capacity building for election administration to build more competent and independent EMBs, a more accurate voter register, fairer election laws, faster vote processing and tabulation, and fewer technical and political break-downs.[51] These reforms essentially aim to level the playing

[45] Note that if the government's requests were completely random, none of the political variables should be significantly associated with requests.

[46] Pastor 1999, 8–9.

[47] Pastor 1999, 10.

[48] A/62/293, 2. Also see Boutros-Ghali 1995, 5. While technically smooth processes are often a necessary condition for successful elections, they are not sufficient.

[49] Chaubey 2011.

[50] UNDP 2012, 35–37; Pastor 1999, 28.

[51] Ludwig 2004b, 131.

field in a way that can make it harder for those governments intent on manipulating elections to implement such irregularities and retain their hold on power.[52] For example, "capacity building assistance from donors made it extremely difficult for [the ruling party] SLPP to rig the elections" in Sierra Leone in 2007.[53] More broadly, technical assistance has been deemed "effective in helping the democratization process."[54] Whether or not that is a positive political development for any given domestic actors depends on their interests.

These externally supported technical reforms can have potentially large political consequences because technical election assistance is essentially political. It pays direct attention to political competition and the capacities and actions of key actors. When the design of entire election systems is at stake, this is often "politically sensitive because the systems themselves can be decisive for electoral outcomes."[55] But even reforms as seemingly mundane as updating the voter registry – a common component of technical support – can be highly sensitive because they are so central to the process and outcome of elections. Removing deceased voters, adding young voters, and checking for duplicates and identification can significantly shrink the room for potential manipulation on election-day. That technical support can constrain actions and influence outcomes has not escaped domestic politicians. In fact, "knowledgeable politicians recognize that elections can potentially be won or lost at this stage of the process."[56] Changes to the electoral environment, especially reforms well in advance of election-day (e.g. who can register and compete), can have important political implications.[57]

This contrasts sharply with election observation. By the time most observers arrive, the electoral process is already in place[58] and therefore the opportunities to influence the process are relatively small compared to what could have been done with electoral rules and institutions in the months and years before election day. In fact, some "pseudo-democrats" have learned to walk a fine line: inviting observers *and* manipulating the outcome by making sure the playing field is not level.[59] Unlike observer missions, technical assistance seeks reform in close cooperation with the government. Also unlike observer missions, technical support activities do *not* culminate in well-attended press conferences where verdicts about the election's credibility are announced. Instead, technical assistance projects fly largely under the media

[52] Most manipulation is executed by incumbents and most incumbents win elections. See Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009, 412; Simpser 2013, 76; and Beaulieu and Hyde 2009, 400–402.

[53] Kandeh 2008, 606.

[54] Lopez-Pintor 2007, 28.

[55] Norad 2014, 30; UNDP 2012, 35–37.

[56] UN SG report 2001, 10.

[57] Interview 12.

[58] If the election is rigged, manipulation takes place most often early in the electoral cycle, i.e. not on election-day but in the pre-election period, when decisions are made about the registration of voters, candidates, and parties, and campaigning begins – and other international attention is not yet focused on the country. These early decisions can restrict the playing field immensely and thus influence the outcome of the election long before the day of polling. Interview 10; Bhasin and Gandhi 2013; Norris 2014, 796.

[59] Hyde 2011a, 158–184.

radar. Compared to observation, technical assistance is – to borrow from Pierson – "big, slow-moving, and invisible."[60]

Consequently, seemingly complementary international interventions (observation and technical assistance) create quite different incentives for domestic and international actors. In contrast to observation, where some governments manage to invite observers *and* manipulate the election with more subtle means or move manipulation into the pre-election period, neither of these are good strategies during technical support missions. Changing manipulation (in timing or type) rather than reducing it is a less attractive strategy under technical assistance because these types of irregularities are *exactly* the kinds of issues that technical support seeks to address. Compared to observation, technical assistance tends to have (i) programs more tailored to the host country to fit the political landscape, (ii) more local knowledge and time investment in the country, (iii) actual follow-up on international reform recommendations from prior elections. Thus, governments can incur higher domestic costs – i.e. risk of losing office – from technical support than from observation.

The value of technical election assistance is differentiated by regime type. In particular, electoral autocrats (chiefly interested in manipulation) can incur higher political costs from technical support than democratically-leaning governments (also known as hybrids, competitive authoritarian regimes, or developing democracies). Both types of governments incur some cost since institutional change is usually costly and can redistribute power in unexpected ways. However, autocratic governments intent on manipulating the process face the prospect of higher political costs through reform than hybrid regimes/developing democracies,[61] which require fewer reforms and may value these reforms for further democratization or other domestic and international reasons. Technical election assistance offers fewer benefits to regimes that are interested in window dressing rather than improving election integrity.

Governments have more incentives to request technical support when the benefits exceed the costs: when the expected capacity boost from technical support is large (i.e. election administration is weak) and when they are somewhat democratic rather than electoral autocracies.[62] In contrast, autocratic governments may see technical assistance as a potential threat to their power because leveling the playing field is not in their interest. As such, the autocrat's costs often exceed the benefits associated with technical support, and this makes autocrats less likely to

[60] Pierson 2003.

[61] Interviews 10 and 12.

[62] Administrative capacity for elections and democracy levels are two distinct concepts and the empirical correlation is relatively weak (r=0.20). While they do co-vary somewhat, each level of election administrative capacity is reached by a wide range of political regimes, spanning almost the entire scale. For example, both autocracies (e.g. North Korea and Turkmenistan 2003) and advanced democracies (e.g. Costa Rica and Czech Republic 2002) have strong electoral capacity. In addition to domestic factors, the requesting decision might also be influenced by calls for reform from high profile actors outside the state. For example, when international observers have condemned the previous election, the government might be more inclined to request technical support. I control for this potential alternative explanation in the robustness section and find no empirical support.

request assistance than more democratically-inclined leaders.[63] One example of this dynamic is Indonesia. Suharto's dominant party regime never requested UN election assistance. However, after Suharto resigned in 1998, the interim government asked for UN support for the upcoming, truly multi-party elections in 1999. The UNDP helped with material support and EMB capacity building. It also supported Indonesian non-governmental organizations to assist with voter education and coordinated other international support.[64] This leads to the first two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Countries with weak election administration should be more likely to request technical election assistance than countries with strong election administration.

Hypothesis 2: Countries which are autocratic should be less likely to request technical election assistance than countries which are hybrid regimes.

From the perspective of the provider, the UN – like other bureaucratic institutions – is interested in organizational growth and survival. It can improve its chances of growth and relevance by retaining its reputation, which largely depends on how well it fulfills its mandate.[65] In the case of election assistance, the UN's mandate is to support countries in improving their electoral processes. The larger the UN's return on its investment (improved domestic processes), the better its reputation in this field, and the more likely its budget will be preserved or expand.

The UN's incentives to provide assistance – i.e. positive responses to country requests – are also influenced by costs and benefits. The UN gains more from providing assistance when the return on its investment is high, which in turn depends on lead times. While the UN should not have political preferences about which countries' requests to fulfill (all else equal), it has incentives to maximize the return on its investment. In other words, in making its decision, the UN does not look for a single political indicator in host countries, partly because the UN does not promote a specific model of democracy – but it does look for lead times.[66] Generally speaking, countries need to request UN assistance at least four months before the election date to be eligible for technical election assistance.[67]

Lead times are important in two ways: (1) for enabling UN project implementation and (2) as an indicator of domestic political will for institutional reform.[68] First,

[63] Advanced democracies are less likely to request assistance because (i) the playing field is already fairly level and (ii) they usually have strong election institutions, so that advanced democracies would receive low benefits from capacity building.

[64] UNDP 2002, 28.

[65] See Maor and Sulitzeanu-Kenan 2015; and Carpenter and Krause 2012. Failing to fulfill its mandate can lead to reputational losses, as in the case of the non-implemented arms embargo in Somalia. See UN Targeted Sanctions Project, n.d.

[66] Interview 5.

[67] This rule is stipulated widely. See, e.g., UN Secretary General Report 2001, 24; and UN Secretary General Report 2003, 5. Exceptions to this four-month lead time are when the UN has already been engaged in the country for a long time and is merely adding a new area of support, and when the risk of civil unrest is increased. Interview 5.

[68] Interviews 5 and 12.

longer lead times enable the UN to follow its bureaucratic procedure (needs assessment mission, pre-clearance) and develop and implement a project well.[69] Especially when countries have not received technical election assistance before or request support for a herculean task (like voter registration), sufficient lead times (often one or two years rather than four months) are necessary to do a project properly. Second, longer lead times can also signal countries' political will for reform because longer lead times allow more comprehensive pro-democratic institutional changes, all else equal.[70] Political will is an important condition for project success, since technical electoral assistance depends crucially on cooperation with host country authorities. The timing of the request decision lies in the purview of the government and election dates are usually known sufficiently in advance to initiate this process and engage in deeper institutional reform. Consequently, governments which only request assistance shortly before the election may signal a limited will for political reform. Their primary interest is not institutional change but the veneer of legitimacy which a request and UN presence may lend to an electoral process and the government that emerges from it. The UN seeks to avoid providing such a false appearance of legitimacy, and thus should be less likely to provide assistance when lead times are shorter. With short lead times, it becomes a "credibility risk [for the UN] to say yes" because at times the requesting government just wants endorsement or a rubber stamp on the election without the accompanying UN-supported institutional reforms.[71] Conscious about this risk of losing credibility, the UN seeks to avoid lending legitimacy to non-meaningful elections.[72] Thus, longer lead times – enabling UN project implementation and signaling domestic political will – should increase the likelihood of UN assistance.

Hypothesis 3: Longer lead times should increase the probability of UN provision of technical election assistance.

In addition to potential benefits, the UN's decision to provide assistance is also influenced by costs. Such costs of assistance include equipment, personnel, and funding for activities in the host country. Budget constraints may arise when requests exceed the potential for assistance. As the need for assistance increases and more countries request electoral support for any given election-year, any given country's probability of receiving assistance declines. Although organizational budget constraints might be a plausible limitation to providing assistance, the UN is sometimes able to mobilize additional funds for projects if needed, for example from voluntary member state contributions (e.g. DFID, embassies in the host country, or DPA's extrabudgetary resources).[73] While this practice of mobilizing additional funds suggests

[69] Interviews 11 and 13.

[70] Interviews 5 and 12. While short lead times can signal insincere requests for assistance in the form of political reform, they are sincere requests for financial support (interview 12). Receiving UN money for staff salaries or material is a bonus that does not require any institutional changes. In fact, financial or material support is often the only remaining option for assistance with short lead times (interview 13).

[71] Interview 5.

[72] Interview 10.

[73] Interviews 5, 10, and 13.

that budget constraints do not dictate the extent of UN election assistance, it is still worthwhile to assess this question of budget constraints empirically, which leads to the fourth hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4: More country requests for any given year should reduce the probability of UN provision of technical election assistance for any single country request.

4 Research design

I test these predictions empirically using data on national elections in 130 countries globally from 1990 to 2003. Following prior research, I exclude twenty-three long-term, advanced democracies, since these are unlikely to be on the receiving end of democracy assistance.[74] The unit of analysis is national elections, which include legislative, presidential, and general/consecutive contests.[75]

The dependent variables are government *request* and UN *provision* of technical election assistance. Data for both variables are sourced from a listing of "member state requests to the UN system for electoral assistance" from 1990 to 2003.[76] This information was compiled by the Election Assistance Division within the UN DPA, which is the focal point for all electoral support in the UN system. The data are fairly comprehensive across UN programs, countries, and years of coverage.[77] This document contains information on the country name, the date of the country request for UN assistance, the UN's response to the request, and the period of UN assistance (if any). It also includes the type of request, the type of assistance provided (if any), the election for which it was provided, and reasons for non-provision. Country *request* is coded 1 when a country requested UN election assistance in the run-up to an election, and zero otherwise.[78] UN *provision* is coded 1 when the organization provided technical election assistance in the run-up to the election and zero otherwise.

Figure 2 visualizes the distribution of the two outcome variables, showing the number of government requests for and UN provision of technical election assistance across time. It illustrates that the number of requests has varied over time, taking off in the early 1990s. It also shows that the UN tends to decline some requests for

[74] Hyde 2011a, 74–75, footnote 29. These twenty-three democracies are Canada, US, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and European countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK.

[75] Same-day elections are collapsed to general elections and multi-round elections are collapsed to the first round.

[76] UNDPA 2002; Ludwig 2004b. This information comprises the UN system, i.e. all UN departments.

[77] Interview 10. The data reflect submissions related to election assistance received by EAD from relevant UN programs.

[78] Many country requests for assistance are broadly phrased, i.e. requesting "support" rather than support specifically for technical assistance or observers. Broad requests for UN election assistance can reasonably be seen as requests for technical election assistance because (i) the UN specializes in technical assistance, (ii) the most commonly requested type of support is technical election assistance, and (iii) the most commonly provided type of support is technical assistance (Ludwig 2004a, 176; interviews 5 and 10).

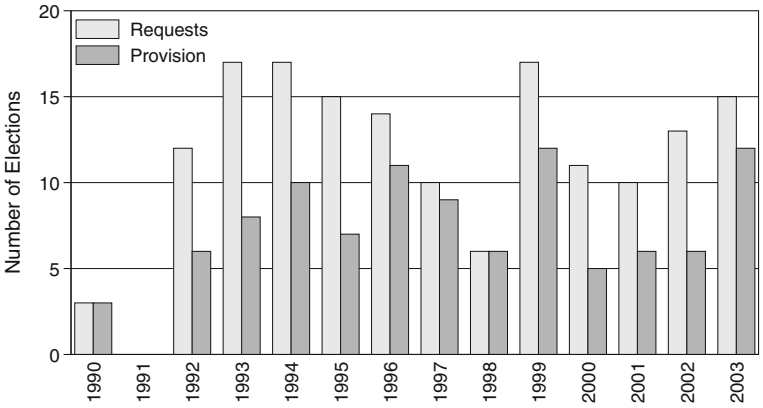

Fig. 2 Technical Election Assistance Requests and Provision

election assistance, which might be due to unsuitable domestic conditions (political will, short lead times), UN budgetary constraints, or other reasons. The exceptions are 1990 and 1998, when only three and six countries, respectively, requested assistance, all of which were granted. When requests almost quadrupled two years later (1992), the UN provided assistance to five of the eleven requesting countries. On average, the rate of UN assistance conditional on government request was 62 percent, i.e. 100 out of 162 elections, between 1990 and 2003.

Since the dependent variables are binary, all models are binary logit; standard errors are clustered by country to capture unobserved heterogeneity between states. Therefore the analysis of government requests includes all data (n=574), while the analysis of UN provision is conditional on government requests and thus conducted on that subset (n=162). In the robustness section, I replicate the main analysis with two-stage sample selection models to better account for the fact that the UN only grants technical election assistance conditional on requests. This does not affect the substantive interpretation of results.

The four key predictors are election administrative capacity, autocracy (to model requests), lead time, and UN budget constraint (to model provision). The variable *election administrative capacity* is a three-point scale coded low (1), moderate (2), and high (3) for the previous election.[79] The excluded reference category is high capacity. This variable includes election-day logistical problems (insufficient materials or inadequate processes), information-related problems (ballot and polling place issues), and inaccurate voter lists. As a succinct measure of election-specific administrative capacity, this variable lends itself well for the empirical analysis in this paper because it captures administrative capacity *specific* to elections (instead of broad bureaucratic capacity) and thus provides information on facets central to this

[79] Kelley 2010, QED sr22cap, is based on U.S. State Department Human Rights Reports. I reversed the original scale to ease interpretation and collapsed no and low capacity since the lowest category was hardly populated (less than 3 % of the data). This transformation does not affect the interpretation of results.

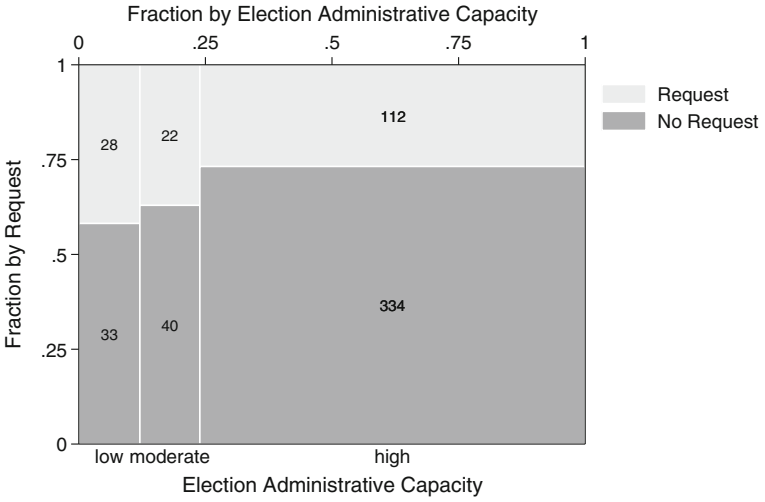

Fig. 3 Technical Election Assistance Requests and Capacity

paper.[80] I expect the effect of administrative capacity on government request for election assistance to be positive: countries with weak election capacity at the previous election should be more likely to request UN assistance than countries with strong election capacity. The variable *regime* has three categories: electoral autocracy, hybrid, and advanced democracy. Autocracy is coded 1 when the country's polity score is below -6, and 0 otherwise.[81] Hybrids are coded for polity scores between -5 and +5, and advanced democracies are coded for polity scores between 6 and 10. The excluded reference category is hybrid regimes. Since I expect autocratic incumbents to be less willing to invite technical election assistance than hybrid regimes, the coefficient on autocracy should be negative.

A first glance at the bivariate relationship between these two independent variables and government requests provides support for the argument. Figure 3 shows that countries with low election administrative capacity request technical election assistance more frequently than countries with high capacity: a difference between 46 and 25 percent. As hypothesized, lower election administrative capacity is associated with a higher proportion of requests for technical election assistance. Again as hypothesized, Fig. 4 shows a u-shaped relationship between regime type and

[80] Further in terms of data quality, the variable's scale offers more fine-grained information than a simple 0/1 dummy; and these data are the only measure we have on election-related capacity, which underlines the difficulty of constructing such data across space and time. While this variable had missing information in about 20 % of elections in the original data source, I have filled virtually all missing values by applying the same codebook and source material. The five (out of 574) elections with remaining missing capacity information are first-time elections (for which the lagged value from the previous election thus does not exist), cases where elections had not been held in more than a decade (which renders previous elections' capacity less relevant) and one country not mentioned in the source material due to foreign occupation. The results are substantively similar using the original (partially missing) data.

[81] Marshall and Jaggers 2011.

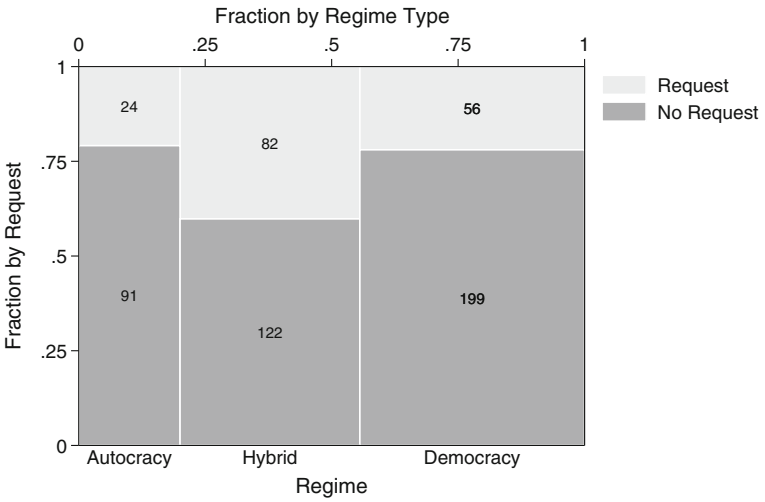

Fig. 4 Technical Election Assistance Requests and Regime Type

requests, where strongly autocratic or democratic countries request UN assistance less often (21 percent) than hybrid regimes (40 percent).

To model UN provision of assistance, *lead time* is the logged number of months between the government request and an election. The average lead time for technical assistance is 8.6 months before the election, varying between zero and 48 months (i.e. four years).[82] I expect longer lead times to be associated with a higher likelihood of UN assistance. Lastly, *UN budget constraint* is the logged number of election assistance requests from any given year. As explained above, I do not expect a strong relationship because of the UN's ability to mobilize additional resources if needed; but the direction of the relationship between these two variables should be negative: an increase in requests should be associated with less assistance.

I include a range of control variables to capture alternative drivers of requests for and provision of technical assistance. To capture government weakness as a driver of requests,[83] I include both economic and political variables. *GDP per capita* measures economic development[84] and *opposition strength* measures the opposition vote share from the previous election to capture the idea that governments might be more willing to reform when parties in the legislature are more evenly divided.[85] Further, *post-conflict* indicates whether the country experienced a civil war in the previous 10

[82]The average lead time for *any* UN assistance is 7.5 months before the election, varying between zero and 62 months.

[83]Fortna and Howard 2008, 294; Fortna 2008, 18.

[84]World Bank 2012, lagged and logged.

[85]Geddes 1994; Lehoucq and Molina 2002, 11–12; Beck et al. 2001. In the robustness section, I use an alternative measure – incumbent confidence – which does not alter results.

years[86] since requests might be driven by prior conflict[87] and thus weakened capacity. More importantly, post-conflict situations with current UN involvement often involve a different process: they usually begin with a mandate from the UN Security Council. Especially when the UN already has peacekeepers in the country, it has substantially less discretion about whether or not to provide election assistance since this assistance is often part of the original mandate. In the post-conflict context, UN election assistance also often serves as a confidence-building measure for fragile political processes in the transition from war to peace.[88] Therefore the relationship between peacekeepers and election assistance should be positive. *UN peacekeeping* is a binary indicator for whether the UN already had peacekeepers present in the country in the year before the election.[89] Following alternative explanations about government weakness as a driver of requests, poorer countries, those with a recent conflict history or those already with peacekeepers on the ground might be more prone to request technical support.

To account for the amount of effort necessary to hold an election, models control for *population size*,[90] and *executive* and *general election*, with legislative contests as the excluded reference category. General elections – i.e. those for both the legislative and executive – and elections in more populous countries might be associated with more requests. Further, uncertain elections might be more in need of UN assistance. In line with previous research, the variable *uncertain election* is coded 1 when these were the first multi-party elections, when the previous election had been suspended, or when a transitional government was in charge of elections, and zero otherwise.[91] As part of the robustness checks, I also include controls for snap elections, incumbent confidence, natural resources, manipulation, international calls for reform, and aid-dependency. None of these variables change the substantive interpretation of results.

To account for alternative drivers of UN assistance, the provision models include the variable *opposition competition* to capture an enabling environment. Following prior research, *opposition competition* is coded 1 when opposition parties are legal, are allowed, and when there is a choice of candidates on the ballot, and zero otherwise.[92] However, I do not expect a strong relationship between competition and assistance provision because (i) many non-competitive regimes select out at the request stage and (ii) the UN does not follow a single indicator of enabling environ-

[86] UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, version 4. This includes both internal and internationalized internal armed conflicts between the government and a rebel group with a minimum of 25 battle-related deaths per year.
[87] Gilligan and Stedman 2003, 38.
[88] Interview 11.
[89] Kathman 2013.
[90] World Bank 2012, lagged and logged.
[91] Hyde 2011a, 75; Hyde and Marinov 2012, nelda1, nelda2, nelda10.
[92] Hyde 2011a, 74; Hyde and Marinov 2012, nelda3, nelda4, nelda5.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
Request for technical election assistance	0.282	0.450	0	1	574
Provision of technical election assistance	0.174	0.380	0	1	574
Request for election observers	0.678	0.468	0	1	553
Provision of election observers	0.665	0.472	0	1	553
Election administrative capacity	2.677	0.659	1	3	569
Regime type	1.244	0.766	0	2	574
Lead time	7.505	8.817	0	62	202
Lead time (log)	1.736	0.899	0	4.143	202
UN budget constraint (log)	1.032	1.408	0	3.367	574
GDP pc (log)	7.026	1.154	4.281	10.158	548
Opposition vote share	15.351	20.467	0	68.180	574
Post conflict	0.354	0.479	0	1	574
UN peacekeeping	0.094	0.292	0	1	574
Population size (log)	16.037	1.406	12.899	20.742	562
Poll type	0.582	0.761	0	2	574
Uncertain election	0.251	0.434	0	1	574
Opposition competition	0.820	0.384	0	1	545
Other providers of techn. el. assistance	0.092	0.290	0	1	574
Incumbent confident	0.594	0.492	0	1	485
Snap election	0.070	0.255	0	1	574
Previously condemned	0.107	0.310	0	1	531
ODA (log)	21.177	0.297	20.698	22.576	547
Natural resources pc (log)	−1.862	6.725	−9.210	9.058	568
Manipulation on election-day	0.255	0.436	0	1	549

Notes: Election administrative capacity is lagged from the previous election. The following variables are lagged by one year: regime type, GDP pc, opposition vote share, population size, ODA, natural resources pc

ment.[93] I also control for technical election assistance by *other providers*.[94] I source supplementary data on technical election assistance by other providers directly (in the case of IFES) and from existing data on international logistical support, legal advice,

[93] Interviews 2, 3, and 5.

[94] As explained above, we lack data on un-fulfilled requests by non-UN providers, so the request models are run on UN data "only." Other organizations also provide technical assistance at times, but (1) often have been founded after 2003, the temporal scope of this study, and (2) even today provide technical election assistance less frequently than the UN and IFES. For example, the AU's election assistance unit was only founded after 2006, and the first such project at the OAS was in 2008. On the NGO side, Democracy International was founded in 2003 and EISA began support to EMBs in 2002. Creative Associates' technical elections support is limited to recent cases (South Sudan, Somaliland). Still other organizations are primarily funders (European Commission) or provide networking opportunities (International IDEA, ACE). Interviews 3, 4, 5, and 6; Diamond 2008, 123.

and civic education.[95]Taking into consideration all minor providers adds a total of 40 cases to the 100 cases of UN assistance, documenting that the UN is indeed the leading provider of technical election assistance.[96] In addition, these models include controls for *UN peacekeeping*, *GDP per capita* and *poll type*, which might also influence the UN's decision to provide assistance. Descriptive statistics for all variables are in Table 1.

5 Results

The results provide strong support for the argument about why some countries and at times the UN resist democracy assistance. Table 2 presents estimates from multivariate logit models predicting government requests for UN technical election assistance. The first column shows a parsimonious estimation including only the two independent variables of interest, without all the correlated controls. Columns 2 and 3 add the control variables and display the estimated effect of capacity and regime type, respectively. Column 4 effectively creates a "horse race" between these two independent variables and includes all controls.

Table 2 provides empirical evidence that country requests for technical election assistance are higher when benefits are high (low administrative capacity) and political costs are low (hybrid rather than autocracy). Countries with low election administrative capacity during the previous election have a much higher propensity to request assistance than countries with high capacity. The estimated coefficient on capacity is statistically significant and negative. In substantive terms, countries with low capacity request assistance with 29 % probability, which declines to 15 % for countries with high capacity.[97] In effect, this cuts the probability of country requests in half. This change in the probability of requesting assistance due to domestic capacity is illustrated in Fig. 5. The point estimates of each scenario (i.e. low vs. high capacity) do not overlap the confidence intervals of the other scenario, which indicates significance. This empirical finding for election administrative capacity is strong evidence in favor of Hypothesis 1 about government requests due to high benefits. It is also worth noting that even high capacity countries still have some positive probability of asking for UN election assistance, often seeking budget support rather than reforms.[98]

[95]IFES website, accessed 4 October 2015; Kelley 2010, DIEM. According to DIEM data, the main alternative providers are NGOs (IFES, NDI, and IRI) and regional inter-governmental organizations (OSCE, Council of Europe, OAS). For more details on other providers, see footnote 94. As a result, the average rate of technical support increases from 18 to 25 %, but the significant gap to observers (67 %) remains. The result interpretation remains unaffected.

[96]This is a conservative coding. The 40 "non" UN cases are possibly an over-estimate because some of these elections (e.g. Tajikistan 2000) are joint OSCE-UN missions which the main data source does not list.

[97]This is estimated from model 2 in Table 2. Unless stated otherwise, all control variables are held at their mean and mode. All Tables and Figures of predicted probabilities use 95 % confidence intervals.

[98]Interview 12.

Table 2 Determinants of Country Requests for Technical Election Assistance

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Election Admin. Capacity: Low	0.634**	0.899***		0.736**
	(0.306)	(0.306)		(0.324)
Election Admin. Capacity: Moderate	0.342	0.164		0.074
	(0.289)	(0.321)		(0.325)
Regime Type: Autocracy	−0.794**		−0.956***	−0.772**
	(0.320)		(0.327)	(0.327)
Regime Type: Advanced Democracy	−0.746***		−0.401	−0.257
	(0.271)		(0.275)	(0.278)
GDP pc		−0.878***	−0.878***	−0.875***
		(0.138)	(0.145)	(0.138)
Opposition vote share		0.013**	0.011	0.012*
		(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Post conflict		0.492**	0.399	0.444*
		(0.224)	(0.246)	(0.236)
UN peacekeeping		−0.091	−0.026	−0.038
		(0.362)	(0.385)	(0.359)
Population size		−0.203**	−0.198**	−0.209**
		(0.097)	(0.099)	(0.099)
Poll type: Executive election		0.144	0.173	0.131
		(0.244)	(0.237)	(0.243)
Poll type: General election		1.057***	1.093***	1.066***
		(0.294)	(0.290)	(0.293)
Uncertain Election		0.555**	0.449*	0.548**
		(0.271)	(0.258)	(0.275)
Constant	−0.581***	7.455***	7.920***	7.851***
	(0.200)	(2.038)	(2.065)	(2.049)
Observations	569	544	548	544
Clusters	129	124	125	124
AIC	663.00	562.25	564.12	560.15
BIC	684.72	609.54	611.49	616.04
LL	−326.50	−270.12	−271.06	−267.07

Notes: Logit models with standard errors clustered on country in parentheses. Excluded baseline categories are high election administrative capacity, hybrid regimes, and legislative elections $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.10$

In line with Hypothesis 2, electoral autocrats tend to resist technical election assistance, likely because they incur higher political costs from assistance aimed at leveling the playing field. The coefficient is negative and significant in all models. The magnitude of the effect is somewhat smaller than the capacity effect but still substantial. Holding all else constant, hybrid regimes request assistance with 22 %

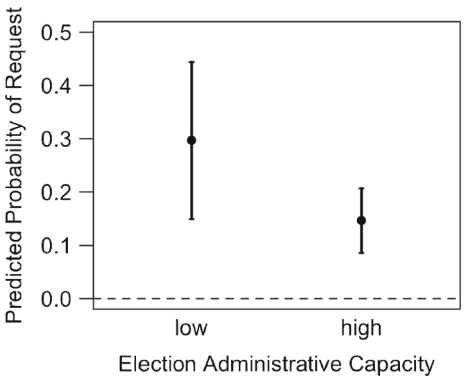

Fig. 5 Effect of Election Administrative Capacity on Country Requests

probability, compared to 10 % for autocrats, as illustrated in Fig. 6.[99] This again reduces the probability of requesting assistance by about 50 percent. The effect is highly statistically significant; each point estimate does not overlap the confidence interval of the counterfactual. This indicates that political strategy plays a role: autocrats are much less likely to request technical assistance, since it is usually not in their interest to change a system that keeps them in power.

Table 3 presents the results for models predicting the UN's provision of technical election assistance. These analyses provide strong support for the importance of lead time but no evidence in favor of budget constraints. Again, column 1 in Table 3 offers a parsimonious model, including only the right-hand-side variables of interest, lead time and budget, without all the correlated controls. Columns 2 and 3 add control variables to each independent variable. Column 4 combines both variables with the controls, and column 5 adds yet another control: administrative capacity.

Table 3 shows that lead time is important in the UN's consideration of whether to provide assistance to requesting countries. The coefficient on this variable is positive and statistically significant. In substantive terms, the probability of UN assistance increases from 23 to 88 % as the lead time increases from observed minimum to maximum (0 to 48 months).[100] This is illustrated in Fig. 7, with the vertical line marking the average lead time in the data conditional on government requests for technical assistance (8.6 months).[101] When a government requested technical election assistance from the UN about 8 months before election day, its probability of receiving assistance is about 66 %. The probability of receiving assistance drops to about a third of that (23 %) when requested in the month of the election but reaches near certainty (88 %) when the request is submitted years in advance of election day.

Governments usually know far in advance when the next election will be held. Many countries take advantage of long lead times while others only ask for help shortly before voting. In fact, a handful of countries even requested assistance in the same month in which the election was held. In a third of the 62 elections in

[99] This is predicted from model 3 in Table 2.

[100] This is predicted from model 2 in Table 3.

[101] The vertical line is at 2.26 because ln(8.6+1)=2.26. The x-axis shows the *logged* number of months.

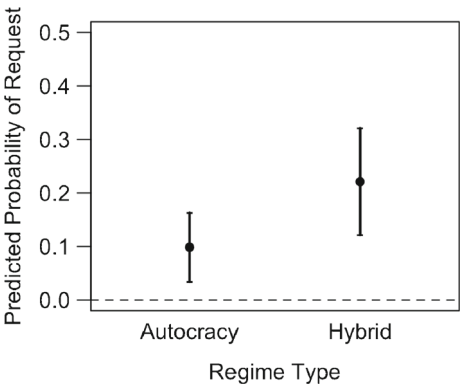

Fig. 6 Effect of Regime Type on Country Requests

which governments requested technical assistance but the UN did *not* provide it, the lead time was two months or less. For example, Venezuela has asked for UN assistance in the month of the election itself.[102] Even if the UN were able to jump in, no meaningful changes could be made so shortly before voting. Consequently, the UN has turned down all of Venezuela's requests. Short lead times make it difficult – if not impossible – to implement assistance, which can suggest a lack of political will on the side of the government, and thus makes UN assistance highly unlikely. This supports Hypothesis 3.

Budget constraints do not emerge as strong predictors of UN provision of assistance. While the coefficient on this variable consistently points in the hypothesized direction – suggesting that an increase in requests tends to be associated with less assistance – it does not reach statistical significance. Concededly, the number of requests per year is a less direct measure than other potential indicators, such as actual budget numbers (which are not consistently available). However, also note that the UN is often able to mobilize additional funds from within and outside the organization if needed, which can explain this finding. This offers no support for Hypothesis 4.

In summary, developing countries tend to resist assistance when the political costs are high and benefits marginal: autocrats are less willing to open up "managed" electoral processes to external scrutiny and thereby potentially diminish their tenure chances in the foreseeable future. Governments are more likely to request technical support when the associated benefits are high, and in particular when domestic capacity to administer elections is low. On the other side, the UN is less likely to provide assistance to countries which ask with short lead times, only inviting the UN a few months before the election is held, so that no major improvements to the process can be made and the playing field is largely set.

[102]For the 2000 and 1998 national elections, Venezuela asked for UN assistance within one and two months of election-day, respectively. In fact, the government of Venezuela disqualifies itself doubly: by requesting assistance with little lead time, and by repeatedly requesting observers even though the UN is very unlikely to provide these without a specific UN resolution for the election.

Table 3 Determinants of UN Provision of Technical Election Assistance

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Lead time (log)	0.925***	0.859***		0.890***	0.958***
	(0.267)	(0.273)		(0.261)	(0.271)
UN budget constraint	−0.599		−0.510	−0.759	−0.773
	(0.480)		(0.502)	(0.621)	(0.649)
Poll type: Executive election		0.169	−0.020	0.129	−0.003
		(0.330)	(0.318)	(0.342)	(0.333)
Poll type: General election		0.178	−0.004	0.150	0.177
		(0.405)	(0.404)	(0.424)	(0.457)
GDP pc		−0.299	−0.300	−0.340	−0.372
		(0.223)	(0.202)	(0.228)	(0.228)
UN peacekeeping		−0.107	0.518	−0.021	−0.256
		(0.660)	(0.559)	(0.652)	(0.682)
Opposition competition		0.168	0.022	0.030	−0.075
		(0.456)	(0.455)	(0.458)	(0.479)
Other providers		0.066	0.196	0.036	0.164
		(0.510)	(0.524)	(0.550)	(0.596)
Election Admin. Capacity: Low					1.063*
					(0.548)
Election Admin. Capacity: Moderate					0.616
					(0.582)
Constant	0.457	0.513	3.793*	3.059	3.033
	(1.538)	(1.473)	(2.104)	(2.687)	(2.707)
Observations	159	153	156	153	153
Clusters	74	73	73	73	73
AIC	197.61	201.21	219.33	201.09	200.02
BIC	206.82	225.45	243.73	228.36	233.36
LL	−95.81	−92.61	−101.66	−91.54	−89.01

Notes: Logit models with standard errors clustered on country in parentheses. Excluded baseline categories are high election administrative capacity and legislative elections. $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.10$

The results also support the argument that provision and requests are two distinct processes that indeed need to be modeled separately: none of the control variables are consistently significant in both analyses. Country requests are higher at general elections (than legislative elections) and from poorer countries, but these factors are not important for UN provision. The UN is somewhat more likely to provide assistance where it is most needed – to countries with low election administrative capacity; however, this is only significant at the ten percent level. Further, conflict experience makes a country more likely to request UN assistance. However, given that technical assistance is also provided to many countries without conflict experience, research

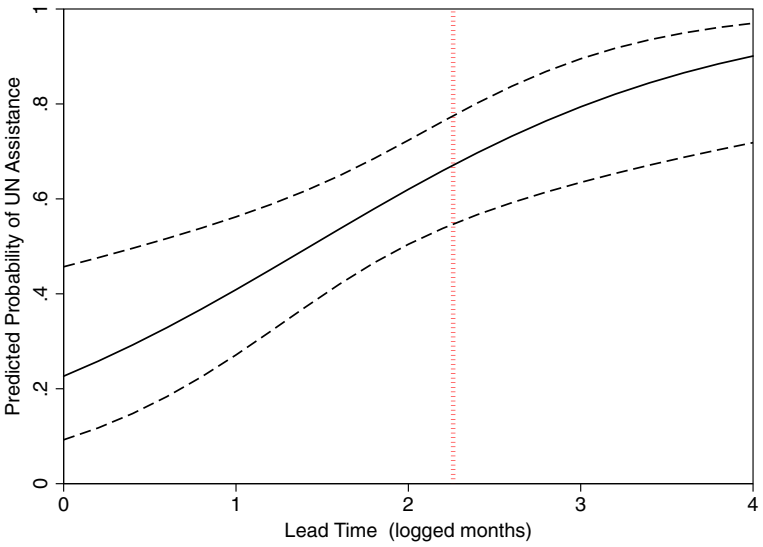

Fig. 7 Effect of Lead Time on UN Assistance (red vertical line indicates mean lead time, 8.6 months)

on peacebuilding – which has so far restricted its focus to post-conflict countries only – might benefit from broadening the sample to all developing countries.

5.1 Robustness checks and alternative explanations

The previous section has provided empirical support for the argument that governments are more likely to request assistance when they have low rather than high capacity and when they are hybrid regimes rather than electoral autocracies. Further, the analyses provided support for the argument that lead times are important for whether the UN provides assistance to requesting countries. In contrast, budget constraints do not seem to matter much for the provision of UN technical election assistance.

To assess the robustness of these findings, I change the estimation strategy and account for a range of alternative explanations. First, to take into account that UN technical assistance is conditional on government requests, I replicate the main analyses (Tables 2 and 3) with a two-stage sample selection model. Such a model is appropriate for cases where we observe the outcome of interest only for the selection group. Here, we only observe whether states receive UN support for the group of states that has requested such assistance. I run a two-stage Heckman probit model to account for this sample selection, where the first stage estimates the odds of a given government requesting assistance, and the second stage estimates UN provision of assistance conditional on government request. Table 4 shows the results of Heckman selection models. These estimates are in line with the main analyses: governments

Table 4 Robustness Check: Determinants of UN Provision of Technical Election Assistance conditional on Requests

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Stage 2: UN Provision				
Lead time (log)	0.424**	0.450***		0.431***
	(0.200)	(0.162)		(0.154)
UN budget constraint (log)	−0.289		−0.253	−0.366
	(0.264)		(0.294)	(0.298)
Poll type: Executive election		−0.010	−0.091	−0.083
		(0.184)	(0.169)	(0.165)
Poll type: General election		−0.138	−0.293	−0.310
		(0.298)	(0.262)	(0.249)
GDP pc		0.058	0.129	0.117
		(0.215)	(0.238)	(0.206)
UN peacekeeping		−0.103	0.232	−0.095
		(0.345)	(0.297)	(0.316)
Opposition competition		0.049	−0.009	
		(0.248)	(0.236)	
Other providers		0.101	0.086	0.004
		(0.256)	(0.244)	(0.228)
Constant	1.163*	−0.381	0.938	0.595
	(0.684)	(0.942)	(1.841)	(1.605)
Stage 1: Country Request				
Election Admin. Capacity: Low	0.464**	0.628***		0.516***
	(0.183)	(0.186)		(0.180)
Election Admin. Capacity: Moderate	0.214	0.130		0.076
	(0.155)	(0.190)		(0.175)
Regime Type: Autocracy	−0.460***		−0.681***	−0.532***
	(0.178)		(0.180)	(0.181)
Regime Type: Advanced Democracy	−0.376*		−0.212	−0.103
	(0.202)		(0.166)	(0.149)
GDP pc		−0.522***	−0.516***	−0.522***
		(0.081)	(0.082)	(0.081)
Opposition vote share		0.008**	0.006	0.006
		(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Post conflict		0.235	0.170	0.158
		(0.152)	(0.176)	(0.154)
UN peacekeeping		−0.086	−0.029	−0.003
		(0.222)	(0.230)	(0.208)
Population size		−0.104*	−0.103*	−0.116**
		(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.052)

Table 4 (continued)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Poll type: Executive election		0.061	0.089	0.038
		(0.145)	(0.137)	(0.147)
Poll type: General election		0.525***	0.579***	0.583***
		(0.175)	(0.169)	(0.175)
Uncertain election		0.252	0.196	0.303**
		(0.158)	(0.147)	(0.152)
Constant	−0.414***	4.199***	4.493***	4.598***
	(0.131)	(1.109)	(1.067)	(1.083)
Observations	566	536	543	541
Clusters	129	123	124	124
AIC	851.67	749.21	775.87	753.38
BIC	890.72	834.89	861.82	847.84
LL	−416.84	−354.60	−367.94	−354.69

Notes: Two−stage Heckman sample selection models with standard errors clustered on country in parentheses. Excluded baseline categories are high election administrative capacity, hybrid regimes, and legislative elections. $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.10$

with low election administrative capacity are more likely than those with high capacity to request assistance. Further, electoral autocracies are significantly less likely than hybrid regimes to ask for assistance. And finally, given government requests, the UN is more likely to provide assistance as lead time increases.

In addition to the sample selection models, I also test whether the results are robust to accounting for alternative explanations. For government requests, I replicate Table 2 while including other potential drivers of government requests for assistance, and check whether they affect the interpretation of results for capacity and regime type. These additional controls include the following: *snap elections*[103] might need short-term support, and countries with more *natural resources* might need less assistance.[104] On the political aspects, I replace *opposition strength* with the binary variable *incumbent confident*.[105] I also test whether international calls for reform by high profile actors[106] or aid-dependency[107] can influence the government's decision to request assistance, perhaps attenuating the effect of capacity or regime type. Finally, I include election-day manipulation as a control variable in these models.[108]

[103] Author's original data collection based on news sources and secondary research. As shown in Table 1, about 7 percent of elections in this sample are snap elections.

[104] Ross 2012, oil and gas value per capita, lagged and logged.

[105] Hyde and Marinov 2012, nelda12

[106] Hyde and Marinov 2012, nelda49.

[107] ODA, World Bank 2012.

[108] Kelley 2010, QED sr21cheat. Since this variable has a proportion of missing values, I also collapsed it to a binary indicator filling missing values with the similar election-day fraud indicator from Beck et al. 2001.

Manipulation should be negatively associated with government's request for assistance. These tables are omitted for space constraints. None of these control variables change the substantive interpretation of results. Among those additional control variables, only natural resources is statistically significant, indicating that countries with more resources are less likely to request assistance. The manipulation variable points in the expected direction (more election-day manipulation is associated with fewer government requests) but is again not statistically significant. Note also that this might be post-treatment: the decision to manipulation might be made after or at the same time as the requesting decision.

I also replicate Table 3, accounting for whether international calls for reform by high profile actors or aid-dependency might influence the UN's decision to provide assistance and thus change the effect of lead times. Neither of those changes the results or is itself significantly associated with UN assistance.

Another alternative explanation of assistance provision is a matter of interpretation. As noted above, lead time may indicate two aspects: (i) the UN's bureaucratic capacity to implement technical assistance and (ii) government's political will. This relates to the difference between UN capacity and government willingness. While it is difficult to distinguish the two beyond doubt, the data provide some evidence against the organizational capacity argument, suggesting that lead time might indeed be an indicator of government will for reform. Strictly speaking, if the UN bureaucratic capacity explanation were true, then the UN would not provide assistance when it receives a request only a couple of months from the date of the election. However, this is not the case. The UN at times provides election assistance – technical and otherwise – when lead time is quite short. When technical support has been requested, the UN has supplied it in 9 percent of the time (14 cases) even though the lead time was two months or less. The UN supplied such quick-response support to a variety of recipient countries: small and large, rich and poor, in various world regions and over the course of time.[109] In 5 percent of requests, the UN provided assistance even though lead time was only a single month or less. These are relatively few cases, as comprehensive technical assistance usually involves months in the host country. But these cases show that the UN is able to assist on short notice if needed. Thus, short lead time does not automatically mean non-provision of assistance, as a strict bureaucratic capacity explanation would imply.

Further, my argument about the UN *not* providing assistance in some cases (lack of government political will) – even given proper lead time – could also be wrong if the UN would go to every place it is invited to, as it often seems the case for some election observers. However, even with proper lead time, the UN tends not to provide assistance to some countries: those with a "lack of enabling environment" for meaningful elections to be held. For example, in the case of Haiti, the UN has provided technical support to the legislative elections in the spring of 2000 but decided against

[109]Technical election assistance provision despite only two months or less of lead time ranges widely in recipient countries: from populations of a million in Gabon to 120 million people in Bangladesh, per capita GDP from $180 in Niger to $5,700 in Gabon, and across Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe/former Soviet Union states.

providing the requested technical support for the November 2000 presidential elections. The reason for this short-term change in strategy is that the Senate elections in the spring were strongly disputed after the government imposed a new methodology to determine whether run-offs were needed (determining majority thresholds based on the top four candidates' votes rather than all votes cast).[110] The new "method" essentially awarded more ruling party candidates a first-round victory, avoiding run-offs. It was declared fraudulent and unconstitutional by the Organization of American States and opposition parties, which boycotted the remaining run-offs. This was all the more disappointing for the UN, which had invested in the country off and on since 1990 with a mandate to "establish an environment conducive to free and fair elections" as well as more general institution building.[111] When the incumbent blatantly cheated in the Senate election and then requested assistance for the presidential election in November, the UN did not provide assistance due to "the political situation in the country." In short, the UN does *not* go to every place it is invited to, even with proper lead time. Instead, it is aware of its opportunity costs and thus rather invests in countries more likely to yield a return on its investment.

6 Conclusion

Why resist democracy assistance? Government resistance to democracy promotion is not a new phenomenon and is fairly widespread. While research has pointed to recent government restrictions[112] especially in the case of foreign funded NGOs,[113] resistance to democracy promotion predates these measures and has also occurred in other democracy assistance fields. The field of election assistance provides an opportunity to observe government resistance both by comparing two basic types of election assistance (observation and technical support) and by comparing resistance within one type (technical support) across countries. Seemingly complementary international interventions (observation and technical assistance) create quite different incentives for domestic and international actors. International election observation and technical assistance are similar in that they open up the domestic political process to external scrutiny and seek to improve election quality. But while observation has become widespread, technical assistance has not. Governments have requested technical support for only about a quarter of their elections, compared to more than two-thirds of elections for observation. While both types of election assistance have become more widespread since 2003, the significant gap between observation and technical assistance persists until today. For example, 73 percent of elections had observers but only 45 percent had technical assistance in the year 2012.[114]

[110] Morrell 2000.

[111] Successive missions were UMMIH (1993–1996) and UNSMIH/UNTMIH (1996–1997).

[112] See Carothers 2006; Carothers and Brechenmacher 2014.

[113] See Christensen and Weinstein 2013; Dupuy et al. 2015a, b; and Gershman and Allen 2006.

[114] Author's calculation based on Nelda data and original data collection on UN technical election assistance.

Why do some developing countries resist technical assistance? And when do some international organizations decide not to provide such assistance when invited?

I argue that requests for technical election assistance have not become widespread because technical assistance can generate higher domestic costs for incumbents seeking to manipulate elections than observation does. Technical assistance is aimed at institutional reforms and tends to be deployed long before election day. These technical reforms can strengthen the election commission, update the voter registry, and boost voter education. They can have significant political consequences because they aim to level the playing field months (and sometimes years) before election-day, making it harder to steal elections. While these changes can benefit democratizing governments, they generate significant costs for autocrats who rely on restricting and manipulating competition to stay in power. Thus, from the autocrat's perspective, technical assistance missions can generate higher domestic costs than observation missions, contributing to the gap in invitation rates between these two forms of democracy promotion.

Using global data on technical election assistance provided by the United Nations as well as other international organizations, I show that governments are much more likely to request such assistance when benefits exceed the costs. Incumbents in electoral autocracies are less likely than leaders of other regimes to request assistance because their political costs (leveling the playing field) far exceed the benefits. However, governments are more likely to request technical assistance when their potential boost in administrative capacity for elections is high. On the provider side, the UN is interested in maximizing the return on its investment and thus tends not to provide technical assistance to governments appearing to lack political will for reform. One indicator of a lack of political will is a short lead time that governments give the UN, which makes it difficult to implement changes before elections are held. As a result, technical election assistance is more likely to be implemented when the requesting country has low administrative capacity, is a hybrid regime rather than autocratic, and asks for assistance with sufficient lead time.

These findings have important implications for research and policy. Democracy assistance is a strategic *interaction* between developing countries and IOs. Yet most research on democracy promotion – and notably on election observation – empirically analyzes the aggregate outcome (assistance delivered yes/no) instead of the component parts of country requests and IO provision of assistance. This paper contributes a model of requests and provision as well as systematic empirical knowledge about the *non*-provision of democracy assistance. Actors – both domestic and international – resist this assistance when the costs associated with it are seen as too high. Understanding these dynamics is critical for evaluating effectiveness as well as the strength of governments' democratic commitment. Future analyses would benefit from taking such selection dynamics into account when assessing the efficacy of programs.

Further, technical election assistance provides a great opportunity to open up quantitative research on both international democracy promotion and UN peacebuilding. While democracy promotion encompasses a wide range of strategies, quantitative research has largely focused on observation (or aggregate measures), neglecting other important tools of the trade. In a similar vein, most research on UN

peacebuilding focuses almost exclusively on civil war countries even though some peacebuilding initiatives (such as technical assistance) are implemented in developing countries broadly, many of which have no conflict experience. This research strand, too, could benefit from broadening its horizon and assessing the effect of tools everywhere where they are applied: in developing countries regardless of conflict history.

In addition, technical assistance can provide a reference point to evaluate the effectiveness of other democracy assistance methods, since it works towards the same goal (democratization) with different means. Most studies examine the effects of single strategies – if, when, how they work – although we could glean important insights by comparing the *relative* effectiveness of methods in the democracy promoters' toolkit. One avenue for future research is thus a comprehensive mapping of technical election assistance projects (beyond 2003), its providers and components, to gain a better understanding of "what works" in democracy promotion. Such insights would be especially useful for organizations which have some discretion over which programs to offer and pursue in particular contexts; it could also potentially help save costs if it emerges that some programs do not yield additional benefits beyond other programs already planned.

Acknowledgments I thank Gabrielle Bardall, Sarah Bush, Amanda Clayton, Jess Clayton, Susan Hyde, Mert Kartal, Jon Pevehouse, two anonymous reviewers, and the editors. Rebecca Saylor provided excellent research assistance. Part of this project was completed during a postdoctoral research fellowship at the KFG "The Transformative Power of Europe" at the Free University Berlin, which is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

Appendix: List of Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with experts at a range of organizations providing technical election assistance, including the United Nations and two NGOs. At the United Nations, interviewees were based at the Development Programme (UNDP) and the Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD) which is part of the Department of Political Aairs (UNDPA). Among the NGOs, interviewees were based at the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and Creative Associates. Experts were either at the associate or senior level, including Senior Election Advisors, Electoral Policy Specialists, and Electoral Policy Analysts.

Interview 1: United Nations, 19 June 2015
Interview 2: United Nations, 26 June 2015
Interview 3: United Nations, 26 June 2015
Interview 4: NGO, 3 July 2015
Interview 5: United Nations, 9 July 2015
Interview 6: NGO, 7 August 2015
Interview 7: NGO, 25 September 2015
Interview 8: NGO, 21 October 2015
Interview 10: United Nations, 3 March 2016
Interview 11: United Nations, 4 March 2016

Interview 12: United Nations, 4 March 2016
Interview 13: United Nations, 4 March 2016

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