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Arturo Santa-Cruz, *International Election Monitoring, Sovereignty and the Western Hemisphere Idea* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), pp. xiii + 287, £52.00, hb.

Arturo Santa-Cruz has provided two excellent services for the study of international relations. Conceptually, he has probed the changing nature of sovereignty through the lens of International Election Monitoring (IEM). In doing so he has opened up an area for scrutiny as a normative construct that is usually regarded as the preserve of a special breed of technical experts. Delicately treading between the different interest-based and ideas-oriented schools of thought, Santa-Cruz shows the possibility and value of balancing self-interest and legitimacy as twin explanations for the emergence of the IEM norm. Empirically he demonstrates how – against its usual type-casting – the Americas have become the lead laboratory for the development of the IEM norm. Detailing four highly salient cases, Chile's 1988 plebiscite and elections in Nicaragua (1990), Mexico (1994) and Peru (2000), Santa-Cruz highlights the evolution of this norm through its initial appearance through the Organisation of American States (OAS), its extension through international non-governmental organisations, and its consolidation via transnational advocacy networks.

Santa-Cruz showcases how in each of these cases surprises occurred. In Chile, the grip of the Pinochet regime was broken not through dramatic revolutionary means, but by patient and tenacious mobilisation via the *Command for the No* campaign. Given the intensity of the Nicaraguan conflict between the Sandinista government and the opposition forces – and the unexpected outcome – the 1990 electoral process was amazingly orderly and peaceful; a result that owed much to the role of former US president Jimmy Carter. The Mexican case is equally compelling, although of course the 1994 presidential election (with the presence of a host of electoral observers) can be deemed to have marked a transitional stage on the road to an authentic form of electoral competitiveness. And – as Thomas Legler and I have written in our book (*Intervention Without Intervening? The Defense and Promotion of Democracy in the Americas*, New York, Palgrave, 2006) the Peru case in 2000 not only advanced the IEM norm to an unanticipated level, but also helped trigger a different cascade of events which ended up bringing down the Fujimori regime.

Santa-Cruz's ambition deserves praise, yet at times the scope of his book is overly broad. Although the conceptual and empirical sides of the project have high value in their own right, at times they become disconnected from each other. Instead of trying to merge the distinctive theoretical IR approach crafted in the first chapter with the impressive detail provided on the specific cases, he tends to privilege the type of state structure as the key condition for allowing IEM to take hold. This is true in his discussion of Chile (pp. 70–1), Nicaragua (pp. 99, 104), Mexico (p. 135) and Peru (p. 174). It is only in the concluding sections of each of these chapters that he reverts back to a more consistent analysis of the international factors motivating the IEM.

Interestingly, given this focus on state structures, some of the richness of the activity by NGOs and civil society towards embedding the IEM norm is not given the prominence it deserves. In the Chilean case, the role of FLASCO is mentioned but receives no elaboration. In Mexico, the role of the transnational indigenous movement is not included in the narrative. And in the case of Peru, the central role of Transparencia should not crowd out all of the other groups (including the Office

of the Peruvian Ombudsman) that engaged in electoral observation during the disputed 2000 election.

There is also a tendency to view the Americas as largely self-contained. With full justification Santa-Cruz gives pride of place in his book to the large US-centred actors, most notably the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the National Endowment for Democracy, and Carter Center. But the impact of the European Union merits more attention; both the European Commission and the foundations associated with the different political parties in Germany. A key to the implanting of the IEM norm in Peru, for example, was the expansion of the original Transparencia-NDI network to encompass election monitors not only from the OAS but also from the European Union.

In extending this point, it might be interesting to further explore the differences in diplomatic style between the different transnational actors promoting the IEM. Santa-Cruz does an excellent job in teasing out the differences (and tensions) between the OAS and the UN on one side, and the NDI, NED and the Carter Center on the other side, but there seem to be other differences as well. One key element that remains unexplored is the types of personality of the 'big' individuals involved. While the Carter phenomenon needs to be looked at more closely, so does the style of leading election monitors who come from different backgrounds in the Americas (such as, for example, Lloyd Axworthy from Canada or Oscar Arias from Costa Rica).

Still, these criticisms reveal how the Santa-Cruz book serves as an excellent catalyst for discussion. Few recent books blend such sophistication in terms of their analysis of the nexus between international and domestic conditions with the sense that what actors think and do on the ground matters. Instead of closing doors off to debate, it presents a wide number of windows from which we can get a better look at the politics and society of the western hemisphere.

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Salvador Martí i Puig, *Tiranías, rebeliones y democracia: itinerarios políticos comparados en Centroamérica* (Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra, 2004), pp. 327, pb.

This book by Salvador Martí i Puig is a healthy reminder of the continued existence of Central America. As the author himself advises from the outset, the days when Central America was all the rage with academics and journalists are long gone. The reason for this high profile derived from the fact that daily life for the peoples of Central America was a tragedy worthy of global media attention. Now that peace of a sort has returned to the region, and it is no longer front page news, Central America has reverted to its earlier neglected status.

Martí i Puig's book gains this Central American reader's goodwill by conveying the author's commitment to the region, and an ethical stance expressed in the statement 'today very few spare a thought for the warm people, the exuberant landscape, the sleeping volcanoes with their lazy fumes, and so many dreams and so much suffering' (p. 9). The book is an interesting journey through the history of Central America and a vindication of a region that was once the fulcrum for the central global conflict of the time.