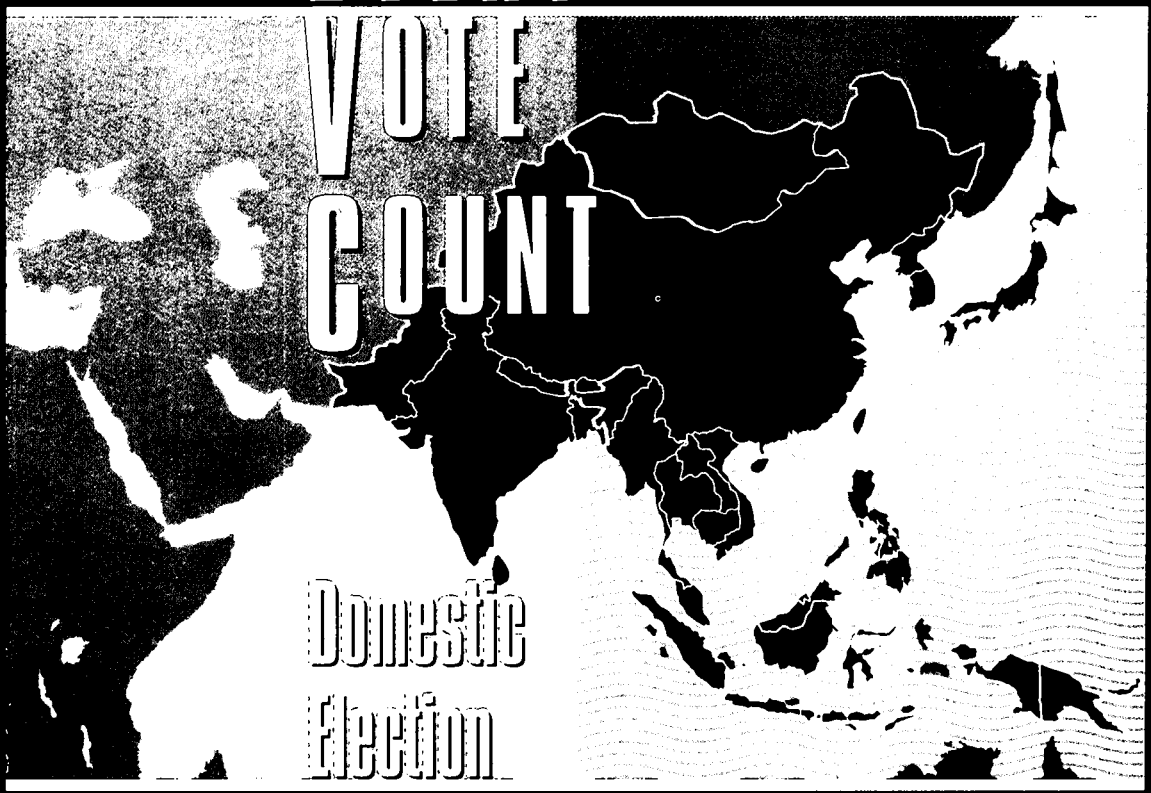
MAKING EVERY VOTE COUNT



Domestic Election Monitoring in Asia

National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
National Citizens Movement for Free Elections

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National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) was established in 1983. By working with political parties, civic organizations, parliaments, and other institutions, NDI seeks to promote, maintain and strengthen democratic institutions in new and emerging democracies. NDI has supported the development of democratic institutions in more than 60 countries. Programs focus on six major areas: political party training, election processes, legislative development, local government, civic organization and civil-military relations. The Institute is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and has a staff of 175 with field offices in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, and the former Soviet Union and the Baltic States.

National Citizens Movement for Free Elections

The National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) was organized in the Philippines in 1983 to promote and safeguard free, orderly and clean elections as well as honesty in government by harnessing the power of an informed and concerned citizenry. NAMFREL won national and international acclaim for its commitment to the restoration and strengthening of democratic institutions and processes, particularly the electoral process. NAMFREL is voluntary, nonpartisan and community based. To date, NAMFREL has served in more than 10 national electoral exercises in the Philippines and has sent electoral observers, resource experts and trainers to more than 15 countries.

Preface

In recent years, growing numbers of nonpartisan civic organizations have mobilized to monitor controversial or watershed elections in a number of Asian countries. These organizations are contributing to more open, democratic political systems in Asia in two very different ways. First, they are helping to improve the quality and transparency of electoral processes, which produces greater public confidence in elections and increases the chances that all sides will accept election results. Second, and perhaps more importantly, election monitoring motivates citizen involvement in public affairs, which is helping to transform the way citizens view their relationship to and participation in politics and governance.

This report provides an overview of the recent experiences and strategies of election monitoring organizations (EMOs) in Asia. It attempts both to describe the diverse experiences of these groups and to identify issues and approaches common to all or many of them. It is hoped that these insights will be of interest and relevance to academics, policymakers and leaders of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Asia and other regions.

The report grows out of the proceedings of a conference on election monitoring in Asia sponsored by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the Philippine National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL). This meeting, held in Manila from February 22 to 24, 1995, brought together representatives of election monitoring organizations and other NGOs involved or interested in election monitoring from 12 Asian countries and territories. (See Appendices I and II.) This report draws heavily on valuable discussion of EMO experiences and strategies at the meeting, as well as on interviews with the participants (many of whom have worked in partnership with NDI) and on documentation provided by them. The report does not pretend to present all the issues discussed during the conference or to be fully comprehensive—it is impressionistic and somewhat anecdotal.

NAMFREL was formally organized in November 1983 as a nonpartisan citizens movement dedicated to safeguarding democracy in the Philippines through free and open elections and good governance. NAMFREL quickly grew into an umbrella organization for some 200,000 volunteers who observed polling places during congressional elections in 1984. For the historic, "snap" presidential election in 1986, NAMFREL fielded more than 500,000 volunteer pollwatchers and implemented a pioneering "quick count" to verify the accuracy of the official ballot count. Since that time, NAMFREL volunteers have served as pollwatchers, election monitors and voter education trainers for every national election in the Philippines. More recently, NAMFREL has advocated congressional passage of a new electoral reform code, recommended independent nominees for the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), involved itself in the modernization and computerization of the electoral process, and organized a monitoring effort for national elections in May 1995. In addition, NAMFREL representatives have actively shared their experiences with nascent election monitoring groups around the globe.

NDI conducts nonpartisan programs around the world to support the development of democratic processes and institutions, including political parties, civic groups, legislatures and elections. Since its inception in 1984, the Institute has conducted thousands of conferences, training sessions and consultations in new and emerging democracies. In addition to enhancing the level of civic participation in the political process, these groups also help promote transparency and accountability through voter education, and campaign and election-day monitoring. NDI has provided technical assistance and worked closely with these nonpartisan monitoring organizations in more than 30 countries, including several in Asia.

NDI has followed democratic development in the Philippines during the last decade. NDI organized a large international observer delegation to the Philippine presidential election in 1986. Since that time, NDI representatives have visited the country periodically, and NDI has worked with NAMFREL on civic organizing activities. NAMFREL representatives have also served as trainers on many NDI programs around the world.

NAMFREL and NDI decided jointly that it would be valuable for organizations with practical knowledge in monitoring elections

and democratic processes throughout Asia to come together to exchange experiences and to begin to develop a common, regional agenda. NAMFREL was one of only a few Asian organizations that participated in a similar, worldwide program organized by NDI in Washington in January 1993; NAMFREL suggested that other organizations in Asia are committed to monitoring elections and government performance and have relevant expertise to share. Thus, NDI and NAMFREL, decided to organize the conference in Manila to share the NAMFREL experience in particular and to reinforce the continuing need for election monitoring in the Philippines as the country moved toward national elections in May 1995.

The Manila conference allowed participants to share effective techniques for organizing monitoring efforts and overcoming structural and procedural challenges, and to identify strategies for sustaining their activities between elections. It is hoped that the sharing of experiences and the establishment of personal ties that occurred during the conference will be the first step toward the development of a regional network of monitoring organizations.

David G. Timberman, a specialist in Asian affairs and a consultant to NDI, was the primary author of this report. Timberman has lived in three Southeast Asian countries and Hong Kong and has written and edited numerous works on politics and economics in Asia. For this report he organized comprehensive interviews with representatives of each of the organizations that attended the NAMFREL/NDI conference and spent several additional weeks in the Philippines and South Korea. Timberman reviewed and synthesized a voluminous amount of information garnered from NDI, NAMFREL and a number of other organizations.

Eric C. Bjornlund, NDI director of program coordination and director of Asia programs, also wrote substantial sections of this report and was its primary editor. Bjornlund has developed and directed election monitoring and civic and political organization programs in Asia and elsewhere. He, along with NAMFREL representatives, designed and managed the program in Manila.

NDI Program Officer Derek Mitchell edited the report by drawing on his broad knowledge of Asian politics and managed the

process of producing and distributing this document. NDI Director of Publications Sue Grabowski also carefully edited the report and greatly improved the presentation.

Several other individuals made critical contributions to this report and to the program in Manila. Guillermo Luz, secretary-general of NAMFREL, conceived of a meeting of election monitoring organizations in Asia and proposed the idea to NDI. As host of the conference, Luz ran the program and ensured its relevance for Asian participants. NDI Senior Program Officer Michael Marshall ably directed the program for NDI and designed a creative and effective agenda. Luz, Marshall and Bjornlund moderated conference sessions.

NDI Program Officer Maryam Montague, then-NDI Program Assistant Aaron Azelton and NDI Logistics Coordinator Lauren Girard also contributed substantially to the Manila conference. Then a field representative for NDI's election support program in Bangladesh, Montague drew on her work there and on her previous experience working with election monitors in Nepal to coordinate the participation of key activists from those countries. In addition, she provided her own analysis to the conference and to this report. Azelton identified and communicated with all the participants and managed details of the conference program. Girard flawlessly coordinated the program's complicated logistics.

NDI thanks all of the participants in this program for taking the time to share their experiences with counterparts from other countries. Their dedication, commitment and courage have contributed measurably to the promotion and consolidation of democracy in their own countries and in the region.

Finally, NDI wishes to extend its appreciation to NAMFREL for hosting this conference and for its tireless efforts in sharing the experiences of the Philippines transition process with democratic activists in other countries. NDI hopes that it can continue to work as closely with NAMFREL and its affiliated organizations during the next decade as it has during the past one.

Kenneth D. Wollack
President, NDI

January 1996

Chapter 1

Introduction

While a small group of Asian polemicists contrive arguments for why democracy is not appropriate for Asia, hundreds of millions of Asians are participating in a key part of the democratic process—selecting their governments through competitive elections. The power and promise of elections in Asia was most dramatically demonstrated by the 1986 presidential election in the Philippines; since then, there have been equally important elections held in countries as diverse as Cambodia, Mongolia, Nepal, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand. Indeed, a majority of all countries in Asia have held national elections since 1992. Most of these elections have been relatively competitive. In some Asian countries, such as Japan, India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka, multiparty elections are a regular occurrence. In others, like Bangladesh, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand and South Korea, competitive elections are both a reflection and an important aspect of the ongoing democratization process.

Almost as important and impressive as the increase in the number of Asian countries holding competitive elections is the improvement in the quality of the elections being held. Although

there are still many problems with elections in Asia—including violence, fraud, vote-buying and government intervention—in a number of countries there have been significant reductions in corrupt and unfair electoral practices. For example, though the elections were still far from perfect, there were important improvements in the quality of national elections held in Bangladesh in 1991, in the Philippines and South Korea in 1992, in Pakistan in 1993 and in Sri Lanka in 1994. The improvements in these and other countries are attributable in large part to the growing independence and effectiveness of election authorities and the active participation of citizens groups in voter education and election monitoring.

The spread of competitive elections in Asia is significant for a number of reasons. First, it represents an important advance in political and human rights in Asia. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states in part, "The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote." Thus, the proliferation of elections is important and desirable because it represents the fulfillment of a fundamental human right.

Second, elections in Asia, as elsewhere, hold a special importance because of the role they play in the process of political liberalization and democratization. The 1986 election in the Philippines was critical to the unseating of Ferdinand Marcos and the restoration of democracy; subsequent elections in the Philippines have helped strengthen the country's democratic foundation. In South Korea a series of elections beginning in 1987 led to the election in 1993 of the first non-military president in more than 30 years. The 1990 election in Mongolia heralded the beginning of multiparty politics in that country. The 1991 elections in Nepal were the first multiparty contest since 1959 and marked the final phase of a year-long democracy movement. And in Thailand, the critical 1992 election became a referendum on the involvement of the military in Thai politics. It produced a civilian government and seems to have significantly enhanced the process of democratization in the country.

Third, competitive elections are a vehicle for peaceful and timely political change. Periodic competitive elections provide

citizens with the opportunity to select the leaders, political parties and programs that they believe are best suited to handle fluctuating conditions and challenges. In an era of rapid economic and social change, this flexibility is important. Elections also provide a way for younger generations of leaders, with new values and perspectives, to assume political power. And they can provide an avenue for the increased participation of sectors of society (*e.g.*, women and members of lower socioeconomic strata) that traditionally have been excluded from politics and governance.

Finally, competitive elections contribute to effective and stable governance. Elections provide a predictable and accepted mechanism for determining leadership succession—in contrast to the uncertainty created by authoritarian systems in countries such as China, Vietnam and Indonesia. They provide a vehicle for managing political competition and encourage the formation of vital components of civil society (political parties as well as nonpartisan groups). They stimulate interaction and communication between governors and the governed, and they educate the public and politicians alike. When successful, elections can validate existing regimes, leaders and policies, and they can help to resolve deep political, religious and ethnic divisions. At the same time, some elections, even though they may be fair, may fuel political and social divisions. It is important, therefore, that competititve elections be accompanied by political institutions and processes that are capable of addressing and resolving these divisions through democratic means.

The spread of elections in Asia and the importance of these polls to the region's democratic development have prompted citizens in many Asian countries to play an increasingly active role in ensuring that elections are competitive and meaningful. To help make certain that elections are free and fair, they have either established new nonpartisan nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to monitor elections or expanded the mission of existing NGOs to include election monitoring. Often the work of these citizens has involved forming a coalition or network of concerned NGOs. The largest and best-known of these election monitoring organizations (EMOs) is the Philippines-based National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), which was formed in 1983. Less well-known—but also impressive—is South Korea's Citizens' Coalition

for Clean and Fair Elections (CCCFE), which was founded in 1991. In recent years similar groups have also formed to monitor elections in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand.

Asia's election monitoring organizations have engaged in a variety of nonpartisan activities, including reviewing electoral laws; monitoring voter registration; monitoring the candidates, parties and media during campaign periods; assisting voters and monitoring voting on election day; monitoring vote counting and tabulation; and engaging in post-election activities such as analyzing the conduct of elections, tracking grievances and advocating electoral reforms. Typically these EMOs participate in these efforts for three, interrelated reasons: to ensure competitive elections; to improve the quality of the electoral process; and to increase citizen participation in politics and public affairs.

To Ensure that Elections Are Competitive

The specific objective of EMOs is to ensure the fairness of the electoral process, including electoral laws and regulations, voter registration, campaigning, voting, vote counting and resolution of election disputes. Their larger goal, however, is to build public confidence in the integrity of the electoral process and to legitimize the results of a competitive election. This objective is particularly important in first or transitional elections, when the public and the contestants are often skeptical about the integrity of the electoral process.

To Improve the Quality of the Electoral Process

Competitive elections, while highly desirable, do not necessarily result in meaningful electoral outcomes. The value of a competitive election may be diminished by cultural and other nonlegal barriers to participation, including pervasive personalism and the excessive role of money. Thus, in addition to ensuring that elections are competitive, improving the quality of the electoral process is also important. This involves promoting the widest possible participation of contestants and voters in the electoral process; encouraging contestants and voters to focus on issues and policies; minimizing (or at least making fairer) the influence of money; and reducing the importance of potentially divisive characteristics and issues such as race, religion and regionalism.

The goal is to make elections a meaningful process for the selection of leaders and for the debate and resolution of public issues.

To Increase Citizen Participation in Politics and Public Affairs

In addition to contributing to the competitiveness and quality of elections, election monitoring in Asia has energized citizen involvement and empowered civic organizations in public affairs. Elections provide an important opportunity to involve citizens in the political process. EMOs can take advantage of that opportunity and the excitement that elections create to attract citizens and existing groups to the cause of democracy and to provide them with meaningful ways to participate in the political lives of their countries.

Moreover, the networks and enthusiasm created by election monitoring can be sustained beyond elections. Continued engagement reinforces two essential tenets of democracy: first, that individual involvement is intrinsically important and can make a difference; and second, that the political process belongs to average citizens and is not just the domain of elites.

This report focuses on the efforts and experiences of nonpartisan, nongovernmental election monitoring organizations in Asia. Their activities are important for a variety of reasons. The challenges they face are not unlike the challenges confronted by NGOs all over the world, and their experiences offer valuable lessons for citizens groups in mature as well as emerging democracies.

First, the attention paid to Asia's economic success often overshadows the region's achievements in the area of democratic development. EMOs, by working to ensure democratic elections, play an important role in the democratization process in Asia. Their influence is heightened by the relative weakness of political parties in much of Asia. Second, Asia's EMOs are representative of the dynamism and growing sophistication of "civil society" in Asia. Indeed, they practically embody the ideal of civil society: groups of citizens who voluntarily participate in public affairs to further nonpartisan goals. Therefore, the experiences of these groups provide insights into politics and civil society across Asia. Finally, the election monitoring efforts of some of these EMOs—NAMFREL and the CCCFE in South Korea in particular—are among the most

sophisticated and innovative election monitoring efforts in the world.

The report begins with an overview of recent national elections in Asia. It next discusses the varied approaches to and experiences with election monitoring in Asia. It also describes some of the important efforts of these groups between elections. Special attention is paid to the experiences of organizations in South Korea, the Philippines and Bangladesh. The report then describes four key organizational issues and four ingredients for successful election monitoring. It concludes with a discussion of present and future challenges related to elections and election monitoring in Asia.

Chapter 2

An Overview of Elections in Asia

Home to more than half the world's population, Asia is a panoply of cultures, religions and historical experiences. As such, it defies generalizations: the traditions and experiences of Northeast Asia differ in many important ways from those of Southeast Asia; and the traditions and experiences of both Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia vary from those of South Asia. The region also encompasses great disparities in national wealth and economic development, as well as a variety of political traditions, including monarchy, military rule, one-party authoritarianism and adaptations of representative forms of government. Within individual countries large differences may exist between urban and rural areas, the status of men and women, and modern and traditional sectors of society.

Asia is also a region, not unlike most other regions of the world, where the forces of economic, social and political change are often in conflict with deeply rooted and long-standing traditional beliefs, practices and institutions. The result is a complex, shifting and often difficult-to-discern mix of influences on society and politics. However, the Asian developmental experience—or at least the experience of a significant portion of East Asia and Southeast Asia—may be unlike that of most other regions in the world because of the unprecedented speed of

economic growth and development. In many countries rapid economic growth and development has produced more affluent, better educated and more pluralistic societies. Affluent and well-educated citizens are likely to seek a voice in the selection of their leaders and in the development of government policies that affect their lives. This development, combined with the communication revolution and the globalization of information and ideas, has contributed to a wave of democratization that has swept across much of Asia during the last decade. Competitive elections are an essential ingredient in this process.

A. The Diversity of Asia's Electoral Experience

Asia's post-World War II electoral experience reflects the region's diversity and dynamism. During the last 50 years electoral politics have become firmly established in only a handful of Asian countries: India, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. In a number of other countries, there has been a mix of competitive elections, noncompetitive elections and, in many cases, coups. This has been the case in Bangladesh, Burma, Indonesia, Pakistan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand. Still others—Cambodia, Mongolia and Nepal—have only recently experienced elections for the first time after decades of uninterrupted autocracy. In other countries, like China and Vietnam, competitive elections are either not allowed or severely compromised. In Burma in 1990 elections were held under unfair conditions but produced results that truly reflected the will of the people. The ruling regime, however, refused to accept the results.

In some Asian countries today the government is essentially trusted to administer honest and competitive elections. In other countries the government is viewed as being a highly partisan actor. Similarly, the military's role in elections has ranged from little or no involvement, to heavy involvement, to outright rejection of election results (as in Burma). In many but not all Asian countries ethnic, religious and/or regional considerations are central to electoral competition. In a number of countries poverty and bonds between patrons and clients play important roles in determining the outcome of elections. And in others "modern" political party affiliations and media campaigns matter most.

Asia's elections suffer from a variety of problems and shortcomings, most of which are not unique to the region. One

obvious problem is the desire of authoritarian or semi-authoritarian governments such as China, Vietnam, Indonesia and Singapore to restrict political opposition and genuine electoral competition. But this problem has more to do with political systems than with elections *per se*. Of relevance to this report are the problems and shortcomings that exist in Asian countries committed to holding competitive elections. The most common of these include violence, harassment and abductions (in countries like Sri Lanka, Cambodia and the Philippines); the unrestrained use of money to influence voting (in South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand); voting along religious, ethnic or regional lines (in India, Pakistan and South Korea); the dominance of personalities and personal loyalties rather than policies and ideologies (virtually everywhere); and the illegal or improper use of government resources by the party in power (again, virtually everywhere).

Elections in Asia are also often characterized by both excessive political partisanship and a lack of agreement on the "rules of the game" for competitive elections in a democratic society. This often results in inflammatory campaigns, violence and coercion, and other unfair or illegal activities. The causes of exteme partisanship in Asia are much too complex and varied for an in-depth discussion here. However, at least four factors deserve brief mention.

First, political partisanship tends to be intense across much of the region because many Asian governments historically have had extensive involvement in and control over the economies of their countries. This has raised the stakes involved in politics, because control of the government translates to control over the flow of valuable economic benefits. Second, in many Asian countries political affiliations are based largely on ethnic, religious, caste or regional identities. Thus, politics become closely intertwined with culture and religion, which can make it difficult for opposing groups to find common ground or reach consensus. Third, national as well as local elections in Asia are often the battleground for longstanding and frequently bitter family or clan-based rivalries. These family rivalries typically extend beyond the immediate clan because of the continued strength of personalism and patron-client ties, especially in rural areas. Finally, in a number of Asian countries the institutions that can help moderate or at least restrain excessive

partisanship—such as broad-based political parties, a nonpartisan bureaucracy and an independent media—remain underdeveloped.

For these reasons, the contest among rival groups for access to and control of public office can cause electoral politics to degenerate into fierce "all or nothing" or "zero sum" battles. In such situations, trust, fairness and compromise are quickly discarded. As a result, some Asian elections have been little more than state-sanctioned power struggles among competing leaders or factions. In some countries, governing parties illegally used government resources in their bids to win re-election. In others, opposition parties opted to boycott elections rather than compete in a faulty process. Elsewhere, authorities have ignored the results of competitive elections, as occurred in Burma in 1990 when the ruling military regime completely disregarded election results.

It is important to note, however, that elections may reflect and amplify existing rivalries and unresolved animosities, but they are rarely the basis for them. Indeed, elections sometimes are the only means through which competing leaders or groups can reach agreement on resolving a political crisis or deadlock. For this reason, a number of Asia's elections have occurred in turbulent political environments in which the stakes were exceedingly high. Examples include the 1986 struggle between an autocratic leader and pro-democracy forces in the Philippines, the 1988 and 1990 electoral contests in Pakistan, and the 1992 electoral competition between civilian and military power in Thailand.

Elections in a number of Asian countries also suffer from relatively low participation by women. The level of women's participation in elections varies from country to country and is a function of attitudes rooted in religion and culture, income and education levels and, in some cases, laws.[1]

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[1]The report of an NDI-sponsored observer delegation to the 1993 elections in Pakistan provides a good example of the problem:

> Pakistan's cultural and social realities and the government's identification procedures sometimes make it difficult for women to vote. Because women's identification cards lack photographs and because many women wear veils, election officials have difficulty verifying women's identities. The

Despite these and other problems, in recent years Asians increasingly have conducted peaceful and competitive elections that have significantly contributed to democratization. In many Asian countries the election commissions responsible for administering elections have grown more independent, powerful and sophisticated. A growing number of Asian NGOs and civic groups are becoming involved in voter education and election monitoring. And more and more Asians are growing accustomed to casting their vote for the candidate of their choice.[2] As a result, the quality of elections has improved in a number of Asian countries. The massive, simultaneous national and local elections in the Philippines in 1992 were orderly, honest and relatively nonviolent. The 1993 elections in Pakistan were a marked improvement over 1990, and in South Korea vote buying has been largely eradicated as a major problem.

The following table lists recent national elections in Asia.

> problem raised the possibility of multiple voting. Because voter lists were not updated fully, many women were registered under their maiden names although their identification cards bore their married names. In many instances this discrepancy resulted in election officials prohibiting women from voting. . . In addition, a lack of women election officials sometimes created staffing problems for women's polling stations. The delegation also observed some women's polling stations that were not operating, apparently because women were not able to come to the polls.

National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, *The 1993 Elections in Pakistan* [Washington, D.C.: 1994], pp. 19-20.

[2]Most Asian countries can boast very high voter turnout (the percentage of eligible voters who actually vote). In Mongolia, turnout is more than 90 percent; in Cambodia in 1993 about 90 percent of eligible voters went to the polls. In Sri Lanka turnout is 75 to 80 percent; in Nepal, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand it averages 60 to 75 percent. Pakistan has the lowest turnout, 40 to 50 percent.

Recent National Elections in Asia

Country	Date of Election	Legislative Body or Type of Election
Bangladesh	February 1996	Parliament
Burma	May 1990	People's Assembly [a]
Cambodia	May 1993	Constituent Assembly/ National Assembly [b]
China	March 1993	National People's Congress [c]
Hong Kong	September 1995	Legislative Council
India	June 1991	Lok Sabha
Indonesia	June 1992	House of Representatives
Japan	July 1993	Diet
Laos	December 1992	National Assembly [c]
Malaysia	April 1995	Parliament
Mongolia	June 1992	Great People's Hural

Country	Date of Election	Legislative Body or Type of Election
Nepal	November 1994	Parliament
North Korea	April 1990	Supreme People's Assembly
Pakistan	October 1993	National Assembly
Philippines	May 1995	Congress
Singapore	August 1991	Parliament
South Korea	March 1992 December 1992	National Assembly Parliament
Sri Lanka	August 1994 November 1994	Parliament Presidential
Taiwan	December 1995 expected March 1996	Legislative Yuan Presidential
Thailand	July 1995	House of Representatives
Vietnam	July 1992	National Assembly [c]

a. Results ignored by the military regime
b. Election held under the auspices of the U.N. Transitional Authority for Cambodia
c. One-party or one-party-dominant system

B. Assessing Asia's Elections

The list of recent Asian elections in the table above suggests the scope of electoral activity in Asia, but it does not provide a sense of the important similarities and the differences that exist among these countries' electoral experiences. (The table also does not include a number of recent, important local elections.) To gain a better sense of these similarities and differences it may be useful to evaluate Asia's recent electoral experience in three categories: 1) the degree of competitiveness; 2) the quality of the electoral process; and 3) the role of an election in the democratization process.

The Degree of Competitiveness

One way to assess elections is by evaluating their degree of competitiveness. Competitiveness is not an absolute; there are varying degrees ranging from non-competitive to highly competitive. One may evaluate the competitiveness of an election based on the degree to which the following conditions exist: freedom of participation of political parties and individuals; opportunity of eligible voters to register and vote; respect for the rights of free association, free expression and free assembly; fair treatment of political contestants; absence of intimidation of candidates and voters; ballot secrecy; due process; fairness and impartiality of the election administration; fair and transparent balloting and counting procedures; and voter confidence in the election process. Competitiveness does not ensure that the election contest will be close, only that the playing field will be relatively level.

It is important to recognize, however, that an assessment of the competitiveness of an election in a particular country cannot and should not be made solely in terms of the laws and procedures governing the electoral process. An appraisal of the overall openness and fairness of the political environment in which the election is conducted is also important. There are countries (*e.g.*, Singapore, Indonesia and, to a lesser degree, Malaysia) in which the election laws and procedures appear to permit a considerable degree of competition, but, in reality, the ability of opposition parties to compete is seriously hampered by laws and procedures favoring the governing party, controls on or intimidation of political opposition, and government ownership of or controls on the media. (In

Indonesia, for example, all candidates for office must pass an interview with the military before they are allowed to run.)

Applying the above criteria, the large majority of countries in Asia now conduct elections that are, to a greater or lesser degree, competitive. The degree of competitiveness varies among these countries, and all the criteria for competitiveness are rarely if ever completely met. But they all share three characteristics: 1) the political environment permits genuine political competition; 2) this acceptance of competition is reflected in electoral laws; and 3) there is a general commitment on the part of the political leadership to tolerate, if not actually foster, electoral competition. By these criteria, elections in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore fall substantially short of being competitive, while elections in China, Laos, North Korea and Vietnam remain clearly noncompetitive.

The Quality of the Electoral Process

A second useful, though somewhat more subjective, way to assess and differentiate elections is by evaluating the quality of the electoral process. Quality is used here to mean the extent to which the electoral process provides an informed and involved electorate with a meaningful choice among candidates and parties representing competing programs and ideologies. Even more so than competitiveness, electoral quality is a relative rather than an absolute standard. The greater the involvement of the electorate, the broader the diversity of candidates and parties, the more differentiated the candidate and party programs and ideologies, the higher is the quality of the electoral process.

The distinction between competitiveness and quality can be an important one; for while it is impossible to hold a non-competitive election of high quality, it is possible to hold a competitive election of low quality. For example, all citizens may be legally entitled to participate in an election, but the cost of running for office or other nonlegal barriers (including gender-based obstacles) may effectively exclude significant sectors of society from participating in a meaningful way. An election may be fair and honest, but excessive personality or regionally based voting may diminish the value of the election as a contest between competing programs and ideologies. Or an election may be competitive, but the competition may be between rival political elites who represent no real choice.

The overall quality of an election, therefore, may be judged by assessing the following indicators: 1) the presence of nonlegal (*e.g.*, financial, gender-based or cultural) barriers to participation in elections—whether for candidates or for voters; 2) the ability of the citizenry to educate themselves about the candidates and issues, participate in campaigns or nonpartisan election-related activities and vote on election day; 3) the level of organization and competitiveness of political parties that represent distinctive policies or ideologies; 4) the presence of a nonviolent and issue-oriented election campaign; 5) the degree to which money influences the election outcome; and 6) the expediency and fairness of election dispute resolution.

Considered against these indicators, most elections in Asia are, at best, of moderate or mixed quality. Even in countries with highly competitive elections, the quality of those elections is often diminished by the prevalence of money and personalism, the weakness of political parties, and the limited participation of women. In the Philippines the problem used to be "guns, goons and gold;" now, with the spread of television, increasingly the problem is "celebrity" politics: movie stars and basketball players winning elections because of their high name recognition. South Koreans worry about the tendency of the electorate to vote along regional lines and the use of entertainment to sway voters. In India the concern is with the influence of "money and muscle." Clearly there is much room here for improvement in the quality of elections in Asia.

The Role of an Election in the Process of Democratization

A third important way of assessing and differentiating elections depends not on the character of the elections themselves as much as on their role in and significance to the process of democratization.

The level or stage of a country's democratic development has an important bearing on the electoral process and, in turn, on the election's effect on the democratization process. An election can be the catalyst to or the event responsible for the abrupt rejection of authoritarianism, as it was in the Philippines in 1986. Or it can mark the end of a significant transition away from authoritarianism, as in Bangladesh during 1990 and 1991. Or an election (or series

of elections) can prompt an incremental democratization process, as was the case in South Korea, Taiwan and Nepal.[3] In each of these countries, elections played a major role in the initial transition from an authoritarian or semidemocratic regime to a more democratic government.

Elections also play an important role in the complex and often difficult process of consolidating new democracies. In countries without a history of competitive elections, it can take several elections before all the political actors understand, accept and effectively participate in the electoral process. Successful subsequent elections—especially if they are of relatively high quality—significantly contribute to the process of consolidation by institutionalizing the electoral process and enhancing the legitimacy of democratic processes. Conversely, divisive, violent or disputed elections can seriously undermine democratic consolidation.

Finally, while the competitiveness of elections is rarely questioned in established democracies, the quality of elections in these countries is often in dispute. The quality of the electoral process is an important gauge of the vitality of democracy and of society in general.

C. Overview of Key Actors and Factors in Elections

The role of election monitoring organizations in Asia and the challenges they face can be understood only within the particular context in which election monitoring occurs. In Asia, as elsewhere, the context varies considerably from country to country and from election to election. There are important differences between elections in a presidential system and those conducted under various parliamentary models. Elections may be held during a period of relative political tranquility, or they may occur at a time of crisis or deadlock. They may be conducted by an incumbent or caretaker government. They may be a critical first step in an uncertain process of democratization, or they may be one of a number of

[3]In authoritarian countries, non- or semi-competitive elections may be used by reformist elements within a dominant party or within the only party to build a power base; or such elections may be used by local elites to assert their independence from the party or state.

political events that can either strengthen or weaken established democracies. They may be scheduled long in advance or may be called unexpectedly, and they may have long or short campaign periods. A contest may be between a dominant ruling party and one or more smaller opposition parties, between two parties of roughly equal strength or among multiple parties. Or opposition parties may opt to boycott. Finally, the independence, authority and competence of government election authorities vary greatly from country to country and over time.

Despite these variations, there are a number of common actors and factors that in one way or another shape the context within which election monitoring takes place. The key actors in almost all elections are the political contestants, the government, the electoral authority, the media and a variety of social groups. International actors may also play an important role in contributing to the quality and viability of elections within a country. As already suggested, these institutions may assume considerably different roles depending on the circumstances.

The Contestants

The contestants include individual candidates, political parties and partisan political groups. Their role in an election is to achieve victory for themselves, their candidate(s) and/or their party. Contestants are inherently partisan; if they were not, elections would not be competitive. Some of the more important variables affecting the behavior of contestants include the degree to which they honor the integrity of the electoral process and the rules governing the elections; the extent to which they are prepared to use violence, coercion and incendiary rhetoric to improve their chances of winning; the willingness and ability of the election authority to deter and punish illegal behavior; the number and relative size of political parties contesting the election; the strength and professionalism of the party organizations; and the relationship of the political parties (and other groups) to the government and to other key sectors (*e.g.*, business, military, labor).

The Government

The government conducting or overseeing the election may be an incumbent contesting the election, a "lame duck" or a

temporary caretaker administration. It may be neutral or covertly or overtly partisan, or some components of the government may be neutral while others are partisan. Other variables that determine how constructive a role the government will play in an election include the autonomy and professionalism of the bureaucracy; the willingness and ability of government officials to use government resources to support the ruling party; the extent of government ownership of the media; the commitment of the government to empower a neutral electoral authority; the independence and professionalism of the police and army; and the government's relationship with NGOs.

The Electoral Authority

All governments that conduct elections must establish an entity to administer those elections. While in some countries the responsibility for administering elections is lodged in a government ministry (*e.g.*, the Ministry of the Interior oversees the conduct of elections in Thailand) in many others the electoral authority takes the form of an independent or quasi-independent election commission. Depending on the country and the government in power, election commissions can be independent or controlled, powerful or weak, activist or passive, and well- or poorly managed and endowed.

The independence, authority and organizational capabilities of election commissions are typically a function of two closely related factors: politics and law. The influence of politics on the independence and power of electoral commissions occurs through the appointment process and through the allocation of the commission's budget. Politics and law meet in the electoral law. Election commissions must operate within the context of electoral law, which may or may not provide such commissions great discretionary powers. In some countries electoral laws are extremely detailed, thus reducing the scope of the election commission's authority; in others the laws grant the commission great latitude. Other important variables that affect the behavior of election commissions include the credibility and competence of election commission leaders; the attitude of the leaders toward independent monitoring organizations; the ability of typically understaffed election commissions to administer logistically complicated elections; and the legal

authority accorded election commissions to punish violations, adjudicate disputes and audit campaign spending.

The Media

In Asia, as elsewhere, the mass media play a major role in communicating information and shaping opinions. Throughout most of Asia, radio and television tend to be the most influential media. Perhaps not coincidentally, in many Asian countries most television stations and many radio stations and newspapers are owned by or affiliated with the government (including, in some countries, the military) and/or major political parties. In addition, the government may influence or control privately owned media through registration, press laws and advertising. Privately owned media may also be highly partisan, unprofessional or purely commercial.

How the media covers an election is of obvious importance to its conduct and outcome. While the fairness of coverage is important, so is the quality of the coverage and the media's role in educating voters. Some of the more important variables that determine the role of the media are the extent of government- or party-ownership and/or control; the concentration of private ownership; the degree of foreign media coverage; and the extent to which domestic journalists report accurately and fairly.

Social Groups

Although political parties are the primary contestants in elections, other social groups may influence the electoral process. Included among these groups are business and professional associations, labor unions, civic groups and religious organizations. They may or may not choose to participate in an election. If these groups decide to involve themselves, they may play a partisan role by fielding their own candidates or by supporting particular candidates or political parties. Or they may assume a nonpartisan role and engage formally or informally in voter education and election monitoring. Other variables that influence the role of these groups include their commitment to competitive elections; their ties, if any, to political parties; and the size, diversity, activism and geographic scope of their membership.

International Actors and Influences

Finally, international actors and influences may play an important role in elections. Governments throughout the world increasingly feel the impact of international influences, including foreign media attention, pressure from foreign governments and providers of foreign aid, and the "demonstration effect" of political liberalization and democratization in other countries. A need for a country's international legitimacy often greatly influences the shape of political liberalization.

Notwithstanding some lingering concerns about outside interference, international election observation has gained acceptance around the world. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, for example, issued a declaration in June 1990 requiring all member states to accept the presence of international observers for national elections.[4] The U.N. General Assembly adopted a resolution in December 1991 endorsing the practice of election observing, including monitoring by domestic nongovernmental organizations.[5]

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[4]The June 1990 document adopted by the 34 counties party to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) process reflects the contemporary attitude toward observer efforts:

> The participating States consider that the presence of observers, both foreign and domestic, can enhance the electoral process for States in which elections are taking place. They therefore invite observers from any other CSCE participating States and any appropriate private institutions and organizations who may wish to do so to observe the course of their national election proceedings, to the extent provided by law. They also will endeavor to facilitate similar access for elections proceedings held below the national level. Such observers will undertake not to interfere in the electoral proceedings (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension* [CSCE, 1990], sec.1, par.8).

[5]Report of the U.N. Secretary-General, *Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections*, U.N. Doc. A/46/609 (November 19, 1991).

Multilateral organizations and outside nongovernmental organizations are now invited to observe elections in other countries on an almost routine basis. But while international actors certainly play a role, it is citizens themselves who ultimately determine the political course of their country. Across Asia, as this report will demonstrate, citizens are increasingly shaping the political process by organizing themselves into civic groups to monitor elections and the performance of their elected officials.

Chapter 3

Domestic Election Monitoring in Asia

Beginning in 1984, the National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) demonstrated to Filipinos that a well-trained and organized domestic election monitoring operation could play a major role in safeguarding the fairness and honesty of their elections. During the critical "snap" presidential election in February 1986, NAMFREL successfully carried out a massive nationwide effort to combat and expose election fraud. NAMFREL's achievement dramatically altered the then-widely held perspective that independent domestic election observing was inappropriate or ineffectual. NAMFREL quickly became the inspiration and model for numerous other election-monitoring efforts in Asia and around the world.

A. The Advent of Asian Election-Monitoring Organizations (EMOs)

The advent of NAMFREL and other election monitoring organizations is a reflection of three closely related trends in much of Asia: 1) the growth in the number and sophistication of nongovernmental organizations and other civil society groups; 2) the partial or total political liberalization that has occurred in the region;

and 3) the increased availability of moral, technical and financial support from foreign NGOs, foundations and governments.[6]

The increasing pluralism and political openness of almost all Asian societies has fostered the creation and growth of NGOs working in, among other areas, human rights, women's issues, consumer rights and economic justice. The number, size, sophistication and influence of NGOs vary considerably from country to country, as does the relationship between governments and NGOs. The NGO sectors in Bangladesh, India and the Philippines are among the largest and most vital in the world. There has been rapid growth of NGOs in Nepal, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand.

Asian elections, as noted, typically have been either the catalyst for or a crucial part of a rapid political transition. Elections may also provide the mechanism through which incremental democratization occurs. In all cases, competitive elections have provided opportunities for existing political and civic groups to expand their missions and memberships and for new groups to emerge. Given the importance of the elections held in Asia during the last decade, it is not surprising that a number of NGOs would seek to play an important role by monitoring those elections.

A variety of Asian NGOs have become involved in election monitoring. In a few instances NGOs have been created exclusively to monitor elections, but in many other instances pre-existing NGOs have joined together in either formal coalitions or informal networks for election monitoring. When a coalition is formed, the members of the coalition may establish a formal "umbrella organization" (as in the case of NAMFREL), or they may retain their own institutional identities.

The origins, configurations and sizes of Asia's election monitoring organizations vary greatly. In the Philippines,

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[6]This report refers to nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs, in the broadest possible sense—any organization, coalition or group of individuals that is private or not controlled by a government—rather than in any technical or legally defined sense. Unless the context indicates otherwise, the NGOs cited in this report are domestic NGOs or organizations within a given Asian country, rather than multinational or international non-governmental organizations.

NAMFREL began as an umbrella organization that comprised more than 100 member groups. In recent years the Catholic Church has established its own pollwatching network, which continues to work closely with NAMFREL. In South Korea in 1991, the Citizens' Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (CCCFE) brought together some 60 national NGOs, led by the Citizen's Coalition for Economic Justice and the YMCA. In Bangladesh, also in 1991, the Bangladesh Movement for Fair Elections (BMNA) constituted an umbrella organization that claimed a large number of nongovernmental, human rights, professional and trade organizations under its banner. Other groups—such as the Coordinating Council on Human Rights in Bangladesh (CCHRB), a coalition of organizations that had conducted pollwatching during the March 1990 local elections—organized their own pollwatching efforts and did not work with BMNA. For the February 1996 national elections in Bangladesh, more than 100 NGOs and similar organizations have formed the Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA).

In Thailand, the caretaker government actually supported the formation of an independent organization, PollWatch, to monitor the 1992 elections. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, a private human rights group, organized a network of pollwatchers for the country's 1993 parliamentary elections. Five human rights and civic organizations in Nepal, with further cooperation from nearly two dozen more domestic groups, banded together to create the National Election Observation Committee (NEOC) for the 1994 national elections. In Sri Lanka, an alliance of 21 groups called the Organization for Human Rights in Sri Lanka, after monitoring provincial council elections in May 1993, formed the Movement for Free and Fair Elections (MFFE) to monitor the parliamentary elections in August 1994. Nearly 40 additional groups ultimately joined the MFFE, which coordinated its election monitoring efforts with the Peoples Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL), an existing election-monitoring organization.

Some of these election monitoring organizations enjoy large memberships and centralized structures; others are much smaller and less centralized. Some are permanent or semi-permanent; others mobilize only for elections. Some have received government or foreign funding; others have drawn entirely on domestic private resources.

Despite these differences, almost all of these EMOs believe that election monitoring is a vehicle to encourage continuing civic participation. According to Wimal Fernando, one of the leaders of the 1994 election monitoring effort in Sri Lanka, "monitoring elections is a means to a larger end, namely, to build a broad network of people and organizations to address issues of national importance after elections." Chaiyan Rajchagool of Thailand's PollWatch agrees: "The monitoring effort is an opportunity to learn how the state machinery works and then to improve it . . . It also leads to a better understanding of the electoral system, which in turn can be used to press for electoral reforms."

As domestic election monitoring has expanded in Asia, it has grown more sophisticated, organized and influential. As already suggested, the roles that these institutions may play vary considerably from country to country and over time. It is a form of political organization that will undoubtedly adapt to meet future challenges, as millions of citizens become accustomed to the notion that it is they who command the political system.

B. Challenges and Responses

Election monitoring requires great courage, commitment, political sophistication and organizational skill. Effective election monitoring embraces a broad mandate that begins with efforts to ensure the fairness of election laws and procedures, and concludes with monitoring the resolution of electoral complaints.

This section describes specific Asian experiences with the various elements of election monitoring. It draws primarily on the experiences of groups represented at the NAMFREL/NDI conference in Manila and secondarily on other documentary materials. It moves sequentially from pre-election activities to balloting, from counting and tabulating of results to post-election activities. It outlines the key aspects of these tasks, identifies challenges faced by Asian election monitoring organizations and describes the approaches they have adopted to meet these challenges.

The Pre-election Period

What does or does not happen in the period before election day—that is, during the pre-election period—may be critical to the outcome of an election. This point is underscored in a report

prepared by the Movement for Free and Fair Elections (MFFE) on the 1994 election in Sri Lanka:

> What happened on election day was largely a function of what had taken place on the days preceding it—during the course of the campaign. Who ultimately was allowed to vote was a function of many things, for example how postal voting was handled, and how effectively arrangements were made for displaced voters to vote. Who actually came out to vote was affected by how effectively campaigns were able to communicate their message and by campaign violence. Which candidates and parties got the largest votes was affected by the quality of the campaigns, what resources were available to parties and candidates to carry out their campaigns, what voters believed to be the most important issues facing Sri Lanka and which party would deal with them best, and by campaign violence. Thus the ultimate outcome on [election day] was shaped to a great extent by activities which took place during the months leading up to election day.[7]

For EMOs, the pre-election period begins either well before scheduled elections or whenever elections are announced or anticipated. Thus, the pre-election period may be significantly longer than the official campaign period or, in the case of quickly called elections, it may be compressed into the few weeks allotted for campaigning. While elections in presidential systems are typically scheduled on specified dates according to constitutional requirements, elections in parliamentary systems may be called on relatively short notice.

Regardless of its length, the pre-election period is probably the most demanding phase of election monitoring. During this period, election monitoring organizations typically engage in the following activities: reviewing, assessing and, if necessary, pressing for the revision of the electoral law, regulations and procedures;

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[7]Movement for Free and Fair Elections, *Interim Report on the Sri Lankan Parliamentary Elections of August 16th 1994*, (Colombo, Sri Lanka: MFFE, 1994), p. 18 (hereafter cited as *Sri Lankan Elections*).

monitoring voter registration; conducting voter education; monitoring campaign-related violence, intimidation and coercion; documenting and assessing the fairness and accuracy of media coverage; and tracking the use of government resources and campaign expenditures.

Given the number and complexity of these tasks, the pre-election period presents major challenges to EMOs—especially if the campaign period is either very short or very long. The 1986 election in the Philippines was called with little notice, which made NAMFREL's task particularly difficult. Similarly, the July 1995 elections in Thailand were called only six weeks in advance, which presented tremendous challenges to activists seeking to reanimate the PollWatch network. However, long-anticipated elections, such as those scheduled in Bangladesh, present their own problems. Civic leaders, in these cases, must motivate organizations and individuals to participate and to sustain their enthusiasm and energy over a significant period of time.

What follows is a brief discussion of each of the major aspects of pre-election monitoring with illustrative examples from the experience of Asian EMOs.

- **Reviewing and revising the electoral law.** The legal framework that is established for an election (*e.g.*, laws, regulations and administrative procedures) significantly affects the entire electoral process. Collectively, the body of electoral law and regulations is the single greatest determinant of who competes, who votes, the character of campaigns, the amount of money that is spent, the honesty and accuracy of counting and tabulating, and the fairness of dispute resolution.

Equally important for EMOs are any provisions regarding the rights and restrictions of independent election monitors. In some Asian countries the election law contains provisions explicitly pertaining to election monitoring; in most cases there is no mention of it. In the Philippines and South Korea, the electoral law provides for independent and nonpartisan monitoring. In Taiwan and Indonesia, electoral laws permit political parties to field observers but prohibit independent citizens groups from mounting an election observation effort. South Asia election laws usually provide electoral authorities with the discretion to determine who should have access to the polls.

It is critical, therefore, that EMOs carefully review the laws, regulations and procedures governing an election; assess their fairness and appropriateness; and advocate any changes deemed necessary. A well-publicized review of electoral laws also affords the public and the media an opportunity to become better informed about a country's electoral process.

A number of Asian EMOs have reviewed their countries' electoral frameworks and proposed modifications. These include, among others, NAMFREL in the Philippines, the Citizen's Coalition for Economic Justice (CCEJ) in South Korea, The Women's Action Forum and Human Rights Commission in Pakistan, and several organizations in Bangladesh.

- **Ensuring accurate and comprehensive voter registration.** Voter registration is used to identify eligible voters and to disallow ineligible persons from voting. It also prevents people from voting more than once or in the wrong location. Thus, the accuracy and credibility of the voter registration process is critical to the integrity of the electoral process overall.

In Asia, eligibility to vote is determined typically on the basis of either: 1) census registration or a national registry, which is an automatic or continuing form of registration; or 2) active registration, in which a voter establishes his or her identity and eligibility to vote by affirmatively registering to vote. Regardless of the system used, compiling and maintaining an accurate and comprehensive list of eligible voters represents a major administrative undertaking, and the magnitude and complexity of the process make it vulnerable to error and manipulation. In Asia, among the most common problems with voter registration are padding voters lists; intentional or unintentional disenfranchisement; excluding women and minority groups; and issuing false or inaccurate voter ID cards.

Depending on the magnitude of these problems, the effect on an election can be significant. For example, in the Philippines in 1986 the Marcos government successfully used its control over the compilation and maintenance of voter lists to subvert the election. On election day some 3 million registered voters in areas deemed to be anti-Marcos could not find their names on the voter lists because the lists had been altered. Serious problems with registration have also marred elections in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan.

Ensuring the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the voter registration process presents a particularly difficult challenge for Asian EMOs because registration often occurs before they are organized or active. In South Asia voter registration is a continuing and automatic process, and most South Asian countries issue national identification cards. Such systems benefit from simplicity and convenience, and provide equitable access to the polls, but they also hamper efforts to monitor the registration process. There are no simple solutions. EMOs must try to organize themselves quickly enough to review voter registration procedures and updates, and to check for and correct anomalies. They must also attempt to develop the capacity for statistical analysis that can help assess the accuracy of voter registration lists.

- **Voter education.** The immediate goal of voter education is to ensure that citizens understand the importance of voting, comprehend their voting rights, recognize voting procedures and are knowledgeable enough to make informed choices. In addition, voter education can be part of a larger process of educating people about their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

The need for voter education in Asia and the challenge of providing it are equally great. In many Asian countries voting behavior is still heavily influenced by regional, ethnic or religious affiliations; by traditional patron-client ties; or by gender-related factors. In a number of countries pervasive poverty compels voters to sell their votes for money, jobs, small favors and protection. And in those Asian countries undergoing democratic transitions there is a lack of familiarity with the basic tenets of competitive elections and democratic government. In Cambodia, for example, a special effort had to be undertaken to convince voters of the secrecy of their ballot. These problems, individually or in combination, have the potential to seriously undermine the value of elections as expressions of the people's will.

There are no quick or easy solutions to these problems. The influences of poverty, religion, tradition, family and peer pressure can be difficult to overcome. Very low literacy (especially among women), large rural populations and scant media penetration in a number of Asian countries create additional challenges.

To overcome these obstacles voter education efforts in Asia need to be simple, sensitive to the interests of the target audience and attention-grabbing. The most common types of voter education activities include sponsoring community meetings and candidate forums; producing voter education kits; publishing pamphlets and comic books; and placing informational advertisements in the media. Other less traditional approaches include presenting skits and plays; conducting role-playing exercises; and producing videos and radio programs.

Ensuring a well-informed electorate is an important component of competitive, high-quality elections. Moreover, voter education efforts can also be used to recruit volunteers for election monitoring. For these reasons, sponsoring or participating in voter education efforts can be an extremely worthwhile undertaking for EMOs. But three cautionary points regarding voter education need to be raised. First, mounting a major voter education effort may divert scarce resources from other aspects of election monitoring. Second, voter education efforts that focus too heavily on the qualifications of candidates or that use what arguably may be subjective criteria for evaluating candidates and parties run the risk of being labeled partisan. And third, voter education activities that have a strong religious dimension may be of limited appeal and may compromise the nonpartisan image of an EMO.

- **Monitoring and controlling violence and coercion.** The use of physical violence, intimidation and coercion to influence the outcome of an election is perhaps the most blatant perversion of the electoral process and of democratic values. Regrettably, to a greater or lesser degree, violence and coercion remain fixtures in elections in a number of Asian countries. Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand, among others, have a history of election-related violence. In these countries, the right of citizens to participate freely and safely in the process, and to vote in elections is undermined by the threat and reality of physical violence, coercive cultural and social pressures (*e.g.*, pressure felt by women or minority groups in some societies), or the threat of physical or financial retribution. Violence, intimidation and coercion may be used by political partisans or by agents of the government (*e.g.*, officials, police and security forces) against candidates, their supporters, voters and election monitors. These actions may deter candidates from campaigning, force citizens to

vote for certain candidates, prevent citizens from voting or impede the reporting of other forms of fraud.

An MFFE report on the 1994 election in Sri Lanka aptly describes the deleterious effects of violence on elections:

> . . . first, by murdering and disabling campaign workers it deprives the electorate of a full and robust campaign where they are able to hear all points of view and are exposed to the platforms and candidates of all the parties; second, fear of violence certainly lowers popular participation in party campaign activities; third, selective violence prevents certain candidates and parties from effectively communicating their points of view to the electorate; finally, in the face of serious and prolonged pre-election day violence and intimidation it is almost a certainty that some voters concluded that voting was simply too dangerous to risk.[8]

The causes of electoral violence and coercion in Asia are complex and deserve a more extensive discussion than is possible here. In many cases violence is the product of the excessive partisanship described earlier. In some countries electoral violence grows out of longstanding religious and ethnic rivalries and insecurities. In others violence stems from fierce competition among rival political families and their followers. In a few countries it is an outgrowth of genuine ideological or class conflict. Coercion is most pervasive in countries where economic and political power are concentrated in the hands of a few. Hence, large segments of society are vulnerable to the desires and dictates of a powerful elite. In almost all countries violence and coercion continue to persist in the face of weak judicial systems and political leadership unwilling to impose serious sanctions or punish perpetrators.

Election monitoring organizations can help to discourage election-related violence, coercion and intimidation by investigating reported incidences of each; reporting their findings to the election authorities and public; and monitoring the response of authorities to

[8] *Sri Lankan Elections*, p. 12.

must immediately collect results and report from identified polling sites or "sample points." These requirements place a premium on the logistical capabilities of EMOs, which often work in environments with less-than-perfect communications and transportation infrastructures.

It also is essential that the PVT be adequately explained to the government, the parties, the media and the public. It is important that each understands the process and how to interpret the results.

The Post-election Period

The electoral process does not conclude on election day. The process of counting and tabulating the vote may take days or weeks (as was the case in the Philippines in 1992). Nor does the process necessarily conclude with the proclamation of a winner (or winners). The fairness of an election and/or the accuracy of results may be challenged by contestants or other groups. And if an incumbent government loses, it may look for a pretext to nullify or adjust the results.

The days immediately following an election may be rife with uncertainty and controversy caused by a close race, delays in the release of election results or the release of incomplete results, charges of large-scale electoral fraud, significant unresolved challenges pending in the complaint system, and/or speculation about the reaction of losers once the outcome is announced. These disputes may prompt calls for recounts or new elections, highly partisan acts by the incumbent government, mass demonstrations and violence. For example, during the protracted three-week vote tabulation period for the 1992 presidential election in the Philippines, the candidate in second place, Miriam Defensor Santiago, staged rallies and a short-lived hunger strike to protest what she alleged was widespread cheating in the vote count.

In such a highly charged environment, the activities of EMOs may play an important role in helping to diminish uncertainty and controversy. EMOs can play a positive role by releasing careful preliminary assessments of the accuracy of the election results (if they have sufficient information from a parallel vote tabulation or other means); by working with the media to quell rumors and speculation; by scrutinizing the behavior of the election commission

of financial and other resources is one of the most subversive forms. Unfair access to money or other resources (*e.g.*, media, transportation and government benefits) or the unchecked expenditure of money diminishes both the competitiveness and the quality of elections. Widespread vote buying (and selling) perverts the electoral process by turning voting into a commercial transaction rather than an exercise in citizenship.

Across most of Asia unfair access to and use of financial and nonfinancial resources remain the most significant challenges to fair elections. Three distinct problems are involved: 1) the absence of meaningful controls on campaign spending; 2) legal but unfair limitations on campaign spending; and 3) the illegal and preferential use of government resources to benefit a particular candidate or political party.

The access to and expenditure of private funds by candidates and parties are perpetual issues in Asian elections. Money has always been an important factor in elections, but both the cost of running for office and the availability of campaign financing have mushroomed in Asia in recent years. Increases in the cost of running for office seem to be linked to a reliance on expensive media-based campaigns and the disintegration of traditional patron-client ties. The proliferation of private sources of campaign financing stems from the region's rapid economic expansion, the corresponding growth of large corporations, and closer ties between political parties and large corporations in a number of Asian countries. As a result, Asian elections are increasingly awash with money.

Common symptoms of money driven elections are vote buying and vote selling, which remain problems in many Asian countries. Vote buying is first and foremost a product of poverty and skewed income distribution, but cultural and social norms, such as notions of reciprocity and patron-client relationships, reinforce the problem.

In almost all Asian countries electoral laws establish a limit on permissible campaign expenditures. However, in many countries the ability of the election commission to exercise oversight of campaign expenditures is limited, and the penalties for exceeding the legal limits are often lenient. Moreover, laws restricting campaign expenditures may be fair, or they may benefit incumbents

or other prominent candidates by depriving lesser-known candidates of the financing needed to increase their visibility, which is particularly true for regulations that restrict advertising in the mass media.

The partisan use of government resources during elections is also an issue almost everywhere in Asia. It is not uncommon for incumbent government officials and civil servants to allow the ruling political party to use government vehicles, offices and equipment for campaign purposes. Funds from government programs may be diverted for "pork barrel" projects, patronage and other partisan political purposes. And, as the following description of the 1994 election in Sri Lanka from the MFFE suggests, the government may turn a blind eye to election-related violence:

> Throughout the election campaign there were widespread reports of state personnel, vehicles and equipment being put to partisan purposes . . . From state bank employees to police, from Mahaweli Authority vehicles to government milk lorries, electioneering was intentionally confused with state business. . . Most disturbing were the repeated incidents of officials, candidates, state employees and police utilizing their positions and state resources to perpetrate campaign violence or election law violations. If elected and appointed officials view violence as just another campaign tactic, how can they expect the population at large to embrace the view that political differences can be settled parliamentarily without resort to violence?[10]

There are a number of ways that EMOs can address these issues. EMOs can assess the fairness of restrictions on contributions and spending, monitor the election commission's oversight of finance and spending laws, monitor the use of government resources and mount campaigns against vote buying. On the local level EMOs can actively try to discourage vote buying. In Thailand, for example, PollWatch's efforts have focused on monitoring activities on the night before the elections, when money typically is distributed. After elections, EMOs can attempt to determine if required

[10]*Sri Lankan Elections*, p. 13.

financial reports are complete and accurate, and meet prescribed deadlines.

- **Monitoring the media.** Increasingly, the media—radio and television in particular—are becoming the most important means of reaching voters and shaping their views of candidates and issues. Moreover, the media can influence public perceptions of the likely success of the competing candidates and political parties; and public perception in turn can affect the ability of candidates and parties to recruit volunteers, secure endorsements and receive funding. Therefore, for elections to be fair, candidates and political parties must be accorded equal access to and fair treatment by the media. The media can also affect the quality of elections. The media can deny access to or coverage of specific parties or candidates. Or it can cover certain candidates in an unfair or highly partisan way. The media may also choose to treat elections as "horse races" rather than as contests among competing parties and programs, and they may or may not assume the responsibility of helping to educate voters.

As already noted, in many Asian countries the government, the dominant political party or the military often owns or controls the broadcast media, which may bias coverage. Privately owned media may also be highly partisan or, for commercial reasons, may not devote adequate time to news and public affairs. Even when not subjected to outright government control, as in some Asian countries, privately owned media is vulnerable to government influence because of significant revenue realized from government advertising or because of the presumption that the government can endanger the media's profitability through other means.

In response, some Asian EMOs have begun to engage in the four aspects of media monitoring: 1) ensuring that the government is neither directly nor indirectly censoring the media; 2) verifying equal access for all contestants; 3) ensuring fair coverage of contestants and election issues; and 4) encouraging the media's contribution to voter education. In Sri Lanka, for example, MFFE coordinated its media monitoring effort with journalists associated with the Free Media Movement. They protested when the media circulated blatant government propaganda and fanned racial animosity. In Nepal, Media Watch and human rights groups pressured the government-owned television station to provide

balanced coverage. In Taiwan, university-based programs to monitor television coverage of the campaign appeared to lead to broader and more balanced coverage.

Election Day: Monitoring, Voting and Counting

Election day is the culmination, though not the conclusion, of the electoral process. It is the day(s) when votes are cast, counted and tabulated. For election monitors, election-day duties include pollwatching; providing voter assistance; monitoring the counting and tabulation; and, in some cases, conducting a parallel or independent vote tabulation. It is the day when all planning and organization are put to the test.

- **Pollwatching.** Once the campaigning is over, elections basically boil down to casting and counting ballots. Both of these activities typically occur at polling places. Both are vulnerable to error and fraud. The goals of pollwatching, then, are twofold: first, to ensure that the process of voting is accessible, orderly, and free of fraud and intimidation; and second, to guarantee an accurate and honest counting process. The second objective is as important as the first, and sometimes more so. There can be free and orderly voting, accompanied by cheating in the counting and/or tabulation of the vote.

Threats to the integrity of the balloting process include any procedures, actions or conditions that deter eligible voters from casting their ballot; instances where registered voters attempt to vote more than once; attempts by unregistered people to vote; efforts to compromise the secrecy of the ballot; illegal enticements to influence how people vote; and other schemes to rig the voting. Problems that arise in counting and tabulating the vote include loss or substitution of ballot boxes; errors or fraud in the process of validating and counting ballots; inaccurate, incomplete or fraudulent ballot counts and documentation; transmission of erroneous or fraudulent polling-place tallies to the tabulation centers; and inaccurate, incomplete or fraudulent tabulation of tallies.

As anyone who has ever participated in or observed an election in a developing country knows, voting and counting often take place in locations that may suffer from inefficient or chaotic administrative conditions; shortages of basic equipment (*e.g.*, paper and writing utensils); an absence of electricity; and little or no

protection by the police and/or other security forces. In areas where a single political party or powerful family dominates, nonpartisan pollwatchers may be viewed as a threat and treated accordingly. In areas where there is fierce competition among rival parties or families, pollwatchers may find themselves caught in the cross-fire, literally as well as figuratively.

These obstacles begin to suggest the complexities and demands (and potential dangers) inherent in undertaking a comprehensive pollwatching effort. It requires volunteers who are dedicated and highly motivated, but who are also well trained and disciplined.

Pollwatching also requires a degree of innovation and flexibility. In many Asian countries independent monitoring organizations have routinely been denied formal permission to enter polling places. However, much pollwatching can be undertaken without credentials. Some alternative approaches include working with political party monitors; involving members of major social organizations (*e.g.*, Grameen bank borrowers in Bangladesh); conducting extensive exit interviews; and using voter education to "make every voter a monitor."

Monitoring voting and counting in a national election is a huge logistical undertaking that may involve tens of thousands of volunteers or more. In the Philippines there are some 100,000 polling places scattered across the archipelago. To monitor the 1986 national election comprehensively, NAMFREL determined that it would need at least 500,000 volunteers. In addition to individuals to watch the polling places, volunteers were recruited to provide support services—particularly transportation and communications—for the monitors. Thus, successful pollwatching demands excellent organization and logistics. This capacity can be very difficult to develop in large, geographically fragmented countries or in countries with poor and remote rural areas. The ability to use existing nationwide institutions or networks can be critical to overcoming such challenges. NAMFREL was able to draw upon the national networks of the Catholic Church and major corporations to field its army of volunteers.[11]

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[11]In Thailand, PollWatch sought to enlist some 25,000 volunteer pollwatchers in 1993. However, unlike NAMFREL, PollWatch did not have a national institution from which it could draw. As a result, it had

- **Parallel vote tabulation.** A parallel vote tabulation (PVT), also referred to as a "quick count" or an "independent vote tabulation," is a method for monitoring and independently verifying the process of counting ballots in an election. It is parallel to, and independent of, the official vote counting process. It focuses on the tabulation or summation of actual vote counts conducted by election officials. A PVT verifies the accuracy of results reported by electoral authorities as the results are transmitted from the local to the central levels of election administration—a PVT does not rely on the techniques of exit polling. It can be based on a statistically valid random sampling or on a comprehensive effort that collects and tabulates the results from all or nearly all voting sites.

Properly implemented, a PVT can help to deter fraud by increasing the likelihood that manipulation during the tabulation process will be discovered. It can also suggest a true vote count when fraud is attempted. And finally, it can enhance confidence in and acceptance of official results if they are consistent with the PVT. Conversely, if improperly executed or inexpertly interpreted, a PVT can generate considerable confusion and controversy.

The seminal PVT effort in Asia was NAMFREL's Operation Quick Count in 1986. NAMFREL sought to compile accurate election results swiftly in order to deter official tampering with the tabulation process. The organization, whose volunteers covered approximately 70 percent of the country's 95,000 polling sites during the 1986 election, also intended to use the quick count to expose fraud whenever it may occur. NAMFREL's PVT, which revealed Aquino's lead over Marcos, ultimately proved more credible among the Filipino public, the international community and leading elements of the Philippine military than the official results indicating a Marcos victory.[12]

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difficulty generating the needed numbers of volunteers and adequately training volunteers. PollWatch also experienced trouble finding participating organizations. Many social organizations were state-controlled, while other NGOs were suspicious of PollWatch because PollWatch was created and partially funded by the interim government. The resulting uneven coverage around the country led to criticism of PollWatch by some of the contending political parties.

[12]This discussion of NAMFREL's PVT is based on the report of Larry Garber and Glenn Cowan, "The Virtues of Parallel Vote Tabulations," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 4, no. 2 (April 1993), p. 99; National

Few other EMOs in Asia have made as rigorous attempts to conduct PVTs. As part of its monitoring of by-elections, the Study and Research Group on Democracy and Socio-Economic Development (SRG) in Bangladesh, which is discussed in Chapter 5, has collected and reported results. Working through the Fair Election Monitoring Alliance, SRG had planned an independent vote tabulation of results in parliamentary elections in Bangladesh scheduled for February 1996, until the opposition's plans to boycott the elections and other factors made the independent count irrelevant and impractical.

While NAMFREL and related organizations in the Philippines have attempted to conduct comprehensive quick counts for national elections, PVTs in most countries entail analyzing a statistically significant sample of polling site results. Typically the electoral districts are stratified according to important demographic criteria, such as whether they are rural or urban and whether they include high proportions of minority voters. After stratification, a random sample of polling sites is drawn. Thus, one or more qualified demographers and/or statisticians is critically important to an EMO's ability to conduct a reliable and credible PVT. If the sample is properly drawn and the sample points are actually collected and reported, the PVT will be accurate within a statistically determined margin of error.

Establishing an adequate communications system presents perhaps the greatest challenge of implementing a large-scale PVT. To protect the security of the operation, the sample is generally drawn shortly before election day and pollwatchers are informed as late as possible of the specific polling sites where results are to be collected. Likewise, as soon as ballots are counted, pollwatchers

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Democratic Institute for International Affairs, *Reforming the Philippine Electoral Process: Developments 1986-88* (Washington, D.C.: NDI, 1991). Citing errors in the initial results of NAMFREL's quick count of the 1987 legislative elections, opposition leader Juan Ponce Enrile alleged that the NAMFREL count was fraudulent. NAMFREL admitted errors and submitted its results to independent review. NAMFREL's count ultimately reinforced the official results of the Commission on Elections. NAMFREL conducted quick counts for subsequent national elections in the Philippines, including congressional elections in May 1995.

must immediately collect results and report from identified polling sites or "sample points." These requirements place a premium on the logistical capabilities of EMOs, which often work in environments with less-than-perfect communications and transportation infrastructures.

It also is essential that the PVT be adequately explained to the government, the parties, the media and the public. It is important that each understands the process and how to interpret the results.

The Post-election Period

The electoral process does not conclude on election day. The process of counting and tabulating the vote may take days or weeks (as was the case in the Philippines in 1992). Nor does the process necessarily conclude with the proclamation of a winner (or winners). The fairness of an election and/or the accuracy of results may be challenged by contestants or other groups. And if an incumbent government loses, it may look for a pretext to nullify or adjust the results.

The days immediately following an election may be rife with uncertainty and controversy caused by a close race, delays in the release of election results or the release of incomplete results, charges of large-scale electoral fraud, significant unresolved challenges pending in the complaint system, and/or speculation about the reaction of losers once the outcome is announced. These disputes may prompt calls for recounts or new elections, highly partisan acts by the incumbent government, mass demonstrations and violence. For example, during the protracted three-week vote tabulation period for the 1992 presidential election in the Philippines, the candidate in second place, Miriam Defensor Santiago, staged rallies and a short-lived hunger strike to protest what she alleged was widespread cheating in the vote count.

In such a highly charged environment, the activities of EMOs may play an important role in helping to diminish uncertainty and controversy. EMOs can play a positive role by releasing careful preliminary assessments of the accuracy of the election results (if they have sufficient information from a parallel vote tabulation or other means); by working with the media to quell rumors and speculation; by scrutinizing the behavior of the election commission

and any other government agencies responsible for counting and tabulating the vote; and by engaging in dialogue with the representatives of key institutions (including the political parties, the military, the judiciary and the media).

In elections where the outcome is quickly determined and widely accepted, the post-election period may involve little more than the adjudication of specific election disputes and the review of reports on campaign expenditures. In such situations, the activities of EMOs may be limited to monitoring the speed and fairness of the dispute resolution process and preparing a final report or reports on the completed electoral process, which might include a review and analysis of candidate and party campaign expenditure reports.

- **Monitoring dispute resolution.** Every election inevitably produces at least some disputed results and complaints of election code violations. Each individual grievance is important in its own right; collectively they may or may not affect the overall outcome of a national election. The manner in which these disputes are resolved not only helps determine the election outcome, it influences public confidence in the election code during future polling.

Each country's election laws establish the process for reviewing and adjudicating disputes. The election law in Pakistan, for example, provides four mechanisms for parties or candidates seeking redress for alleged improprieties, depending on the point in the process during which such complaints are made: 1) pre-election complaints are filed with the election commission; 2) election-day challenges are presented to the officials in charge, the presiding or returning officers; 3) post-election complaints are filed with the election commission; and 4) formal election petitions are filed with the election commission and then referred to special election tribunals. The election commission and the election tribunals have the authority, if the evidence warrants, to invalidate results in a given constituency, to declare a new winner, or to order recounting or repolling.

Unfortunately, procedures for lodging and adjudicating election-related complaints are typically underdeveloped or too slow to be able to offer meaningful relief. In the Philippines, it may take the Commission on Elections years to review and issue decisions on contested election results, which can then be appealed. As a result, there are numerous examples of reversals of election results issued

weeks before the term of office expires. In Thailand, PollWatch has tried to take alleged violators to court. However, to the organization's chagrin, it has discovered that "the procedure is cumbersome and it is almost impossible to get the support of the provincial governor which is required for prosecution."

The process of electoral dispute resolution in most Asian countries is, to a greater or lesser degree, a function of the fairness and speed of the judicial system. Thus, there are no simple solutions to the problems of indifference and delay. Asian EMOs can monitor the progress of significant electoral disputes and can also encourage the media to pay attention to unresolved disputes.

- **Reporting.** With the conclusion of the election process, it is important for EMOs to evaluate the process and their role in it. This typically is done by preparing and issuing a final report (or reports) on the conduct and the outcome of the election. This account may also include analyses of campaign financing and electoral dispute resolution, and recommendations for electoral reforms.

A final report (or reports) assessing the fairness and quality of the completed election is important for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, these reports can significantly influence the public's confidence in the legitimacy of the election. Second, they can affect subsequent efforts to promote electoral reforms. In Bangladesh, for example, SRG monitored and produced a report on a model local election held in April 1994. The report highlighted the positive effects of a variety of recently adopted electoral reforms and provided a thoughtful assessment of their benefits and prospects for replication on a larger scale. Third, final reports are tangible products that may enable the government, political parties, the media and the public to assess the neutrality and credibility of an EMO. Finally, they contribute to a body of information and analysis that is vital to monitoring future elections.

The experience of a recently completed election, if thoroughly documented and effectively explained to politicians, the media and the public, can provide the momentum needed to mount a successful campaign for electoral reform. It is necessary to begin this effort well in advance of the next election, particularly if legislation is required. Thus, the conclusion of one election becomes the

beginning of the next. The goal is to build upon the lessons learned from each election cycle to improve the competitiveness and quality of the electoral process.

Chapter 4

Between Elections: Electoral Reform, Civic Education and Government Oversight

Successfully conducted elections may produce a number of important outcomes. These include better informed and more involved citizens; clarification of the relative appeal and strength of political parties and other political organizations; new or reaffirmed political leadership; a clearer mandate with regard to policies; and increased legitimacy of democratic processes and institutions.

These are all significant potential consequences of elections, but elections alone do not ensure the success of democracy. For democracy to flourish, political and human rights must be respected, citizens must have access to channels through which to communicate their views to elected officials, and institutions of democratic governance must function effectively and accountably. Thus, the democratic promise embodied in elections ultimately is achieved or squandered by the actions of leaders, citizens and institutions in the months and years following an election.

This fact is well-known to most groups that have conducted election monitoring in Asia. Between elections, EMOs in a number of Asian countries remain involved in activities that promote citizen participation in democratic governance. These

activities include civic education, public policy advocacy and other government oversight initiatives, including monitoring the performance of government and elected officials.

Three factors explain the willingness and ability of Asian EMOs to participate in these activities. First, as noted earlier, there is a gradual but steady evolution of more open and participatory "civil societies" across much of Asia. This development has two basic elements: 1) increasingly influential, sophisticated and politically active NGOs; and 2) growing acceptance of NGO activity by a number of Asian governments.[13]

Second, many EMOs are coalitions of civic groups that have as their primary mission other social or political causes (*e.g.*, human rights, social development, women's issues). These NGOs become involved in election monitoring as an extension of their work in other areas. Between elections they return to pursuing their primary missions but, typically, having gained a better understanding of the political process as well as a broader network.

Third, the experience and contacts gained from election monitoring are both highly valuable and easily transferrable to other activities. The national coalitions and the educational skills developed for election monitoring can be adapted for ongoing civic education activities. The expertise and credibility established for election monitoring can be applied to efforts to promote electoral and other political reforms. The organizational skills and analytical capabilities cultivated during election monitoring can be employed to monitor the performance of elected officials. Finally, in addition to increasing the level of civic involvement, these activities also help to sustain organizations and networks between elections.

This section briefly describes some of the activities in which Asian EMOs (or their members) engage between elections. These include electoral reform; civic education and participation; and government oversight.

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[13]For example, the Civic Organizations Law in Taiwan, revised in the early 1980s, for the first time permitted NGOs to form broad social movements (as opposed to one-issue organizations). In the Philippines, the 1986 Constitution and the 1991 Local Government Code explicitly recognize the role of NGOs in governance.

A. Advocating Electoral Reform

As already noted, good electoral laws and an independent election authority are essential to open and democratic elections. Even in the absence of organized fraud, the competitiveness and quality of elections are shaped to a considerable degree by electoral laws and the willingness and ability of election authorities to implement them. It is necessary for election monitoring groups, therefore, to advocate sound electoral laws and an independent, nonpartisan election authority. Unfortunately, the results of these efforts have been decidedly mixed. The experience in the Philippines is illustrative.

In the Philippines, NAMFREL and other election monitoring NGOs formed the Congress for Electoral Reform (CER) to press national legislators to enact electoral reform legislation and to modernize and computerize the electoral process. Electoral reform has also been on the agenda of the government's National Unification Commission (NUC), which has engaged in negotiations with the various insurgent groups. Problems identified by the NUC Technical Committee on Electoral Reform included loopholes within the existing legal framework governing the electoral process; congressional inaction on certain constitutional provisions relating to elections; recurring problems with registration; ineffective electoral education; inadequate regulation of campaign expenditures; inaccurate and slow canvassing of results; an ineffective organizational structure within the Commission on Elections (COMELEC); and low morale among COMELEC personnel.

To address these problems, the NUC recommended a range of electoral reforms. These included adoption of a continuing system of registration; promotion of civic education to counter the politics of money and celebrity; computerization and simplification of ballot counting; enactment of absentee voting; adoption of a party list system for electing members of Congress; and a prohibition against family-based "political dynasties."

In November 1993 President Fidel V. Ramos strongly advocated the passage of an electoral reform bill, which his administration certified as "urgent" legislation. Despite a presidential endorsement, the legislation languished in Congress, whose members would be most affected by the reforms. In response, in late 1994 NAMFREL and other EMOs formed the People's

Movement for Electoral Reform to urge passage of a new electoral code, modernization of the electoral process and appointment of independent commissioners to the COMELEC. As of early 1995 the Philippine Congress had passed only one electoral reform proposal urged by NAMFREL; that legislation provided for partial party list representation beginning in 1998.

Election laws mean little in the absence of an independent, nonpartisan and competent election authority. The election authority must be willing and able to apply the electoral law fairly, to use sanctions (and the power of persuasion) to deter violations of the law, to competently administer the electoral process and to challenge any partisan elements of the government. Lack of confidence in the ability of authorities to fairly and effectively administer elections in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Thailand and Cambodia has prompted the installation of caretaker governments to administer elections. Conversely, in the 1992 elections in the Philippines, the COMELEC forcefully asserted its independence and authority and, by so doing, successfully managed a massive and potentially controversial electoral exercise.

The independence and strength of the election authority is influenced by a number of factors, including its history, the electoral law, the political environment, the attitude of the executive branch, the competence of electoral officials and the amount of resources available. And like any other aspect of government (especially politically significant components), the independence and strength of an election authority can wax and wane.

In the Philippines in recent years, EMOs grew apprehensive that new appointments to COMELEC would jeopardize its high level of independence. At issue had been the names of those whom President Ramos would appoint to replace COMELEC commissioners whose terms expired in late 1994 and early 1995. In 1994 the president made two appointments that critics considered to be partisan, and there was concern that he would do the same when the chairmanship and two additional commissioner positions became vacant. In response, the CER formed an 11-member selection committee, chaired by former COMELEC commissioner and NAMFREL organizer Haydee Yorac, to solicit and screen recommendations for commissioners. The movement widely publicized its selection criteria and the procedures for nominating and

reviewing candidates. The committee reviewed recommendations and eventually produced a short list of 27 candidates. It then invited the public to comment on the names. The committee pared the list to three nominees that it recommended to Ramos; the president selected one of the three. The committee then proposed two names for chairman and six for the third vacancy. President Ramos did not select either of the two recommendations for chairman, but he did choose one of the recommendations for commissioner.

B. Promoting Civic Education and Participation

In every democracy, whether established or new, citizens must inform themselves about and involve themselves in public affairs. This continual education includes reviewing the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society and encouraging their participation in both partisan and nonpartisan organizations to promote their interests.[14]

In established democracies the biggest barriers to civic participation may be apathy and alienation. In relatively new democracies the greatest obstacles are often the absence of experience with civic participation and the population's unfamiliarity with their rights and responsibilities as members of a democratic community. Across Asia, promoting civic education and participation often involves altering or adapting traditional notions of authority and hierarchy; overcoming constraints on the participation of women and other excluded groups; organizing people to influence the political and lawmaking processes; and applying pressure on government institutions unaccustomed to accountability and transparency.

The potential benefits of civic education and participation are many. Committed and involved citizens serve as a source of information and ideas to government and to politicians. Informed and active citizens also help ensure that political parties are broadly representative and democratic in their internal affairs. And citizen participation is critical to the growth and impact of NGOs,

[14]Examples in the United States include the League of Women Voters and Common Cause, among many others.

Having engaged substantial numbers of people in the political life of their countries, Asian election monitoring organizations continue to build upon this momentum; they are designing programs to advocate political reform, to provide civic education and to monitor the legislative process.

Democratic elections are essential to establishing representative governments. They also ensure a degree of accountability. But elections by themselves do not guarantee a healthy democracy. Democracy will not long endure unless citizens take an active interest in the complex and often mundane process of governing. Without popular participation, even democratically elected leaders and governments may grow unresponsive and unaccountable. Historically Asia's culture and authoritarian political structures have tended to narrow the avenues for civic participation. Looking to the future, the encouragement and accommodation of greater civic participation will be critical to the success of Asia's new and established democracies.

Chapter 5

Election Monitoring in Asia: Three Experiences

This section briefly describes election monitoring efforts in South Korea, the Philippines and Bangladesh. These countries have been selected for three reasons. First, they represent each of Asia's three distinct sub-regions: Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia and South Asia. Second, they represent different cultures and political traditions. South Korea has a Confucian/authoritarian culture; the Philippines is a cultural-polyglot with U.S.-style political institutions; and Bangladesh is a Muslim country with British political traditions. Finally, the three countries possess differing levels of socio-economic development: 1992 per capita income was $6,790 in South Korea, $770 in the Philippines and $220 in Bangladesh.[16]

A. The Citizens' Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (CCCFE) in South Korea

South Korea is perhaps best known for being one of Asia's "tiger" economies. Real annual growth in South Korea's GNP averaged 8.5 percent between 1985 and 1992. South Korea also

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[16]*The Europa World Year Book 1994*, s.v. "Bangladesh," "The Republic of Korea," "The Philippines." All figures are in U.S. dollars.

has undergone notably rapid democratization since the mid-1980s. In 1987, after more than 25 years of authoritarian, military backed governments, South Korea held its first competitive national elections. In 1993 Korean citizens elected their first civilian president, Kim Young Sam, in more than 30 years. In June 1995 the country conducted its first competitive local elections.

The swift process of democratization in South Korea hides a number of tensions and problems. South Korean politics and society are influenced by Korea's Confucian, hierarchical and paternalistic traditions; concerns with the pace of economic growth and the concentration of economic power in the hands of the Korean business conglomerates (*chaebol*); and the continuing tensions with North Korea. South Korea's political parties remain highly factional and regional. NGOs and other elements of civil society are only gradually emerging.

The first efforts at election monitoring in South Korea occurred during the 1987 presidential election. Reportedly, some 100,000 pollwatchers were mobilized. However, most of this election-related activism was conducted by dissident groups and other partisan members of the opposition. During the 1991 elections for local councilors, South Korea's emerging NGO movement split to follow two different strategies: a YMCA-led coalition actually fielded candidates in the elections while an umbrella group led by the Citizen's Coalition for Economic Justice (CCEJ) limited its role to conducting voter education and election monitoring. Almost all of the NGO candidates lost and, as a result, the politically active NGOs joined to form the Citizens' Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (CCCFE) to monitor the 1992 legislative and presidential elections.

More than 70 national and 500 local NGOs coalesced under the CCCFE banner. The two most important pillars of the CCCFE were the CCEJ and the National Council of YMCAs. CCEJ is the largest and most influential NGO, and is concerned with a wide range of social justice issues. The YMCA has been a leading force in Korea's national development since the 1910s, when the YMCA leadership gradually shifted from missionaries to Koreans, and the YMCA evolved into a center for opposition to Japanese colonial rule.

The CCCFE focused on voter education and pollwatching. Its voter education and monitoring efforts pursued three goals: 1) minimizing payments and entertainment; 2) ensuring adherence to the election law; and 3) guarding against partisan intervention by the government. CCCFE established 24-hour telephone complaint centers to receive reports of electoral violations. The CCCFE also organized a "policy campaign" designed to foster public discussion of candidate positions on important issues. (Under South Korean law, NGOs can debate and advocate policies, but they cannot endorse candidates.)

In 1992 the government of President Roh Tae Woo refused to grant pollwatching credentials to the CCCFE. CCCFE leaders knew that the public viewed CCCFE as credible, however, so the coalition decided to create its own credentials. Empowered by public support, coalition leaders were confident that the government would not challenge CCCFE pollwatchers; and they worried, in any event, that government accreditation would translate into government control or a perception of government control.

Initially, the CCCFE was very critical of the government-controlled Commission on Elections. Since 1992 the elections commission has grown more independent, and CCEJ and the YMCA have begun to work with it. Both groups worked closely with the commission on the June 1995 local elections.

For the June 1995 elections the CCEJ, the YMCA, the YWCA, the Korean Alliance of Labor Unions, religious groups, peasant groups and other civic organizations formed the Citizens' Coalition for Fair Electoral Campaigns. The coalition comprised some 60 national NGOs and 400 local groups. The focus of the monitoring effort shifted from voting to campaigning with an emphasis on "man-to-man" monitoring of candidate credentials, promises and performance.

The coalition also mobilized nearly 50 academic experts in Seoul to study and pinpoint the city's problems and to propose solutions. About 300 people carried out similar research in 10 cities. The policy proposals were presented to voters with the admonishment: "Through these policies we can solve the problems in our city. Vote for the candidates who espouse them." Candidates were invited to public meetings to present their policies and discuss them with citizens.

The CCEJ/YMCA coalition also holds public forums to address the perceived problems with Korea's "election culture" and election law. The two most-often cited problems are regional voting and the use of entertainment and gifts to woo voters. There is also an ongoing effort to reform the election law to remove a bias against non-party candidates.

B. National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) in the Philippines

The Philippines is a nation of almost 70 million people with per capita income of about $770. Philippine society displays great regional and linguistic variety, but these distinctions are mitigated somewhat by an almost universally shared Roman Catholic faith. The Philippines suffers from a relatively high, though declining, incidence of poverty, a wide disparity of wealth and great differences in living conditions between urban and rural areas. At the same time, the Philippines boasts relatively high literacy (for both men and women), an active NGO sector and a relatively high level of participation by women in public life.

The Philippines stands out in Asia for its tradition of competitive elections that dates back to the advent of American colonial rule in the early 20th century. This tradition was interrupted by Ferdinand Marcos in 1972, partially revived in 1984 and 1986, and then fully reestablished with the restoration of democracy following the controversial 1986 presidential election. Even excluding the Marcos era, the Philippine electoral tradition is a highly imperfect one: many elections have suffered from squabbling among elites, nondistinct political parties, vote buying, fraud and violence.

The organization most concerned with improving the electoral process is the National Citizens Movement for Free Elections. NAMFREL was created in 1983 in response to the manipulation of elections by then-President Marcos. Reflecting upon Marcos-era elections, Mariano Quesada, one of the founders of NAMFREL, quipped, "Election officials in some countries brag that they know the results shortly after the polls have closed. We knew the results a month in advance." The near-complete control exercised by Marcos increasingly discouraged Filipinos from using the electoral process to challenge the Marcos regime. This cynicism with the

electoral process contributed to the growth of the communist movement in the Philippines.

NAMFREL grew out of a small meeting of concerned citizens in October 1983, following the assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino and in anticipation of the May 1984 legislative elections. From this meeting, NAMFREL expanded to field more than 200,000 pollwatchers in the May 1984 legislative elections and 500,000 in the February 1986 presidential election. In the process, NAMFREL pioneered the use of a quick count, or parallel vote tabulation (PVT); and, in 1986, NAMFREL's Operation Quick Count played a critical role in persuading Filipinos and the international community that Corazon Aquino had won the election. In addition to the 1984 and 1986 elections, NAMFREL and its affiliates monitored the 1987 constitutional plebiscite, the 1987 congressional elections, the 1992 presidential and congressional elections, and the 1995 congressional elections. All of these election monitoring efforts have included PVTs. For the 1992 elections, NAMFREL collaborated with media organizations under the rubric of the Media-Citizens Quick Count (MCQC) to conduct the PVT.

The stated goal of NAMFREL then and now is to safeguard the integrity and quality of the electoral process—not to affect the outcome. But preserving a reputation for nonpartisanship has not been easy: by working to ensure fair elections in 1984 and 1986 NAMFREL implicitly was working against the Marcos regime. When some of NAMFREL's leaders subsequently joined the Aquino government, the organization's nonpartisan credentials were challenged. The highly credible MCQC in 1992 bolstered NAMFREL's reputation.

Before the 1992 elections various arms of the Catholic Church decided to create their own election-monitoring organizations, the two largest being the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) and VOTE CARE. These groups assumed primary responsibility for voter education and pollwatching. NAMFREL provided technical assistance and conducted the PVT. This division of labor continued in 1995. As noted earlier, NAMFREL and the other EMOs also advocate electoral reform, modernization of the electoral process and appointment of independent and nonpartisan election commissioners.

NAMFREL is organized as a coalition and relies on volunteers recruited by its member organizations. Initially it was an umbrella organization that brought together more than 100 religious groups, professional associations, labor concerns and other NGOs. NAMFREL's strength derives from three primary sources. The first is its nationwide organizational infrastructure, which is assisted by a close affiliation with the Catholic Church. The second is the resources and managerial expertise provided by the organization's ties to businesses owned by reformist members of the Philippine elite. The third is NAMFREL's power to attract and mobilize volunteers, which is in great part a function of its exceptional name recognition and credibility.

NAMFREL has become a model for election monitoring around the world. The sources of NAMFREL's success, in approximate order of significance include:

- **The sense of crisis that existed from 1983 through the 1986 election.** Filipinos, including many who had no prior involvement in civic affairs, were mobilized by the fear that the country's political system was on the verge of collapse.

- **Respect.** NAMFREL was respected because it adopted a principled stand and took risks to pursue it.

- **Credibility.** NAMFREL established its credibility though its ties to the Catholic Church and its technical expertise.

- **Nonpartisanship.** NAMFREL took pains to emphasize its concern with the electoral process rather than with the election outcome.

- **Efficacy.** NAMFREL demonstrated as early as 1984 that election monitoring could make a difference.

- **Organization.** NAMFREL successfully took advantage of the organizational and communications infrastructure provided by the Catholic Church.

- **Human resources.** NAMFREL tapped into a pool of highly motivated leaders and volunteers, and trained those volunteers effectively.

- **Successful resource mobilization.** NAMFREL received substantial financial and in-kind support from reformist members of the corporate sector and from the Philippine middle class.

- **International assistance.** From 1984 to 1986 NAMFREL benefitted from support and protection provided by the international community and media.

As addressed in Chapter 6, the preceding factors can be used as a checklist to assess the success of other EMOs. However, in so doing it is important to recognize that certain aspects of the NAMFREL experience are unique and therefore may not be transferable. The NAMFREL experience differs from that of other EMOs in Asia in at least three important ways. First, unlike other Asian nations the Philippines has a tradition of electoral politics. Thus, NAMFREL was involved in restoring a process that had been interrupted and corrupted—it was not trying to create a new process. Second, there is probably no analogue in other Asian countries to NAMFREL's ability to tap into the moral authority, political influence, organization and resources of the Catholic Church. Third, it is also unlikely that any other EMO in Asia can expect to receive the same high level of support from the business community as accorded NAMFREL.

C. Election Monitoring in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has a population of approximately 120 million people, of which it is estimated that some 75 percent are illiterate and 60 percent live in extreme poverty. Bangladeshis are predominantly Sunni Muslim. While religious and cultural attitudes regarding women inhibit their role in public affairs, religious intolerance is less pervasive than in some other countries. Bangladesh also boasts a strong NGO sector, a free media and an elite that tends to respect legal norms.

Violence and the force of arms have plagued Bangladeshi political life since the country won its independence from Pakistan in 1971. Both of the nation's first two major leaders were assassinated, and coups and attempted coups have haunted Bangladeshi politics throughout the country's short history. There is also a tradition of strong executives, both military and civilian, and an entrenched and largely unaccountable bureaucracy. Personality politics and issues of questionable significance pervade the country's political debate.

Elections during the past two decades have also been turbulent and have been marked by allegations of fraud and

intimidation. As a result, Bangladeshis are skeptical about election results. Accordingly, during the 1980s opposition parties generally boycotted elections and resorted to strikes and demonstrations to express political views. However, this street agitation had little effect on President Hussain Mohammed Ershad until late 1990 when the opposition launched a mass protest movement that culminated in the collapse of his regime.

The 1991 Elections

On December 4, 1990, after weeks of growing popular unrest, Ershad announced his resignation and the dissolution of parliament. An interim government, led by Chief Justice and acting President Shahabuddin Ahmed, immediately announced that parliamentary elections would be held February 27, 1991. Shahabuddin pledged to take all measures necessary to ensure a free and open campaign leading to peaceful democratic elections. His interim government took a number of steps to demonstrate its neutrality and its commitment to holding free and fair elections. Among other actions, the interim government completely reconstituted the election commission by appointing to it highly respected judges of the Supreme Court and adopting reforms that increased the independent election commission's control over the election process.

A number of Bangladeshi NGOs, human rights groups and professional associations mounted serious efforts to monitor the 1991 polls. Among them were the Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh (CCHRB), the Bangladesh Movement for Fair Elections (Bangladesh Mukto Nirbachan Andolan or BMNA), the Citizens Election Commission (CEC), the Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR), the Bar Association and the Grameen Bank. BMNA attempted to constitute itself as the umbrella organization for election-monitoring efforts and claimed a large number of nongovernmental, human rights, professional and trade organizations under its banner (although not including the CCHRB and several other groups). The BSEHR and the CEC cooperated to organize a third observer network, and the Bar Association mounted its own effort. The Grameen Bank encouraged its 900,000 members (borrowers) to vote early, to stay and observe the polls for the rest of the day and to report back on what they witnessed.

For the most part, these organizations conducted separate monitoring efforts, which differed in scope and methodology. There was not greater coordination, in part, because some groups questioned the neutrality of other groups. Nevertheless, these organizations did attempt to cooperate to some degree, primarily by sharing information and methods. Collectively, their involvement reinforced public confidence in the process.

The election commission and government did not encourage or facilitate domestic pollwatching or parallel vote count efforts. While welcoming international election observers, the government and the election commission expressed concern about the impartiality of some groups seeking credentials to observe the polls. The electoral authorities refused to provide domestic monitors with credentials or access to polling stations. The election commission's unwillingness to officially sanction domestic monitors did not in practice prevent domestic organizations from observing the elections. Most presiding officers permitted representatives of such groups to ask questions and to observe the process at the polls.

Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party won a plurality of the seats contested. The elections were perceived generally as open, well administered and relatively nonviolent. All major political parties, the Bangladeshi public and foreign observers accepted the elections as legitimate and accepted the results. In fact, many Bangladeshis described the elections as a "second independence," and the contests were widely acclaimed as a "trend setter" for elections in Asia.

A number of factors contributed to the success of the 1991 elections. A neutral caretaker government considered the holding of free and fair elections as its *raison d'être.* Acting President Shahabuddin Ahmed, who had been the nation's sitting chief justice, worked diligently to leave genuinely free and fair elections as his legacy. For the first time in many years, all major political parties participated in the elections and stated their commitment to and confidence in the process.

Even as independent monitoring groups in Bangladesh hailed the success of the 1991 elections, they expresssed some apprehension about the electoral process. This included significant problems with the voter lists, attempts to vote by underage individuals, intermittent disturbances that interrupted polling and outstanding

violations of campaign expenditure limits. Independent monitors also expressed concern that the public may have viewed the process as fair and accepted the results only because an independent interim government administered the elections. They warned presciently that Bangladesh must work to ensure the fairness of future elections held under elected governments and in a potentially more polarized atmosphere.

Election Monitoring in Bangladesh Today

When the parliamentary system was restored following the 1991 elections, Bangladeshis hoped for an enduring era of democracy and good government. Initially, the prospects looked promising. The opposition participated in the parliament, general freedom of the press was restored, and by-elections and local council elections were held in 1992 without major incident. Additionally, the military, which had often figured prominently in Bangladeshi politics, seemed intent on removing itself from the political fray.

However, the legacy of 20 years of often violent and undemocratic government, and of personalist politics, has left its mark. A unified opposition, led by the Awami League, has boycotted parliament since late 1994. The opposition has charged the government with bad faith and official corruption, including alleged vote rigging in a 1994 by-election. In addition to the parliamentary boycott, frequent opposition-induced nationwide strikes (*hartals*) and escalating political violence have virtually paralyzed the country since early 1995. The opposition has also challenged the integrity of the election commission and has demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in favor of a neutral caretaker government to oversee national elections. As this report goes to press, the central election commission has scheduled oft-postponed parliamentary elections for mid-February 1996. Absent the installation of a caretaker government, however, the major opposition parties have vowed to boycott the process.

Given this environment, the credibility of elections seems crucial for the survival of multiparty democracy in Bangladesh. Public confidence in the electoral process, and ultimately in the political process as a whole, must be restored. An organized system of well-trained, domestic election monitors will be a necessary element to ensure the fairness of the next national elections and to lay the foundation for long-term cooperation among civic groups.

Continuing concerns about public confidence in the electoral process have led a growing number of development NGOs, human rights groups and research centers to make plans to monitor the 1996 elections. These NGOs have varying mandates, approaches, constituencies and strengths, but all share a commitment to accountable, democratic government.

Since January 1995, more than 100 NGOs have joined to form the Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA).[17] In March 1995, FEMA, with NDI's assistance, organized its first training seminar on domestic election monitoring in Bangladesh. The participants agreed to establish regional chapters and to conduct regional workshops to recruit and train other trainers on election monitoring. Key FEMA organizers also participated in the NAMFREL/NDI conference in Manila.

One of the founding organizations of FEMA is the Study and Research Group on Democracy and Socio-Economic Development (SRG).[18] The 1991 elections prompted the creation of the SRG, a discussion and social action group of academics, human rights workers, social and political activists and senior executives from various professional associations and businesses. According to SRG's brochure:

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[17]Among the founding NGOs of FEMA are the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB); the Association for Social Advancement (ASA); the Bangladesh Jatiya Sangbadik Samity (BJSS); the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC); the Bangladesh Smaj Unnayan Samity (BSUS); the Community Development Association (CDA); Gono Unnayan Prochesta (GUP); Jagorani Chakra (JC); Proshika Manobik Unnayan Kendra (PMUK); the Study and Research Group on Democracy and Socio-Economic Development (SRG) [a project of the Manabit Shahajiya Sangstha or MSS]; and the Voluntary Health Services Society (VHSS).

[18]This report cannot do justice to the important work of all of the NGOs, human rights groups and social service organizations that are committed to democratic elections and effective national election monitoring in Bangladesh. The SRG's work is cited as merely one example of such commitment.

> The experience of the 1991 parliamentary elections showed that mere monitoring of polls was not enough to ensure free and fair elections. A conscious and concerted effort needs to be made by the public to identify obstacles to holding free elections and suggest ways to overcome these obstacles.

The SRG is nonpartisan, but not apolitical; it addresses socio-economic issues of political significance. The group's "Election Watch" project seeks, among other goals, to educate citizens about the voting process and to involve them in ensuring the legitimacy of elections. SRG members monitored by-elections and city corporation elections in 1994 and 1995.

The SRG has had to work hard to convince electoral authorities that the efforts undertaken by nongovernmental organizations are complementary to official initiatives. According to an SRG leader who attended the NAMFREL/NDI conference, the SRG's message was: "We are not here to take over—we are here to complement and supplement." The SRG has helped the understaffed election commission to reform registration procedures, publicize election rules and processes, and conduct voter education and training.

The SRG has also established credibility with Bangladesh's political parties through its competent and impartial monitoring of various by-elections. The group has sponsored seminars that have brought together members of political parties and other civic leaders. It also has provided training to polling agents and acquainted them with the relevant electoral rules and regulations.

D. Common Challenges, Diverse Approaches

There are important themes common to the experience of election monitoring organizations in South Korea, the Philippines and Bangladesh. In all three countries political polarization both complicated the work of EMOs and heightened its importance. In all three countries, critics accused EMOs of partisanship; the groups struggled to convince electoral authorities of their neutrality. In each country, the relationship between the EMOs and election authorities improved over time. Each EMO also had to establish its reputation for credibility and effectiveness.

Moreover, the election monitoring efforts in these countries took advantage of existing organizations, networks and political coalitions. In the Philippines, NAMFREL benefitted from the support, in particular, of the Catholic Church and its network throughout the country. In South Korea election monitoring drew on the strength of the extensive networks of the YMCA and CCEJ. In Bangladesh election monitoring in 1991 grew from networks of existing NGOs, while the 1996 effort seeks to broaden those connections to include a number of large, service delivery NGOs. In none of these cases did any one organization or group of individuals create a new election-monitoring organization from scratch.

These election monitoring experiences, of course, also differ from one another in important respects. Each reflected and responded to unique political circumstances. NAMFREL reflected the widespread public revulsion with the Marcos dictatorship and provided a means to mobilize broad public support for democratic ideals. In South Korea an increasingly powerful and politically active NGO community has worked to support democratization, including free elections. Efforts to field candidates by some within the NGO movement proved unsuccessful and were replaced by nonpartisan election monitoring. Election monitoring organizations in Bangladesh, at least in their current forms, have largely emerged in response to continuing concerns about the fairness of elections. They have yet to demonstrate genuinely mass support for election monitoring itself.

Of the three experiences, only NAMFREL in the Philippines conducted a PVT to check fraud in the ballot count. The coalition planning to monitor the February 1996 parliamentary elections in Bangladesh had sought to conduct a PVT until political events overtook the effort.

These three examples also illustrate a variety of approaches to resource mobilization. NAMFREL refused funding from outside the country and from political parties; it relied instead on church and corporate contributions. The CCCFE drew on the YMCA and other religious organizations and on the CCEJ and other NGOs, but it also accepted equal contributions from the political parties. (Public opinion in favor of CCEJ prompted the parties to make such contributions.) Bangladesh's FEMA received substantial, if belated,

financial support from foreign donors in addition to direct and indirect support from its constituent organizations.

Election monitoring has an explicit religious connection in the Philippines and, to a lesser extent, in South Korea. The commitment of the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines to election monitoring has been an essential factor in the successes of NAMFREL and related groups. Commitment to religious values and commitment to participatory democracy are closely related motivations for many election-monitoring volunteers in the Philippines. Significantly, the Korean experience differs in that Christians constitute a minority of the population, and support from Christian institutions does not translate as easily into broad popular support. But as in the Philippines, religious values certainly motivated at least part of the election-monitoring coalition.

In Bangladesh, however, election monitoring seems to be a secular effort, as is the NGO movement in general. Like the population at large, most leaders of the election monitoring movement are Muslims. They perceive nothing inconsistent between the promotion of participatory democracy and Islamic religious values, but neither do they appeal explicitly to religion. Indeed, some view religious fundamentalism—although not religious values *per se*—as a potential threat to tolerance and democracy. Traditional religious institutions have largely abstained from participating in the democratization movement, much as fundamentalists in particular were perceived as opponents of Bangladeshi independence in 1971.

In the Philippines and South Korea, EMOs were viewed initially as anti-government. They represented a political movement that clearly supported democracy in political environments where defenders of the status quo essentially opposed democratization. But over time EMOs succeeded in demonstrating that they were not partisan in narrow political terms. Rather, EMOs proved their competence and their commitment to the democratic process itself.

In Bangladesh in 1991, election monitoring was considerably less prominent and less controversial than it was in the Philippines in 1986 and 1987 or in Korea in 1987 and 1992. The forces of the status quo in Bangladesh had already surrendered before the 1991 elections, and essentially all competing parties and other actors in those elections supported the ideal of free and fair elections. Since

that time, political bickering about election fairness has increased sensitivities about election monitoring. Thus, EMOs, especially as they grow into more potent political forces, must work even harder to demonstrate their credibility and maintain their reputation for independence.

Chapter 6

Key Aspects of Successful Election Monitoring

This section draws on the preceding discussion in an effort to identify some of the important aspects of election monitoring. It begins by addressing four fundamental organizational issues. The section then suggests a list of four other key ingredients for successful election monitoring. Although this study focuses on election monitoring in Asia, much of the following information is applicable to election monitoring efforts in other regions.

A. Key Organizational Issues

Implicit in much of the preceding discussion is the importance of organization and organizational issues to election monitoring. This section touches on four important organizational challenges facing EMOs in Asia and elsewhere. These are: 1) establishing realistic goals and objectives; 2) creating an appropriate organizational structure; 3) mobilizing human, financial and other resources; and 4) communicating effectively.

Establishing Realistic Goals and Objectives

When initiating an election monitoring effort, it is important to develop attainable goals and objectives. It may not be possible or necessary to engage in all of the election-monitoring tasks described in Chapter 3 of this report; if there are constraints on time

and resources, choices—sometimes difficult ones—must be made. To determine and prioritize its goals and objectives, the monitoring organization must consider a series of questions. First, what is the basic problem or need with regard to the electoral process? Is the problem violence? Vote buying? Fraud? The electoral law? The procedures used in voter registration or ballot counting? Second, how can the problem or problems be addressed? Through electoral law reform? Domestic election monitoring? Voter education? A parallel vote tabulation? An international election observation mission? And third, is the proposed course of action realistic? Is there adequate time, will and resources (human as well as financial)? Is it feasible politically? Does the organizational capability exist or can it be created? Where will the leadership, expertise and volunteers come from?

This is not to suggest that clear answers must be found to all of these questions before embarking on an election monitoring effort. Were this required, it is doubtful that any election monitoring effort would ever be undertaken. But eventually these questions must be addressed, and the sooner they are confronted, the better the prospects for the organization and its activities.

Creating an Appropriate Organizational Structure

The logistical complexity and geographical scope of most election monitoring efforts place a premium on good organization. An EMO must be sufficiently evolved so that it can cover large geographical areas, but it must also develop effective (though not necessarily highly centralized) mechanisms for quick decision-making, effective communication and efficient logistical support. An EMO often must rely on pre-existing NGOs as sources of volunteers, but it must be able to ensure the nonpartisanship and effectiveness of this diverse group of citizens as well. And a monitoring organization must be able to accommodate and reconcile a potentially wide variety of individuals and groups, from academics to political activists, business executives to labor union members and religious associations to women's rights organizations.

These complex and sometimes competing organizational requirements present the organizers of election-monitoring efforts with a number of difficult decisions. Is it better to create a new organization or to expand or alter the mission of a pre-existing organization? How inclusive or exclusive will be the EMO's

membership requirements? Is it wiser to try to allow the group to "grow" into a national organization or to tap into already existing organizations by forming a coalition? If the latter, how will the decisionmaking process work, and what will be the division of labor among the groups?

In reality, of course, decisionmaking regarding organizational structure rarely has the luxury of being insulated from external political and institutional influences and considerations. More often, political and personal motives, the configuration of existing NGOs, and time and resource constraints exert a strong influence on these decisions. Therefore, the organizational arrangements of most EMOs evolve in response to functional limitations and opportunities, shifts in the political environment, and changes in institutional and personal relationships.

Mobilizing Human, Financial and Other Resources

A third key organizational challenge facing EMOs is generating the resources needed to carry out their program. As used here, the term "resources" is not confined to financial resources. Although financial resources are very important, human resources and in-kind contributions of goods and services are equally or more consequential. Therefore, resource mobilization in its broadest sense encompasses fundraising, the solicitation of in-kind contributions of goods and services, and volunteer recruitment.

Potential sources of financing for EMOs include membership dues; proceeds from selling t-shirts, buttons and banners, and sponsoring concerts and other entertainment; cash contributions from individuals and corporations; and grants from domestic and international foundations. Nonfinancial resources for an election monitoring effort might include donated or discounted transportation, office space, communications equipment, office supplies, and other materials, photocopying services and food. Finally, human resources—primarily in the form of volunteers—are the third key resource needed by EMOs. One participant at the NAMFREL/NDI conference characterized volunteers as a source of "time, treasure and talents."

The mobilization of resources is a major challenge for most Asian EMOs for a variety of reasons: low levels of national and individual income; unreceptive or suspicious businesses; the absence

of a tradition of voluntarism and/or philanthropy (and of tax laws conducive to philanthropy); and fierce competition for resources among and even within NGOs. Moreover, resource mobilization, an often time-consuming process, is even more challenging when time is short. It is important to determine in advance the resources needed so that time and effort are not wasted procuring useless in-kind donations or inappropriate volunteers. Finally, efforts to mobilize resources must also take into consideration the impact of large cash or in-kind contributions on the public perception of an EMO's independence and nonpartisanship. As a rule, many small contributions are better than a few large ones, and EMOs must always consider whether support from government agencies or international donors will compromise their independence or harm their credibility.

Communicating Effectively

EMOs must be able to communicate capably with a variety of key constituencies and audiences. There are at least three types of communication to consider when organizing a successful election monitoring effort. The first is internal communication— communication among the EMO's coalition members, leaders and volunteers, and between the headquarters and the local branches. The second is communication between the EMO and the principal actors in the election—candidates, political parties, the electoral authority, other government agencies and the media. The third is communication between the EMO and the public, which can be accomplished through public programs, publications and the media. All three types of communication are essential to building and maintaining the profile, credibility and legitimacy of the organization and its election monitoring effort.

Methods of communication include using publications and videos; sponsoring public meetings, conferences and symposia; and generating press releases, briefings and events designed to attract media coverage. Effective communication must be frequent; the message must be clear and consistent; the information and analysis must be accurate, balanced and credible; and the documentation must be readily available and accessible.

B. Other Key Ingredients for Successful Election Monitoring

The diversity of Asia and of Asian EMOs complicates any effort to generalize about these organizations and their experiences. However, in addition to the organizational issues cited above, there are at least four other ingredients that are critical to the success of election-monitoring efforts in Asia and elsewhere: 1) developing and maintaining nonpartisanship; 2) building credibility; 3) establishing a working relationship with the electoral authority; and 4) increasing the participation of women and other excluded groups.

Developing and Maintaining Nonpartisanship

All EMOs face the challenge of demonstrating their nonpartisanship to the government, political parties and the public. As one participant in the NAMFREL/NDI conference observed, "election monitoring efforts, by nature, are viewed as anti-government." Almost all EMOs also confront the demands of mobilizing committed people to participate in a nonpartisan cause. For example, in some Asian countries, students, who are often the most willing to be politically active, are also the most partisan. According to Wimal Fernando of Sri Lanka, "the strictly nonpartisan people stay at home and sleep—they're not interested and don't take risks."

Establishing and maintaining a reputation for nonpartisanship is essential to the success of an EMO's election monitoring effort. Attaining this neutral status involves maintaining both the reality and the perception of nonpartisanship. One mistake can severely damage or destroy a reputation for nonpartisanship that may have taken months or even years to build. EMOs can develop and sustain their nonpartisan reputation through:

- **Adopting and enforcing a code of conduct.** For example, NAMFREL's code of conduct forbids its volunteers from endorsing or criticizing candidates; they must keep their personal choices to themselves and cannot participate in partisan campaigns. Volunteers who violate the code are required to leave the organization.

- **Clearly demonstrating an even-handed and nonpartisan attitude and approach.** Tangible examples of nonpartisanship include the creation of a nonpartisan or politically balanced

governing body, the equal treatment of competing candidates and political parties, and the balanced interaction with or involvement of other partisan groups. An EMO's future nonpartisan credentials are bolstered by its ability to demonstrate that previous election-monitoring efforts neither favored nor benefitted any one party.

- **Exhibiting inclusivity as much as possible.** The more politically and socially diverse are the people and groups involved in the election-monitoring effort, the more difficult it is for critics to charge partisanship. Moreover, drawing participants from sectors of society traditionally less involved in political life may empower them and contribute to greater public participation in politics.

Building Credibility

An EMO's credibility is closely linked to its nonpartisanship. It is common for critics of election monitoring efforts to accuse EMOs of bias or incompetence—especially when the organizations are new and untested. Therefore, in addition to being able to demonstrate its nonpartisanship, an EMO must also establish and maintain its credibility. As with nonpartisanship, credibility is a precious if precarious asset.

Ultimately, the credibility of an EMO is measured by the degree of confidence that the government, the contestants and the public have in the integrity of the election-monitoring effort and the accuracy of the EMO's findings. EMOs can build and maintain their credibility by:

- **Demonstrating balance and expertise.** This can be achieved by involving respected citizens who represent a range of views, by producing high quality and balanced analyses, and by providing specialized election-related training to political parties, officials and the media.

- **Ensuring the integrity and feasibility of the election monitoring plan.** An EMO must be able to explain its election monitoring methodology (especially if a PVT is involved); demonstrate that the plan for election monitoring is logistically and financially feasible; and show that, if properly executed, the election-monitoring plan will accomplish its stated goals.

- **Competently executing the election monitoring plan.** An EMO must do what it says it is going to do, and it must do it well.

- **Ensuring the transparency of decisionmaking and implementation.** The processes by which an EMO makes and implements decisions must be open to the scrutiny of the government, political parties, the media and the public. An EMO should clearly and regularly explain its decisions and actions to the public and all affected participants through news conferences, press releases, public programs, talk shows and other means. These activities have the added benefit of generating media and public interest in and support for the election monitoring effort.

Establishing a Working Relationship with the Election Authority

Although the legal framework is of great importance to an election monitoring effort, the relationship between an EMO and the electoral authority is also significant—especially in countries where the electoral authorities exercise considerable discretion and where there are no explicit legal provisions regarding election monitoring. In Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan, for example, election laws do not address election monitoring *per se*, but the election commission in each country exercises its prerogative to invite election observers.

It is very important, therefore, for an EMO to build a relationship of mutual respect with the election commission. Such regard may be difficult or impossible to attain if a government is unreservedly hostile to independent election monitoring, as was the case in the Philippines from 1984 through 1986. But more typically governments are either committed to competitive elections or forced to conduct them because of domestic or international pressure. In these cases the EMO/election commission relationship is much more fluid. Whether the relationship is cooperative or adversarial depends on the actions and interaction of the two organizations. The chances of a relatively more collaborative relationship increase as both organizations grow more credible and sophisticated (as in South Korea and Bangladesh).

As a democratic transition unfolds, the EMO/election commission relationship usually grows more harmonious and less adversarial. Election commissions realize that they can use EMO advocacy for electoral reform to secure more independence and

authority from the government. Election commissions may also turn to EMOs to train election officials and to assist with government-sponsored voter education campaigns. Through this process election commissions often become allies with EMOs or serve as intermediaries between EMOs and other, perhaps less responsive, arms of government (including the military and police).

Increasing the Participation of Women and Other Excluded Groups

In recent years women have ascended to the highest positions of political leadership in Burma, India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. Throughout Asia, women have begun to carve out significant roles as civil servants, politicians, NGO leaders, intellectuals and journalists. Although these are positive developments, they reflect what is at best a gradual increase in women's participation in public affairs. The reality is that most of Asia's female leaders rose to power based on their ties to male leaders —either as wives or as daughters. Political parties often use female volunteers, but few women are asked to contest elections. As a result, the proportion of women office holders in Asia is still small.[19] And in many Asian countries, women continue to be either discouraged from participating in public life or relegated to playing roles subordinate to men.

The factors affecting women's political participation are far too varied and complicated to adequately address here. These barriers are often erected through a complex mixture of attitudes and norms rooted in religion and culture; income and education levels;

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[19]In only three national legislatures in the world do women comprise more than one-third of the representatives. In Pakistan four of 217 National Assembly members are women. In Bangladesh, 35 of 330 legislators are women. Vietnam's female national legislators number 73 of 395, and in China there are 626 women among 2,978. Singapore counts three women among its 81 legislators. The number of female legislators in other Asian countries include: 61 of 500 in Indonesia; 15 of 192 in the House and 12 of 52 in the Senate in Malaysia; and in the Philippines, 22 of 250 in the House and four of 24 in the Senate. Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in Parliament as at 30 June 1995* (Geneva: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1995).

degrees of urbanization; and, in some countries, the law. As a result, the relatively low level of female involvement in public life will not change until there are shifts in traditional attitudes about the status of women in society; increased women's access to opportunities for education and income generation; and, in some countries, improvements in the legal status of women.

The participation of women in election monitoring efforts usually reflects these larger social and cultural influences. As a result, women tend to be underrepresented in these activities. A more inclusive approach to election monitoring is beneficial for several reasons. First, it increases the pool of human resources and skills available to election monitoring. Second, in some societies the involvement of women as monitors may reduce the proclivity of men to threaten violence in the polling places. Third, in some societies women are associated with positions of social or moral authority (*e.g.*, school teachers and nuns in the Philippines). Finally, as proponents of broadly based civic participation, EMOs must practice what they preach.

Minorities, the poor, citizens in rural areas and, in the case of Nepal, those from lower castes have also been underrepresented in election monitoring efforts. The National Election Observation Committee in Nepal, for example, was formed by a core group of six NGOs, all but one led by Brahmins. As with other forms of political participation, election monitoring tends to appeal to higher-educated, more urbanized segments of the population. EMOs must work to overcome such trends in order to underscore the participatory values that underlie their activities and to gain from the expanded resources inherent in reaching out to larger and more diverse audiences.

Chapter 7

Challenges for the Future

Competitive elections often reflect, somewhat paradoxically, the best and the worst that democratic political systems have to offer. On one hand, they are inspiring examples of practical democracy: vigorous contests among competing candidates, political parties and programs that provide opportunities for voters to participate in selecting their government. On the other hand, competitive elections can entail bombast, chicanery, divisiveness and violence.

Perhaps nowhere is this paradox more evident than in Asia. Throughout the last decade elections have been a key element in the transition to and consolidation of democratic governments across much of the region. At their best, these elections have enabled peaceful leadership succession, produced more representative and responsive government, and increased the participation of citizenry in the decisions that affect their lives. However, at their worst, Asian elections have been expensive extensions of intra-elite squabbles and have intensified rather than diminished religious, ethnic and class divisions.

Asia's mixed experience with elections raises the question of the future of elections—and therefore election monitoring—in the region. Rather than speculating about such a diverse and

dynamic area, it may be more useful to identify a number of challenges still facing the region.

The two greatest challenges are far too daunting to address in this report. The first involves the persistence of authoritarian regimes in Burma, China, Indonesia, Laos, North Korea and Vietnam. Barring significant political liberalization in these countries, the medium-term prospects for competitive elections appear dim. The second concerns the sustainability of the fragile democratic gains that have been made in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Pakistan, Mongolia and other countries. It remains possible that political and social turmoil may cause such Asian countries to revert to their more authoritarian traditions.

Setting aside these two huge issues, it is possible to identify eight somewhat more discrete challenges to the institutionalization of democracy in Asia (and elsewhere).

1. Strengthening the Culture of Nonpartisanship

Partisanship itself should not be viewed negatively. Elections—and democratic politics in general—are premised on the desirability of competition between partisan groups. Political parties and interest groups are supposed to be partisan. Problems occur when intense partisanship is combined with a lack of consensus on the rules and the absence of independent institutions to impose penalties if the accepted rules are unheeded.

EMOs, as noted earlier, must establish and maintain a code of conduct to ensure their nonpartisanship. But standards that are overly demanding or restrictive may generate too much exclusiveness and too little participation. At the NAMFREL/NDI conference Krishna Upadhyaya of Nepal observed that across much of Asia, "involvement in politics equals partisanship; nonpartisanship equals nonparticipation." In highly politicized societies, EMOs may determine that strict nonpartisanship undermines their effectiveness. They may find it more realistic to constitute themselves as multipartisan organizations that reflect a broad spectrum of political points of view. Similarly, EMOs with strong ties to religious organizations may face difficulties in securing acceptance by followers of other faiths.

2. Building Trust and Mutual Respect Between EMOs and the Government, Political Parties and the Public

Establishing trust and mutual respect between EMOs and other segments of a democratic society is part of the larger challenge of strengthening civil society and finding a new balance in state/society relations. Some Asian countries limit the independence of NGOs. In others, governments are hostile to and suspicious of NGOs. And, in many countries, the ability of NGOs to engage in politics and governance is defined by their history and by a lack of experience and expertise. Asian NGOs must learn how to play a role in democratic politics and policymaking. Asian governments must accept NGOs as legitimate and positive forces in the political system. Meeting these challenges involves a learning process for both.

NGO-political party relations in Asia are equally if not more problematic. NGOs often see political parties as being concerned solely with winning elections and distributing the spoils of victory. Political parties often perceive NGOs as being either covertly partisan or potential competition. Yet, NGOs and political parties are essential for sustainable democratic development. Will NGOs force parties to become more issue oriented? Will parties compel NGOs to become more overtly political? The tension and competition between politically active NGOs and political parties seem both unavoidable and potentially healthy.

3. Adjusting to Rapid Change

The accelerated pace of political and social transformation continues across most of Asia. Sometimes it is difficult for individuals and groups to keep up with these changes. But it is essential that they maintain stride, for rapidly changing circumstances require fresh approaches. The swift political restructuring occurring in some Asian countries, for example, is prompting some EMOs to shift their focus. They are moving from assessing the competitiveness of elections to improving the quality of elections, from monitoring elections to monitoring legislatures, and from confronting the government to working with it. To keep up with these and other changes, Asia's EMOs will need to remain flexible and adaptable. As one conference participant observed: "Though

the defeat of a corrupt government *per se* does not guarantee clean government, the popular enthusiasm for election monitoring wanes with the change. Hence to sustain the enthusiasm or at least the network built up for monitoring may become a real challenge."

Because of the accelerated pace of political and social change in much of Asia, an EMO must constantly re-evaluate the value and effectiveness of its activities. The leaders of EMOs must be able to ask and answer the following types of questions: Do changes in the political and institutional environment require alterations in the goals and/or structure of the organization? Are new or different monitoring activities needed? Which activities work and which do not? Which activities are cost effective and which are not?

4. Continuing Electoral Law Reform

Across much of Asia there is a growing acceptance of the general legal framework required for free and fair elections. Increasingly this acceptance is reflected in electoral codes. But there persists the threat of regression, nonimplementation and partisanship. Also, many electoral codes have not kept pace with a number of important developments, such as the pervasive influence of money and media in elections. South Korea has adopted a very progressive electoral code; the record in the Philippines is more mixed. Thailand's government is debating the creation of an independent electoral commission. EMOs must continue, therefore, to work with electoral authorities, political parties and legislatures to address concerns about the development and implementation of electoral codes.

5. Increasing the Involvement of Women, Minorities, Rural Citizens and the Poor

Despite the many political transformations that have occurred across Asia, certain traditional roles and relationships remain resistant to change in a number of Asian countries.

The exclusion of women and other groups from public life is one of the most significant and embedded. This segregation is a function of culture, religion, economic development and legal status. Therefore there are few, if any, quick fixes. The challenges include

improving the education of women, ensuring that they are equal before the law, and promoting more women into leadership positions in government, political parties and NGOs.

Likewise, as has been noted, there are challenges to greater political involvement of minorities, people from rural areas, members of lower castes and the poor. These groups, too, are potential sources of support for election monitoring, and broadly based election monitoring may encourage more people from these groups to participate in the political lives of their countries.

6. Building Meaningful Political Parties

The growth in the number and sophistication of Asia's NGOs stands in contrast to the relative underdevelopment of the region's political parties. Political parties are too often vehicles for individuals or elites to attain and hold power. Frequently parties are transitory, and their membership does not extend beyond narrow, regional bases. Rarely can they be said to represent distinctive sectors of society, ideologies or programs. As a result, political parties in a number of countries are viewed as elitist or disreputable.

Political parties should and can play a positive role in elections and governance. They are needed for interest aggregation and articulation—especially as societies become more pluralistic. They help to organize politics and governance. They can cut across religious, ethnic and regional divisions to find common ground and consensus. The challenge is to move beyond the highly personalistic basis of parties; to strengthen linkages between parties and specific constituencies; and to build party capabilities to develop and communicate programs, generate resources, expand geographical scope and recruit members. These improvements in political parties will enhance the quality of elections and of governance.

7. Improving the Quality of Elections

There will continue to be problems and shortcomings with the competitiveness of elections in a number of Asian countries; but in the long run the larger issue will be the quality of those elections. Enhancing the quality of elections will require greater emphasis on issues instead of personalities, developing stronger and more meaningful political parties, limiting the role of money in elections

(and in politics in general), and increasing the independence and quality of media coverage.

8. Fostering Continuing Citizen Participation in Governance and Politics

Citizen participation in elections and election monitoring is a critical aspect of democracy. However, elections are only one event in a broader process of citizen involvement in a democratic society. Democracy requires that citizens participate actively in their elected government by voicing their needs and preferences, participating in the decisionmaking process and monitoring the performance of their government and elected officials. Citizen involvement may be partisan or nonpartisan, locally or nationally focused. Activities may be channeled through civic organizations, associations, political parties, the media or individual initiative. Thus, Asia's new and established democracies face the important task of fostering political cultures that encourage civic participation and creating or strengthening the variety of organizations through which citizens participate in governance and politics.

Meeting these eight challenges will not be easy, but there is cause for optimism. There are a number of dramatic examples of the growing desire for and commitment to competitive elections and democracy in Asia: "People Power" in the Philippines in 1986, the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations in China, the 1990 Burmese parliamentary elections, the bloody Bangkok demonstrations in 1992 and the high voter turnout—90 percent of registered voters—for the 1993 Cambodian elections. Though less dramatic, there are other important long-term trends that favor elections and democracy: the growth of an Asian middle class, the rise of NGOs and voluntarism, the development of independent media free from government control and the broader acceptance of new international norms for individual rights and governmental behavior.

Several other issues will also contribute to the future shape of elections and election monitoring in Asia. First, political and administrative devolution is underway in the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand. In some Asian countries local elections also present an opportunity for opposition parties to gain a share of power—and governance—when national-level politics are dominated by another party or coalition. As a result, local elections,

which can be very difficult to administer and monitor, are assuming greater political importance.

Second, technological developments will continue to influence elections and election monitoring, but their effect is difficult to predict. How will computers, instantaneous communication, computerized and more pervasive mass media affect elections and election monitoring? What are the prospective problems and benefits of computerized registration and vote counting processes, of electronic voting and tabulation, and of the emergence of cable and satellite television and the Internet?

Finally, the international environment will continue to influence elections and election monitoring. During the past decade competitive elections have become a nearly universal goal, and an informal international network of organizations and individuals committed to supporting and promoting open and democratic elections has emerged. This international assistance has made a difference. The election monitoring efforts of NAMFREL and the Korean YMCA, for example, benefitted from the protection and legitimacy afforded by their ties to international religious organizations. International observer missions and the international media provide similar encouragement, protection and legitimacy. Ultimately the outcome of Asia's elections is in Asian hands. But international support and involvement, including backing from the growing community of Asian democrats, will continue to be important. As conference participant Chaiyan Rajchagool of Thailand's PollWatch noted, "When we do this work we have more enemies than friends, and our enemies are more powerful than our friends. It is helpful to know that we are not alone, that we are together."

APPENDICES

Appendix I

Program Agenda

Monitoring Domestic Elections and Democratic Processes in Asia

February 22-24, 1995
Manila, Philippines

Wednesday, February 22

8:00 pm **Welcome and Introductions:**
Guillermo M. Luz, NAMFREL
Eric Bjornlund, NDI

Thursday, February 23

8:30 am **Roundtable:**
Overview of Domestic Election Monitoring in Asia
Mariano Quesada, NAMFREL
Eric Bjornlund, NDI
Michael Marshall, NDI

10:15 am **Roundtable:**
Monitoring the Pre-Election Period: Violence and Intimidation, the Media, and Voter Registration
Krishna Upadhyahya, INHURED, Nepal
Wimal Fernando, MFFE, Sri Lanka

12:00 pm **Luncheon Speaker:**
Corazon C. Aquino, Former President of the Philippines

2:00 pm **Roundtable:**
Election Day: Pollwatching and Parallel Vote Tabulations
Patricio Tan, NAMFREL
Feroz Hassan, SRG, Bangladesh

3:30 pm **Workshop 1:**
How to Monitor the Media
Yu-li Liu, National Chengchi University, Taiwan
Udaya Kalupathirana, INFORM, Sri Lanka

Workshop 2:
How to Design a Voter Education Program
Rosanne Mallillin, VOTE CARE, Philippines
Eric Bjornlund, NDI

Workshop 3:
How to Work with Political Parties and Election Officials
Soh Kyung-suk, CCEJ, South Korea
Tarikul Ghani, MSS/SRG, Bangladesh

Friday, February 24

8:30 am **Report on February 23 Workshops**
Damaso Magbual, NAMFREL

9:00 am **Roundtable:**
Building a Monitoring Effort: Organizational Development, Management, and Volunteer Recruitment
Chaiyan Rajchagool, PollWatch, Thailand
Damaso Magbual, NAMFREL

10:30 am **Roundtable:**
Increasing the Participation of Women
Zohra Yusuf, HRCP, Pakistan
Sapana Malla, Nepal

11:30 am **Roundtable:**
Mobilizing and Maximizing Resources: Coalition-Building and Fundraising
Salehuddin Ahmed, BRAC, Bangladesh
Nam Boo Won, YMCA, South Korea

12:30 pm **Luncheon Speaker:**
Jose Concepcion, Chairman, NAMFREL

2:00 pm **Roundtable:**
Monitoring Government Activities: Executive, Legislative, and Local Government Accountability
Socorro Reyes, CLD, Philippines
Michael Chang, Justice Alliance, Taiwan

3:45 pm **Workshop 1:**
How to Organize a Quick Count/Parallel Vote Tabulation
Ted Katalbas, NAMFREL
Maryam Montague, NDI

Workshop 2:
Fundraising/Resource Mobilization
Mariano Quesada, NAMFREL
Michael Chang, Justice Alliance, Taiwan

Workshop 3:
Promoting Government Accountability
Teresa Baltazar, Konsyensyang Pilipino (KP), Philippines
Michael Marshall, NDI

5:15 pm **Discussion of Workshops**
Eric Bjornlund, NDI

6:15 pm **Roundtable:**
Conclusions and Next Steps
Chaiyan Rajchagool, PollWatch, Thailand
David Timberman, NDI

Appendix II

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Monitoring Domestic Elections and Democratic Processes in Asia

February 22-24, 1995
Manila, Philippines

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Selected NDI Studies

- *The October 13, 1991 Legislative and Municipal Elections in Bulgaria*
- *An Assessment of the October 11, 1992 Election in Cameroon* (English and French)
- *Civil Military Relations in Nicaragua* (1995)
- *Democracies in Regions of Crisis — Botswana, Costa Rica and Israel* (1990)
- *The New Democratic Frontier — A Country by Country of the 1990 Elections in Eastern and Central Europe* (1992)
- *An Evaluation of the June 21, 1992 Elections in Ethiopia*
- *The November 1990 National Elections in Guatemala* (November 1991)
- *The 1990 General Elections in Haiti* (December 1990)
- *NDI Handbook: How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections*
- *Nation Building: The UN and Namibia* (1990)
- *Coordinating Observers to the 1993 Elections in Niger*
- *The October 1990 Elections in Pakistan*
- *Palestinian Perspectives on Democracy* (1994 English/Arabic)
- *The May 7, 1989 Panama Elections*
- *Voting for Greater Pluralism: The May 26, 1991 Municipal Elections in Paraguay*
- *Reforming the Philippine Electoral Process: 1986-1988*
- *The May 1990 Elections in Romania*
- *An Assessment of the Senegalese Electoral Code* (1991 English/French)
- *Uneven Paths: Advancing Democracy in Southern Africa* (1993)
- *Promoting Participation Yemen's 1993 Elections*
- *The October 31, 1991 National Elections in Zambia*

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