THE ELECTORAL INTEGRITY PROJECT

WHY ELECTIONS FAIL AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

THE YEAR IN ELECTIONS, MID-2015 UPDATE

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PEI 3.5   August 2015   www.ElectoralIntegrityProject.com
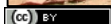
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OVERVIEW:

This report presents an update to our previous work. The most recent release of the Perceptions of Electoral Integrity dataset (PEI 3.5), in July 2015, covers 125 countries holding 153 elections from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2015.

This cumulative coverage illustrated in Figure 2 represents almost three-quarters (72%) of all independent nation states holding national parliamentary and presidential elections around the world, excluding micro-states (with a population below 100,000). The expert survey utilizes a rolling design measuring the quality of national elections one month after the close of the polls. See the technical appendix for the full details about the methods. Based on the views of 272 experts, the average response rate for PEI 3.5 is 28%. In February 2015, the project published *The Year in Elections 2014*, the annual report, describing the full results of release 3.0.[1]

What is new in this most recent release?

PEI-3.5 expands and updates coverage by adding 18 additional countries while assessing 27 elections held during the first half of 2015 (see Table 1). These contests are as varied as those held for the Israeli Knesset in March, the Finish Eduskunta, the Togolese president in April, and the British House of Commons in May.

TABLE 1: PEI 3_5 ELECTION COVERAGE

Country	Date D/M/Y	PEI	Office	Round	Code
Finland	19/04/15	86	Legislative	1	FIN_19042015_L1
Denmark	18/06/15	85	Legislative	1	DNK_18062015_L1
Estonia	01/03/15	79	Legislative	1	EST_01032015_L1
Poland	24/05/15	74	Presidential	2	POL_24052015_P2
Israel	17/03/15	73	Legislative	1	ISR_17032015_L1
Greece	25/01/15	71	Legislative	1	GRC_25012015_L1
Benin	26/04/15	68	Legislative	1	BEN_26042015_L1
Croatia	11/01/15	65	Presidential	2	HRV_11012015_P2
United Kingdom	07/05/15	65	Legislative	1	GBR_07052015_L1
Micronesia	03/03/15	63	Legislative	1	FSM_03032015_L1
Lesotho	28/02/15	63	Legislative	1	LSO_28022015_L1
Nigeria	17/03/15	53	Legislative	1	NGA_17032015_L1
Guyana	11/05/15	53	Legislative	1	GUY_11052015_L1
Mexico	07/06/15	53	Legislative	1	MEX_07062015_L1
Sri Lanka	08/01/15	51	Presidential	1	LKA_08012015_P1
Uzbekistan	29/03/15	50	Presidential	1	UZB_29032015_P1
El Salvador	01/03/15	49	Legislative	1	SLV_01032015_L1
Suriname	25/05/15	48	Legislative	1	SUR_25052015_L1
Turkey	07/06/15	47	Legislative	1	TUR_07062015_L1
Comoros	11/02/15	47	Legislative	2	COM_22022015_L2
Kazakhstan	26/04/15	45	Presidential	1	KAZ_26042015_P1
Zambia	10/01/15	44	Presidential	1	ZMB_20012015_P1
Sudan	13/04/15	43	Presidential	1	SDN_13042015_P1
Uzbekistan	04/01/15	39	Legislative	2	UZB_04012015_L2
Togo	15/04/15	38	Presidential	1	TGO_25042015_P1
Tajikistan	01/03/15	34	Legislative	1	TJK_01032015_L1
Ethiopia	14/05/15	21	Legislative	1	ETH_24052015_L1

Source: *The perceptions of Electoral Integrity expert survey (PEI 3.5)*

RESULTS

The result of the overall summary PEI index saw two Nordic democracies – Finland and Denmark - performing best, according to the overall Perception of Electoral Integrity index. These countries are in the top positions, followed by Estonia, Poland and Israel. The fact that several newer democracies score relatively highly according to the survey, including Benin in West Africa and Croatia in Eastern Europe, suggests that lack of historical experience of multiparty elections is not an insuperable barrier to effective and transparent contests.

By contrast, countries holding elections during these six month scoring *least* well include Sudan, Togo, and Ethiopia in Sub-Saharan Africa and also Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in Central Asia. The poor performance in PEI reflects the lack of political rights and civil liberties in these countries, as monitored by human rights watch organizations.[2]

The comparison of all 125 countries in PEI in Figure 1 confirms the strong association between PEI and the Freedom House/Polity IV index of democratization, as expected. Nevertheless, some outliers can be observed, like Tunisia, where the positive rating of recent elections bodes well for the transition from autocracy in this country.

FIGURE 1: ELECTORAL INTEGRITY (PEI) AND DEMOCRATIZATION
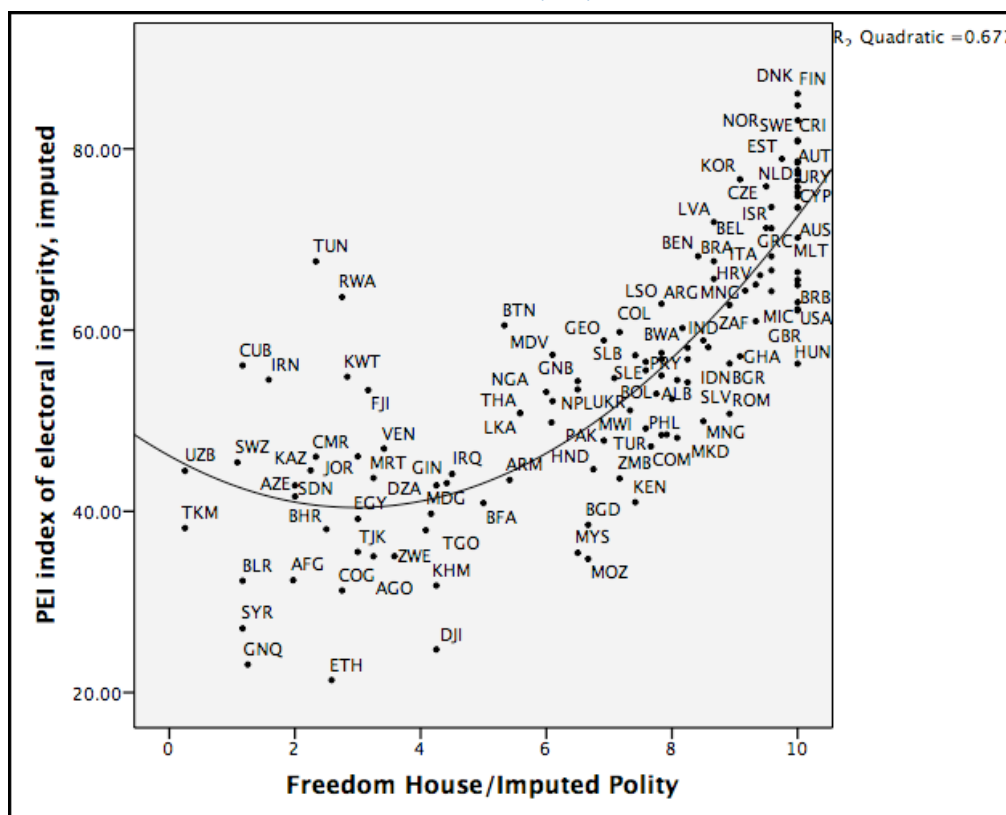
Source: The perceptions of Electoral Integrity expert survey (PEI 3.5)

Table 2 shows the scores in eleven sub-dimensions of electoral integrity and allows a more detailed comparison of the performance of countries at different stages of the electoral cycle. As with previous PEI surveys, the weakest link in the electoral cycle concerns political finance, the stage generating the greatest concern. Elsewhere the project has demonstrated that several forms of legal regulations are widely used around the world, including transparency requirements, spending and donor limits, and public funding, but the weakness of these is often in the implementation stage, as well as the lack of consistency.[3]

TABLE 2: PEI BY COUNTRY, ELECTIONS 1 JAN 2015 TO 30 JUNE 2015

Nation	PEI index	Electoral laws	Electoral procedures	District boundaries	Voter registration	Party and candidate registration	Media coverage	Campaign finance	Voting process	Vote count	Results	Electoral authorities
Finland	86	80	98	95	71	93	70	70	83	99	96	96
Denmark	85	91	99	91	84	87	69	70	76	98	94	91
Estonia	79	75	84	90	68	75	69	58	89	87	86	83
Israel	74	76	92	79	62	76	58	61	58	91	87	87
Poland	74	77	83	76	69	77	56	61	75	82	78	80
Greece	71	48	94	77	59	72	55	50	64	92	90	87
Benin	68	83	77	51	69	65	70	40	56	85	80	88
Croatia	65	65	77	55	51	64	48	59	64	80	79	72
UK	65	37	85	65	43	65	39	58	71	85	73	79
Micronesia	63	76	73	47	74	68	57	34	62	74	68	70
Lesotho	63	80	82	46	69	60	48	39	55	77	76	76
Mexico	57	54	71	68	63	53	50	40	50	80	51	65
El Salvador	54	56	62	49	60	60	46	36	55	67	48	58
Nigeria	53	75	66	42	62	60	49	20	30	73	67	70
Guyana	53	43	77	61	47	63	36	30	48	66	45	74
Sri Lanka	51	57	69	49	51	47	35	27	45	64	61	69
Turkey	49	33	64	53	47	50	27	28	49	69	69	53
Suriname	48	51	64	42	47	62	38	26	44	52	63	52
Comoros	47	83	48	26	38	48	63	29	28	62	55	56
Kazakhstan	45	31	52	52	43	36	26	33	51	59	63	42
Uzbekistan	44	32	57	43	56	35	27	29	50	50	74	38
Zambia	44	53	54	31	59	48	30	27	33	58	55	49
Sudan	43	26	49	37	42	48	37	26	44	55	58	43
Togo	38	37	41	23	28	49	48	29	40	36	37	40
Tajikistan	36	18	43	24	41	27	30	22	40	48	57	35
Ethiopia	21	11	19	30	34	26	19	18	21	13	40	10

Source: The perceptions of Electoral Integrity expert survey (PEI 3.5)

ILLUSTRATIVE CASES

Some selected contests illustrate the factors underlying these expert evaluations.

Estonia

In the Baltics, the March 2015 **Estonian** legislative election, for example, was evaluated as having very high overall electoral integrity. Ever since independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the country has held a series of multiparty contests.[4] In the Parliament (Riigikogu) 101 members are elected through an open-list proportional representation system to serve 4-year terms. This 2015 election was the first since the resignation of former prime minister Andrus Ansip, which led to a government composed by the coalition between the Reform Party and the Social Democrats. OSCE/ODHIR conducted a needs assessment prior to the polls and declared full confidence in the electoral process. Estonia has pioneered Internet voting, and the OSCE noted that possible improvements were needed in this area, its accompanying legal provisions and their implementation. Political participation of minorities could also be further improved.[5] Yet, the country scored well above the global average on all eleven PEI sub-dimensions, as shown in Table 2. Only the dimension of campaign finance was evaluated more critically. This is in line with the highly favorable international rankings of the country which agencies report on many other dimensions, such as press and economic freedoms.[6]

Tajikistan

By contrast, in **Tajikistan** in Central Asia, the incumbent won the March 2015 elections for the Majlisi Namoyandagon (Assembly of Representatives); the People's Democratic Party (PDP) won with 71.4 percent of the vote, gaining an overwhelming 55 out of 63 seats (87%). The contest used a mixed electoral system combining 41 members elected by absolute majority vote in single-member constituencies and 22 members elected through closed-list proportional representation. The PEI experts attested that the contest had low electoral integrity overall with a particularly poor score on party and candidate registration. Some political party representatives were not allowed to be present during the counting, with increased suspicion of vote stuffing and fraudulent counting.[7] The electoral campaign did not provide space for a true debate. The media was also reported as being used to promote the ruling party.[8] In a country highly dominated and controlled by the government party, with civil liberties restricted, the OSCE declared that elections took place in a "restricted political space" and "failed to provide a level playing field for candidates" and, therefore, did not meet OSCE standards[9]. The EU seconded this statement, with great concern expressed regarding the country's situation, namely problems over the electoral law, the right to stand, freedom of expression and assembly and access to media. The results of the PEI survey confirmed the observer reports as the country achieved low scores on all PEI sub-dimensions, with a particularly poor performance in electoral laws.

The United Kingdom

Some results, however, are perhaps somewhat more surprising. In particular, the **UK** general elections in May 2015 scored only moderately in PEI, despite centuries of Westminster democracy. The contest was widely expected to be a tight race, according to the campaign opinion polls, but despite these predictions, election night saw a clear parliamentary majority given to the Conservative party. Table 2 breaks down the PEI results according to the eleven stages in the electoral cycle, suggesting that British elections are poorly rated by experts in terms of the fairness of electoral laws, with 650 single member districts (First-Past-the-Post) posing high barriers to the representation of geographically-dispersed minor parties, such as the Liberal Democrats, the Greens, and UKIP. Voter registration processes also scored poorly in Britain, according to the experts. In this election, individual electoral registration replaced the previous system of household registration. OSCE/ODIHR observers raised concern about the completeness of the electoral lists and the possibility that some groups, such as students and first-time voters, may have been left off.[10]

Nigeria

The **Nigerian** presidential elections, in the most populous country in West Africa, were evaluated as having moderate electoral integrity. The polls were delayed for six weeks, due to security concerns regarding sectarian violence in the country's Northeast. The electoral campaign was competitive but marked by violence, with both the incumbent and the opposition reporting attacks and murders of their supporters.[11] The Boko Haram resurgence also threatened freedom of assembly. Media favoring the incumbent was a concern for observers, not being addressed by the regulatory body.[12] Yet, despite these concerns, EU observers considered the overall outcome of the elections as "peaceful and orderly (…) despite frustration and challenges caused by often late opening of polling sites, failing biometric voter verification, some regrettable violent incidents, and re-polling on Sunday".[13] They commended the National Election Commission NEC efforts given the systemic challenges.[14] Important challenges remain, however, such as adequate "legal provisions for the right to stand, campaign finance, transparency, and opportunity for remedy"[15]. The PEI experts gave the country its lowest score in the sub-dimension of campaign finance.

MORE INFORMATION

More information about the Electoral Integrity Project and the PEI survey is available at www.electoralintegrityproject.com.

The 3.5 data release and codebook is available for download at: https://thedata.harvard.edu/dataverse/PEI.

FIGURE 2: THE PEI WORLD MAP
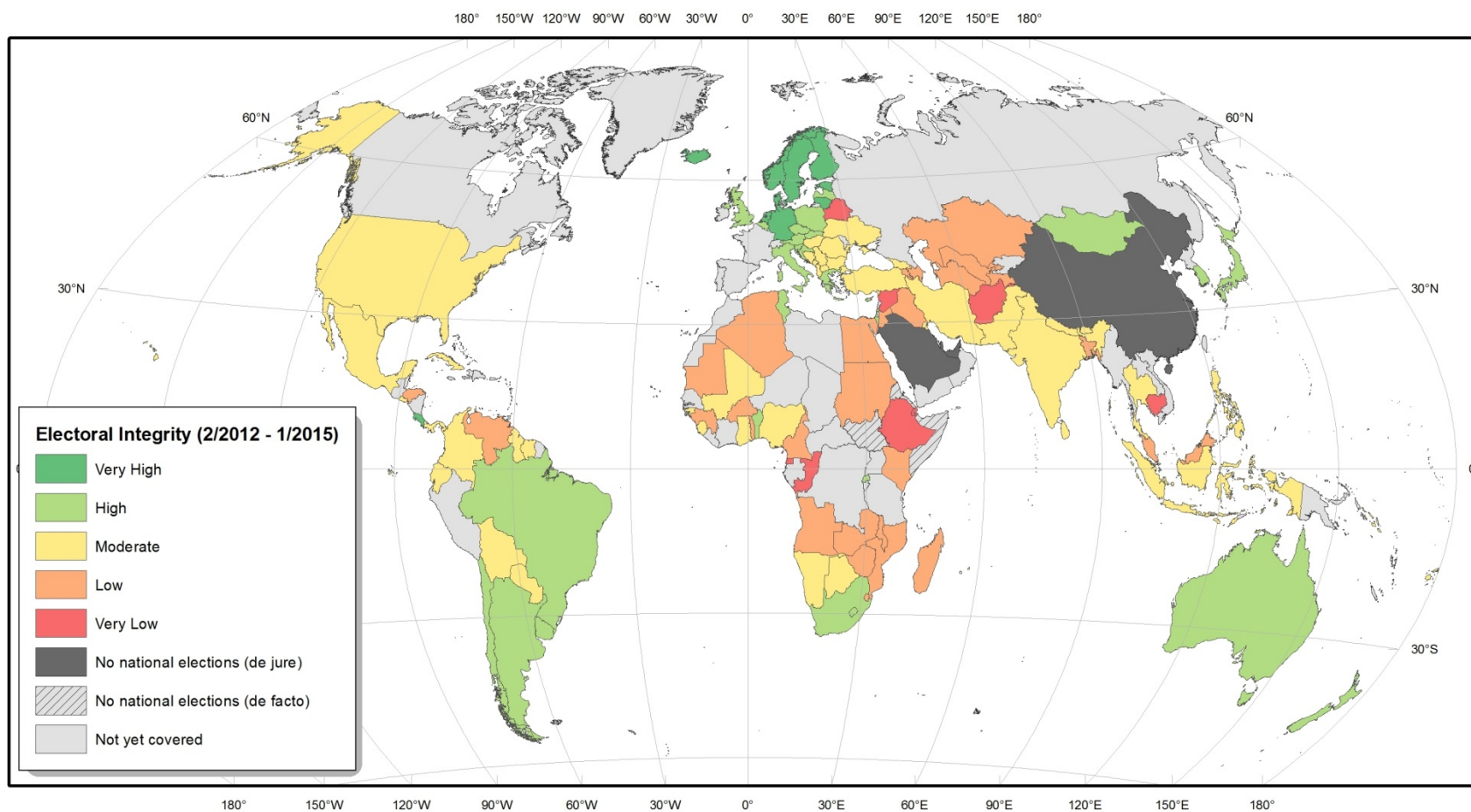
Note: The levels of electoral integrity are calculated in terms of standard deviations from the mean: Very High = >1.5 Std.Dev.; High = 0.5-1.5 Std.Dev.; Moderate = -0.5 – 0.5 Std.Dev.; Low = -1.5 - -0.5 Std. Dev.; Very Low = < - 1.5 Std. Dev.

Source: The perceptions of Electoral Integrity expert survey (PEI 3.5)

Technical Appendix: Performance indicators, methods and data

Aims: To start to gather new evidence, on 1st July 2012 the project launched an expert survey of Perceptions of Electoral Integrity. The design was developed in consultation with Professor Jorgen Elklit (Aarhus University) and Professor Andrew Reynolds (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill). The method of pooling expert knowledge has been used for years for measuring complex issues, such as to assess the risks of building nuclear plants, levels of corruption, and processes of democratization.

Global Coverage: The PEI survey of electoral integrity focuses upon independent nation-states around the world which have held direct (popular) elections for the national parliament or presidential elections. The criteria for inclusion are listed below. The elections analyzed in this report cover the three-year period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2015. In total, PEI 3.5 covers 153 elections in 125 nations.[16]

Criteria for inclusion in the survey	#	Definition and source
Total number of independent nation-states	193	Membership of the United Nations
Excluded categories		
Micro-states	12	Population less than 100,000 in 2013, including Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Liechtenstein, Marshall Islands, Monaco, Nauru, Palau, Saint Kitts and Nevis, San Marino, Seychelles, and Tuvalu.
Without de jure direct (popular) elections for the lower house of the national legislature	5	Brunei Darussalam, China, Qatar, UAE, and Saudi Arabia
State has constitutional provisions for direct (popular) elections for the lower house of the national legislature, but none have been held since independence or within the last 30 years (*de facto*)	3	Eritrea, Somalia, and South Sudan
Sub-total of nation-states included in the survey	173	
Covered to date in the PEI 3.5 dataset (from mid-2012 to mid-2015)	125	72% of all the subtotal of nation-states

Because of the selection rules, elections contained in each cumulative release of the PEI survey can be treated as a representative cross-section of *all* national presidential and legislative elections around the world (with the exception of the exclusion of micro-states). The countries in PEI-3.5 are broadly similar in political and socio-economic characteristics to those countries holding national elections which are not yet covered in the survey, with the exception of being slightly larger in population size.

Respondents: For each country, the project identified around forty election experts, defined as a political scientist (or other social scientist in a related discipline) who had demonstrated knowledge of the electoral process in a particular country (such as through publications, membership of a relevant research group or network, or university employment). The selection sought a roughly 50:50 balance between international and domestic experts, the latter defined by location or citizenship. Experts were asked to complete an online survey. In total, 1,696 completed responses were received in the survey, representing just under one third of the experts that the project contacted (29%).

Concepts: The idea of electoral integrity is defined by the project to refer to agreed international conventions and global norms, applying universally to all countries worldwide through the election cycle, including during the pre-election period, the campaign, on polling day, and its aftermath. [17]

Measurement: To measure this concept, the PEI pilot survey questionnaire includes 49 items on electoral integrity (see Table A1) ranging over the whole electoral cycle. These items fell into eleven sequential sub-dimensions, as shown. Most attention in detecting fraud focuses upon the final stages of the voting process, such as the role of observers in preventing ballot-stuffing, vote-rigging and manipulated results. Drawing upon the notion of a 'menu of manipulation',[18] however, the concept of an electoral cycle suggests that failure in even one step in the sequence, or one link in the chain, can undermine electoral integrity. The list of elections in the survey is presented in Table A2.

The electoral integrity items in the survey were recoded, where a higher score consistently represents a more positive evaluation. Missing data was estimated based on multiple imputation of chained equations in groups composing of the eleven sub-dimensions. The Perceptions of Electoral Integrity (PEI) Index is then an additive function of the 49 imputed variables, standardized to 100-points. Sub-indices of the eleven sub-dimensions in the electoral cycle are summations of the imputed individual variables.[19]

Validity and reliability tests: The results of the pilot study, from the elections held in 2012, were tested for external validity (with independent sources of evidence), internal validity (consistency within the group of experts), and legitimacy (how far the results can be regarded as authoritative by stakeholders). The analysis, presented elsewhere, demonstrates substantial external validity for the PEI data when compared to many other expert datasets, as well as internal validity across the experts within the survey, and legitimacy as measured by levels of congruence between mass and expert opinions within each country. [20]

For external validity tests, the PEI Index in the third release was confirmed to be significantly correlated with other standard independent indicators contained in the 2015 version of the Quality of Government cross-national dataset, including the combined Freedom House/imputed Polity measure of democratization (R=.759** N. 122), the Cheibub-Ghandi classification of democracy-autocracy (R=.626**, N.122), the Bertelsmann measure of Free and Fair elections (R=.659**, N. 90), and the Cingranelli-Richards measure of Electoral Self-Determination rights (R=.566**, N.122).[21]

For internal validity purposes, several tests were run using OLS regression models to predict whether the PEI index varied significantly by several social and demographic characteristics of the experts, including sex, age, education, domestic and international institutional location, and familiarity with the election. In accordance with the findings from the previous versions, domestic experts and those reporting a higher level of familiarity with the election were significantly more positive in their evaluations, but other social characteristics were not significant predictors of evaluations.

Codebook The PEI-3.5 Codebook provides detailed description of all variables and imputation procedures. A copy and all the data can downloaded from the project's dataverse: https://thedata.harvard.edu/dataverse/PEI

TABLE A1: PEI SURVEY QUESTIONS

	Sections	Performance indicators	Direction
PRE-ELECTION	1. Electoral laws	1-1 Electoral laws were unfair to smaller parties	N
		1-2 Electoral laws favored the governing party or parties (N)	N
		1-3 Election laws restricted citizens' rights	N
	2. Electoral procedures	2-1 Elections were well managed	P
		2-2 Information about voting procedures was widely available	P
		2-3 Election officials were fair	P
		2-4 Elections were conducted in accordance with the law	P
	3. Boundaries	3-1 Boundaries discriminated against some parties	N
		3-2 Boundaries favored incumbents	N
		3-3 Boundaries were impartial	P
	4. Voter registration	4-1 Some citizens were not listed in the register	N
		4-2 The electoral register was inaccurate	N
		4-3 Some ineligible electors were registered	N
	5. Party registration	5-1 Some opposition candidates were prevented from running	N
		5-2 Women had equal opportunities to run for office	P
		5-3 Ethnic and national minorities had equal opportunities to run for office	P
		5-4 Only top party leaders selected candidates	N
		5-5 Some parties/candidates were restricted from holding campaign rallies	N
CAMPAIGN	6. Campaign media	6-1 Newspapers provided balanced election news	P
		6-2 TV news favored the governing party	N
		6-3 Parties/candidates had fair access to political broadcasts and advertising	P
		6-4 Journalists provided fair coverage of the elections	P
		6-5 Social media were used to expose electoral fraud	P
	7. Campaign finance	7-1 Parties/candidates had equitable access to public subsidies	P
		7-2 Parties/candidates had equitable access to political donations	P
		7-3 Parties/candidates publish transparent financial accounts	P
		7.4 Rich people buy elections	N
		7.5 Some states resources were improperly used for campaigning	N
ELECTION DAY	8. Voting process	8-1 Some voters were threatened with violence at the polls	N
		8-2 Some fraudulent votes were cast	N
		8-3 The process of voting was easy	P
		8-4 Voters were offered a genuine choice at the ballot box	P
		8-5 Postal ballots were available	P
		8-6 Special voting facilities were available for the disabled	P
		8-7 National citizens living abroad could vote	P
		8-8 Some form of internet voting was available	P
POST-ELECTION	9. Vote count	9-1 Ballot boxes were secure	P
		9-2 The results were announced without undue delay	P
		9-3 Votes were counted fairly	P
		9-4 International election monitors were restricted	N
		9-5 Domestic election monitors were restricted	N
	10.Post-election	10-1 Parties/candidates challenged the results	N
		10-2 The election led to peaceful protests	N
		10-3 The election triggered violent protests	N
		10-4 Any disputes were resolved through legal channels	P
	11. Electoral authorities	11-1 The election authorities were impartial	P
		11-2 The authorities distributed information to citizens	P
		11-3 The authorities allowed public scrutiny of their performance	P
		11-4 The election authorities performed well	P

Note: Direction of the original items P=positive, N=negative. **Source:** Pippa Norris, Ferran Martínez i Coma, and Max Gromping. *The expert survey of Perceptions of Electoral Integrity*. www.electoralintegrityproject.com.
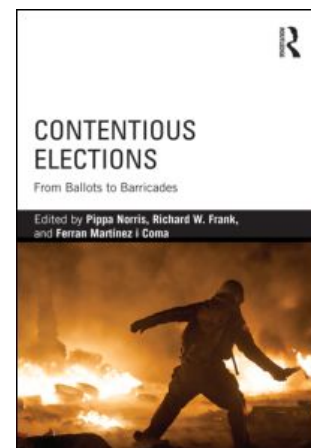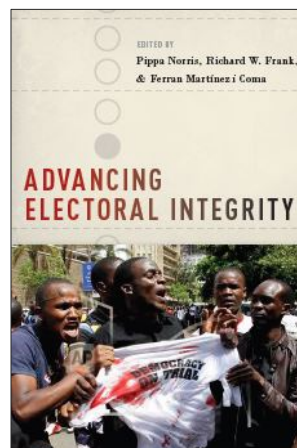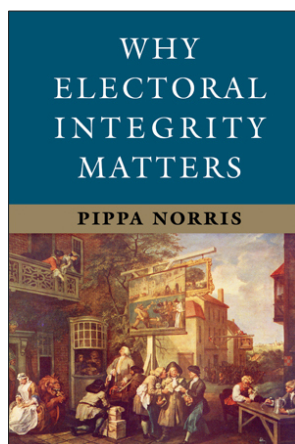
Further reading from EIP

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[1] https://sites.google.com/site/electoralintegrityproject4/projects/expert-survey-2/the-year-in-elections-2014

[2] Freedom House. *Freedom in the World, 2015.* https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world#.VcDNupNViko

[3] www.moneypoliticstransparency.org

[4] http://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/69/

[5] http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/estonia/139566?download=true

[6] See, for example, www.freedomhouse.org and https://index.rsf.org

[7] http://www.rferl.org/content/tajik-elections-rahmon-party-victory/26877105.html

[8] http://www.rferl.org/content/tajik-elections-rahmon-party-victory/26877105.html

[9] http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/tajikistan/143306?download=true

[10] http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/uk/147991?download=true

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[15] http://www.eueom.eu/files/pressreleases/english/300315prps-nigeria_en.pdf

[16] In addition, in 2014 elections in Haiti, Lebanon, and Comoros were delayed or suspended. Those are thus not included in the dataset. The election in Thailand was held and later annulled. Results are included in the data release.

[17] Pippa Norris. 2013. 'The new research agenda studying electoral integrity.' Special issue of *Electoral Studies* 32(4).

[18] Andreas Schedler. 2002. 'The menu of manipulation.' *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 36-50.

[19] See the codebook for further information. www.electoralintegtityproject.com

[20] Pippa Norris, Ferran Martinez i Coma and Richard Frank. 2013. 'Assessing the quality of elections.' *Journal of Democracy.* 24(4): 124-135; Pippa Norris, Richard W. Frank and Ferran Martinez i Coma. 2014. Eds. *Advancing Electoral Integrity.* New York: Oxford University Press; Martínez i Coma, Ferran and Carolien Van Ham. 2015. 'Can Experts Judge Elections? Testing the Validity of Expert Judgments for Measuring Election Integrity'. *European Journal of Political Research* doi:10.1111/1475-6765.12084; Norris, Pippa, Richard W. Frank and Ferran Martínez i Coma. 2014. 'Measuring Electoral Integrity around the World: A New Dataset' *PS: Political Science & Politics*, Vol.47:4, pp: 789-798.

[21] Jan Teorell, Stefan Dahlberg, Sören Holmberg, Bo Rothstein, Felix Hartmann and Richard Svensson. 2015. *The Quality of Government Standard Dataset,* version Jan15. University of Gothenburg: The Quality of Government Institute, http://www.qog.pol.gu.se.