PROTECTING ELECTIONS

Risk Management, Resilience-Building and Crisis Management in Elections

Discussion Paper 4/2023

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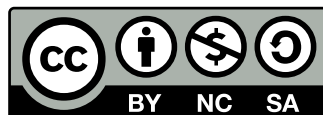Risk Management, Resilience-Building and Crisis Management in Elections

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Acknowledgement

Acronyms and abbreviations

ACE   Administration and Cost of Elections project (now known as ACE Electoral Knowledge Network)

AEC   Australian Electoral Commission

BRIDGE   Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections

ECI   Election Commission of India

ECF-SADC   Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC Countries

EII   Electoral Integrity Initiative

EIP   Electoral Integrity Project

EMB   Electoral management body

ERIS   Electoral Reform International Services

ISO   International Organization for Standardization

KAF   Kofi Annan Foundation

OECD   Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SADC   Southern African Development Community

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main objective of this paper is to outline the importance of and avenues for an increased use of risk management, resilience-building and crisis management methods to protect electoral integrity.

When elections go wrong, they can contribute to political crises that undermine democratic processes and institutions, trigger violent conflicts and instability, and harm governments' domestic and international legitimacy. Therefore, calls to protect electoral integrity against manipulation from autocratic figures, malicious foreign interferences, negative impacts from natural hazards, and technical and human errors are ever increasing.

There are different approaches to strengthening electoral integrity. In most instances, national efforts focus on entrenching legal and institutional securities, mainly by ensuring that the election law establishes a level playing field for all stakeholders and that electoral management bodies (EMBs) have the independence and resources necessary for impartial decision making and action. This, however, is not always sufficient to safeguard electoral integrity. The complexity of electoral processes and the stressful environments they are administered within mean that elections are subject to various known and unknown risks. When such risks materialize, they can cause stress and shocks and produce crises. Therefore, the ability of electoral administrators to navigate complex and ever-changing landscapes remains of the utmost importance for the conduct of credible elections.

EMBs and international electoral assistance providers have long understood this challenge. However, the research and experience accumulated by International IDEA over the past decade show that electoral management lags behind other sectors in adopting methodological approaches to dealing with risks, threats and crises. Whereas financial, health, security, disaster prevention and recovery, and other sectors that deal with high-stake and high-risk events widely adopt and implement risk management, resilience-building and crisis

Calls to protect electoral integrity against manipulation from autocratic figures, malicious foreign interferences, negative impacts from natural hazards, and technical and human errors are ever increasing.

management methods, most EMBs use them insufficiently, if at all. To promote change, two developments are critical.

First, the value of these management methods needs to be broadly understood and recognized by national electoral stakeholders. A back-to-back review of the risk management, resilience-building and crisis management theory, practice and programming avenues in elections provides the outline of a roadmap for promoting the increased implementation of these methods by EMBs and other electoral stakeholders.

Second, a programming framework that unlocks synergies between different management methods and specific electoral integrity remedies is needed. The main milestones of the development process proposed by this paper include the consolidation of existing remedies for protecting elections, further work to link the three methods to the electoral cycle approach, the development of an assessment methodology for evaluating formal processes, practices and resources for protecting elections, and charting programming options for national stakeholders.

In the face of increasing threats to democratic institutions and processes, the pace at which we become well versed in protecting elections matters.

In the face of increasing threats to democratic institutions and processes, the pace at which we become well versed in protecting elections matters. Consensus-building, including between national and international actors, will be necessary for achieving a fast track for learning, consolidation and diffusion of good practices that can respond to existing and emerging threats.

INTRODUCTION

The integrity of elections is threatened worldwide. However, this relates less to how elections are organized and more to the deteriorating democratic environment in which elections occur (International IDEA 2019a, 2021a; V-Dem 2021). Corrupting electoral processes and their results is often the tactic of incumbents with autocratic mindsets, offering an inroad for malicious foreign interference to destabilize democracies. Although these strategies are not new, the 2020 United States elections and 2022 Brazil elections further exposed their intricacy to the world. At the same time, the Covid-19 pandemic has initiated the writing of a new chapter in the operating manuals of electoral management bodies (EMBs) worldwide—one about the management of crisis situations.

Understanding that democracies are increasingly under threat and that democratic elections are critical for overcoming such situations or revitalizing democracy after backsliding, makes calls for protecting elections ever urgent. As part of the response to this call, this paper charts approaches to protecting elections that International IDEA will explore, in partnership with national stakeholders and peer organizations worldwide.

The integrity of elections is threatened worldwide. However, this relates less to how elections are organized and more to the deteriorating democratic environment.

Key takeaway

Protecting elections is defined as efforts to prevent, withstand or recover from negative occurrences that may undermine the integrity of electoral processes and results. It is considered part of a broader effort to promote electoral integrity.

For this paper, protecting elections is defined as efforts to prevent, withstand or recover from negative occurrences that may undermine the integrity of electoral processes and results. In that respect, the protection of elections is considered part of a broader effort to promote electoral integrity. The Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security (2012: 6) has defined

electoral integrity as 'any election that is based on the democratic principles of universal suffrage and political equality as reflected in international standards and agreements, and is professional, impartial, and transparent in its preparation and administration throughout the electoral cycle'.

The comparative body of knowledge on election integrity is mainly found in the policy, practice and research related to international electoral assistance. The paper, therefore, first provides an overview of traditional approaches to protecting the integrity of elections and reflects on current challenges. Next, it introduces risk management, resilience-building and crisis management methods. The three methods are long institutionalized by sectors that face high risks, such as financial, health, security, disaster prevention and preparedness, and so on. However, they remain vastly underutilized in protecting the integrity of electoral processes, which are high-risk and high-stake events for democratic societies. A back-to-back review of the three methods aims to make their niches and synergies in protecting electoral integrity more apparent. Challenges work together, and so should solutions. Therefore, in the final section, this paper outlines practical steps for developing and implementing the integrated framework for protecting elections that draws on the three methods.

Chapter 1
FROM SUPPORTING TO PROTECTING ELECTIONS

The focus, scope and methods of electoral assistance have evolved over time. This can be depicted in the language of the day. In the early decades, and for a long time, the emphasis was on promoting *free and fair* elections. Then, the *electoral cycle approach* signalled a major shift in how electoral assistance efforts were programmed. One decade ago, the concept of *strengthening electoral integrity* was introduced, leading to a large-scale realignment of electoral assistance. Currently, it is described as *protecting elections* in the face of democratic backsliding (Pearce Laanela et al. 2021).

For instance, the United Nations tracks its engagement in electoral assistance back to the observation of the 1947 Korean elections (Halff 2017[1]). In the following decades, the UN upheld the organization of free and fair elections and referendums in numerous contexts by providing supervision, and financial and technical assistance. In the 1990s, the global and regional focus was on normative frameworks, the institutionalization of electoral assistance and the development of comparative knowledge for practitioners (Norris 2017; Leterme 2018). In terms of knowledge, the immediate priority was to help inform crucial electoral decisions, such as the choices of electoral legal and institutional frameworks. International IDEA Handbooks on electoral system design (International IDEA 1997, 2005) and electoral management design (International IDEA 2006, 2014a) filled these gaps. Over time, similar resources—such as handbooks, policy papers, guides, academic articles— were developed to strengthen electoral justice, prevent electoral violence and malpractices, promote gender sensitivity and inclusion, uphold international electoral standards and obligations, and assess the conduciveness of contexts in which elections take place (e.g. International IDEA 2010, 2014b; IFES 2011a; Birch 2020; The Carter Center n.d.; EU 2016; OSCE 2002; USAID 2021; Vickery and Ellena 2020—to name just a few).

The focus, scope and methods of electoral assistance have evolved over time.

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[1]   Although Halff (2017) also highlights the engagement of the UN's predecessor, the League of Nations, with its involvement in plebiscites in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s.

Arguably, four initiatives remain electoral assistance cornerstones. The first is the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network (hereafter ACE). Originating in discussions relating to the cost and the administration of elections (known as the Administration and Cost of Elections project), ACE was launched in 1998 as 'an online encyclopedia for election practitioners and anyone else interested in electoral procedures' (ACE n.d.). ACE's ambition is to be a one-stop shop for knowledge on all aspects of electoral processes, whether readily accessible or available for sourcing from the associated expert network.

The second initiative is Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE). This has a similar mission to ACE, but instead of consolidating knowledge, it offers a comprehensive training curriculum on all critical aspects of electoral processes. The BRIDGE project, which launched in 1999, includes '17 modules that provide a sound introduction to all aspects of electoral administration' (BRIDGE n.d.). It remains the most prominent electoral capacity development resource.

The third initiative is the Electoral Cycle Approach, a conceptual framework developed in 2006 by the electoral assistance community for holistic visualization and programming of electoral assistance (Tuccinardi et al. 2008). It distinguishes between three electoral periods (pre-, during and post-election) and eight subphases, which are common denominators of democratic electoral processes. Outlining electoral periods and subphases has made it easier to plan, fund and evaluate electoral assistance.

Possibly the most impactful global initiative to counter negative events in elections was initiated by the Kofi Annan Foundation and International IDEA, who convened the Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security

The fourth, and possibly the most impactful global initiative to counter negative events in elections, was initiated by the Kofi Annan Foundation (KAF) and International IDEA, who convened 'the Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security—a high-level group of former leaders, Nobel Prize winners and experts' to 'identify challenges and solutions to uphold the integrity of elections' (International IDEA 2013). The initiative delivered a report entitled *Deepening Democracy: A Strategy for Improving the Integrity of Elections Worldwide*, which was overarching in terms of advocating mutually reinforcing commitments and actions to 'increase the likelihood that incumbent politicians and governments will strengthen the integrity of national elections' (Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security 2012: 7). In addition to action-oriented policy recommendations, the report charted pathways for further research. Practitioners and academics were quick to endorse and translate those recommendations into electoral assistance and research projects.

The most notable example of the academic-driven research effort was the establishment of the Electoral Integrity Project (EIP), which was initially based at Harvard University and the University of Sydney, focused on 'developing and deepening concepts and theories concerning the causes and consequences of electoral integrity' (EIP n.d.). The EIP, now housed at the Royal Military College of Canada/Queen's University Canada and the University of East Anglia, continues to 'produce innovative and policy-relevant research comparing elections worldwide' (EIP n.d.).

An example of a practice-focused spin-off project is KAF's Electoral Integrity Initiative (EII), which launched 'an informal network of organizations and individuals who share a common concern for the unaddressed political challenges that undermine elections, especially in countries that have recently emerged from, or are experiencing, prolonged political instability' (EII n.d.). Over recent years, EII has served as a platform for international governmental and non-governmental electoral assistance organizations and academics to discuss, exchange experiences, cooperate and coordinate engagement in electoral assistance projects globally, regionally and at the country level.

The pattern that usually transpires involves electoral assistance providers and academics first developing remedies for specific problems. When these are amassed, there are often initiatives to integrate them into broader frameworks that consolidate and enable synergies between them.

Despite these efforts, more recently, a global trend of democratic backsliding has been diagnosed, affecting both transitional and well-established democracies. International IDEA (2021a: 1) finds: 'The number of countries moving in an authoritarian direction in 2020 outnumbered those going in a democratic direction.' V-Dem (2021: 6) reports that: 'The global decline during the past 10 years is steep and continues in 2020, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America' and 'The level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2020 is down to levels last found around 1990.' According to the Economist Intelligence Unit (2020: 4), the average global score in the 2020 Democracy Index is 'by far the worst global score since the index was first produced in 2006'.

Key takeaway

Electoral assistance providers and academics first develop remedies for specific problems. When these are amassed, there are often initiatives to integrate them into broader frameworks that consolidate and enable synergies between them.

Particularly worrying are findings that democratic institutions in well-established democracies are being increasingly undermined and destabilized as a result of disputed elections or external interference in electoral processes, or by autocrats who—once democratically elected—try to close the door behind them. International IDEA (2021a: 6) finds that 'the most common democratic declines in the world tended to be related to the integrity of elections, media and freedom of expression'. V-Dem (2021: 22) finds that autocrats first 'restrict and control the media while curbing academia and civil society', then 'couple these with disrespect for political opponents to feed polarization while using the machinery of the government to spread disinformation' and 'only when [they have] come far enough on these fronts is it time for an attack on democracy's core: elections and other formal institutions'. Recent developments—such as mastering the manipulation of voters' preferences through the abuse of social media platforms (Bradshaw and Howard 2019),

and abusing public health and safety measures, designed to curb the Covid-19 pandemic, so as to limit participation (International IDEA 2021b)—fuel the vulnerability of elections and amplify global calls to protect them.

All this means that there is a need to broaden efforts to protect electoral integrity.

Efforts to protect electoral integrity need to accelerate the development of specific remedies for addressing new challenges and to devise frameworks that unlock synergies between them

On the one hand, it is necessary to accelerate the development of specific remedies for addressing new challenges to electoral processes. For example, more needs to be done regarding regulation and management of election-related cybersecurity, misinformation, illicit funding and different forms of election-related violence, including violence against women and election administrators more broadly, to mention a few. On the other hand, there is a need to devise frameworks that unlock synergies between these specific remedies. The latter is the focus of this paper.

Key takeaway

Efforts to protect elections should be led by national organizations that are well versed in applying risk management, resilience-building and crisis management methods to this end. This argument is situated in the realms of business management and public administration.

This paper argues that efforts to protect elections should be led by national organizations that are well versed in applying *risk management, resilience-building and crisis management methods* to this end. In the paradigm of the multi-disciplinary approach to electoral management proposed by James (James 2021)—which encompasses comparative politics, political philosophy, public administration, business management, law and computer science—this argument is situated in the realms of business management and public administration.

Because systematic studies about using these three methods in elections are largely missing, this paper will first introduce and delineate the concepts (Chapter 2). Then, it will consolidate theoretical arguments and detail evidence of arrangements that already exist in elections, as well as outlining programming options for their greater use in protecting electoral integrity (Chapters 3, 4 and 5). Finally, the paper charts a roadmap for unlocking synergies between different methods (Chapter 6) and concludes (Chapter 7).

Chapter 2

CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS: THREE METHODS, ONE FRAMEWORK

Risk management, resilience-building and crisis management are methods widely endorsed by organizations and sectors that need to protect high-stake assets in high-risk environments. Although there is no single widely accepted definition for any of the three—possibly because of the tendency of each sector to adjust the definition using its own vocabulary—each method has specific objectives. Risk management is primarily about establishing processes for detecting and preventing the kinds of negative occurrences that an organization might encounter. Resilience-building is about strengthening an organization or a system to maintain continuity in the face of stresses and shocks resulting from those risks that do materialize. Crisis management is mainly about recovering from disruption and establishing normalcy.[2]

In theory and practice, however, there are many overlaps, and such examples are mentioned throughout the paper. For instance, Sisk (International IDEA 2017a) and Merkel and Lührmann (2021) refer to recovery as a resilience feature. Sakaki and Lukner (2013) attribute prevention and mitigation to crisis management, while Alexander (2015) refers to resilience-building as part of crisis management.

Therefore, when programming happens at the level of one organization or a network of related governance agencies, it is not uncommon that only one method is adopted, which then consumes elements of the other two. For example, risk management concepts and practices adopted by individual organizations sometimes expand beyond the detection and prevention of risks to incorporate dealing with stresses or crises that occur when risks are not successfully prevented and mitigated. Similarly, some crisis management models include preventing negative occurrences or withstanding stresses. Resilience-building can encompass preventing risks and/or restoring continuity.

Risk management, resilience-building and crisis management are methods widely endorsed by organizations and sectors that need to protect high-stake assets in high-risk environments.

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[2]   The order in which the three methods are presented in this paper denotes the chronology of the occurrences: risks, threats and crises.

Key takeaway

Because risk management, resilience-building and crisis management often work towards the same goal, there are many overlaps between these methods in theory and practice. Therefore, it is not uncommon that organizations adopt one method, which then consumes elements of the other two. While such constructs may be logical and practical, they may also be constraining.

While such constructs may be logical and practical, they may also be constraining. For example, because risk management requires proactiveness and methodological rigour established through a set of devoted organizational policies, resources and responsibilities, placing it within the crisis management process—which is reactive and entails different engagement procedures—will make it less optimal. The opposite is also true. Resilience-building often requires that action is taken at the level of a system in which an organizational entity operates. Tying it to the internal process of a single organization, which is common to risk and crisis management, could be confining.

Ideally, risk management, resilience-building and crisis management should work together.

Ideally, risk management, resilience-building and crisis management should work together. In this respect, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Baubion 2013: 5) argues: 'Building the resilience of societies is consistent with investment in prevention and preparedness as well as with enhancing crisis management capacities. Promoting the concept of resilience is a powerful driver for self-organizing risk and crisis management capacities at many different levels.'

However, employing the three methods in a way that unlocks synergies between them may be easier said than done. Broadly speaking, overlaps—conceptual, regulatory or operational—could generate confusion and conflicts (Fulghieri and Hodrick 2006). Therefore, integrative arrangements should be well thought through to minimize blind spots and remain feasible and logical to practitioners. For example, Mitchell (2013: 5) captures integration points between resilience-building and risk management as follows: 'Where traditional risk management has addressed risk within the existing boundaries of the structure and processes of a system, resilience opens up the possibilities to modify and completely change the way a system is structured and how its core processes work.'

To that end, this paper offers analogies to link each of the three methods with electoral integrity (see Table 2.1). These may constitute a practical framework for any discussion on protecting elections.

The paper will next examine theoretical and empirical aspects of applying and programming risk management, resilience-building and crisis management methods in protecting elections.

Table 2.1. **Methods' goals connected and electoral analogy**

Key goal of method	Electoral analogy
Risk management is primarily about preventing situations that may negatively impact objectives.	Identify and prevent negative occurrences that may undermine the integrity of electoral processes.
Resilience-building is primarily about ensuring continuity by withstanding stresses and shocks.	Strengthen electoral processes and institutions so that they can withstand negative impacts from any risks that materialize, without losing continuity.
Crisis management is primarily about recovering from harmful impacts.	Ensure effective recovery when the integrity of electoral processes and institutions is significantly damaged or lost.

Source: Developed by the author.

Chapter 3

RISK MANAGEMENT IN ELECTIONS

Risk management is an advanced discipline well elaborated in the literature and anchored in practice (COSO 2004; ISO 2018; Salgado et al. 2019). There are countless ways in which the risk management processes can be organized, but common denominators include *risk identification, risk assessment, risk analysis and evaluation, risk communication* and *risk treatment.*

> **A systematic risk management process narrows blind spots, ensures that the process is based on a sound methodology, and promotes risk culture and learning.**

For many EMBs, the process of preventing risks from materializing happens intuitively and relies on people's experience and ingenuity. However, a systematic risk management process narrows blind spots, ensures that the process is based on a sound methodology, and promotes risk culture and learning. Limited global surveys conducted in recent years point to the sparse implementation of formal risk management practices by EMBs. Among 87 EMBs surveyed in 2014 (International IDEA 2016), only 18 had some aspects of a formal risk management process in place. Out of 43 EMB respondents to a comprehensive risk management survey in 2019/20 (International IDEA and AEC 2021), only 11 applied risk management to all areas of their work, while 12 applied it partially.

When EMBs adopt risk management, it often happens under the umbrella of a government-wide effort to institutionalize risk management across all its agencies; for example, this is broadly the practice in Commonwealth countries. In other instances, it is adopted through organic EMB initiatives, such as in Mexico, Norway, Peru or Sweden, or acquired through international electoral assistance efforts, such as in Nepal, Nigeria or Sierra Leone (International IDEA 2016; International IDEA and AEC 2021). The whole-of-government risk management approach is more promising because it implies mandatory adoption, government guidance and implementation support. Examples from Australia, Canada, Kenya, South Africa and the United Kingdom point to the critical role of the ministries of finance/treasury in placing requirements and developing guidelines for the institutionalization of risk management processes by EMBs.

> **Key takeaway**
>
> Electoral risk management is a systematic effort to improve knowledge about and situational awareness of internal and external risks to electoral processes in order to initiate timely preventive and mitigating action. There are many ways in which risks can be managed. Still, common denominators of formal risk management processes include: (a) risk identification, (b) risk assessment, (c) risk analysis and evaluation, (d) risk communication and (e) risk treatment.

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) formal risk management process is inspired and guided by the Commonwealth Risk Management Policy (Australian Government 2022), which responded to the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act (Australian Government 2013). In Canada, the Treasury Board issued an Integrated Risk Management Framework in 2001 and an accompanying implementation guide in 2004 'to help Canadian federal organizations implement basic risk management practices in their organizations' (Government of Canada n.d.). The Independent Electoral and Boundary Commission (IEBC) of Kenya followed the requirement set by the Public Sector Risk Management Guide issued by the National Treasury (International IDEA and AEC 2021). In South Africa, the National Treasury is responsible for embedding risk management in the public service, including the Electoral Commission of South Africa (National Treasury n.d.). In 2001, the UK Treasury produced the Orange Book that provided guidance for developing and implementing risk management processes in government organizations (HM Treasury 2004; UK Government 2023).

Other favourable developments include the standardization of risk management in electoral education curriculums and the promotion of the concept as a 'gold standard' by international development organizations. For example, the OECD promotes effective risk management to reduce the vulnerability of public sector organizations and enable them to deliver programmes that benefit citizens (OECD 2020). While this is an opportunity that needs to be maximized, the institutionalization of risk management is complex. It requires significant ambition and effort, while progress often comes in small incremental steps. The literature on the institutionalization of risk management points to the challenge of taking institutionalization superficially and falling short of utilizing its full benefits (Hubbard 2020). According to Hood and Rothstein (2000), the process of institutionalizing risk management is complex and prone to failures, which could drain resources and harm organizations by giving a false sense of protection.

3.1. **PROGRAMMING RISK MANAGEMENT IN ELECTIONS**

Significant guidance for EMBs on institutionalizing risk management can be found in generic and election-specific risk management literature. Accordingly, to establish risk management processes, EMBs should create a fit-for-

The institutionalization of risk management by an EMB must be supported by the leadership, build on processes and resources that already exist and include collaboration with other state and non-state agencies once risk management is established.

purpose risk management framework, including policies, formal guiding documentation, allocation of responsibilities and resources, and build a positive risk management culture and capability (ISO 2018; International IDEA and AEC 2021). The institutionalization of risk management by an EMB must be supported by the leadership, build on processes and resources that already exist and include collaboration with other state and non-state agencies once risk management is established (Frigo and Anderson 2011; International IDEA 2016; International IDEA and AEC 2021).

It is worth pointing out that, while the most significant responsibility for managing process-related risks is with EMBs, elections increasingly need to navigate complex risks in areas outside the mandate or expertise of EMBs. Examples include cybersecurity risks, broader public security risks and health risks, to mention just a few. Therefore, risk management must be an area where inter-agency collaboration exists. For example, the Election Commission of India (ECI 2017: 2) lists 191 risks to its electoral processes and points to the need for cooperation with other state and non-state actors in mitigating them. International IDEA (2018) suggests a three-layered approach for preventing election-related violence, which rests on improved collaboration between EMBs, security sector agencies and other state and non-state actors who have mandates and interests to protect peaceful elections. Addressing health risks during the Covid-19 pandemic offers numerous examples of collaboration between EMBs and the health ministry (International IDEA and AEC 2021; International IDEA 2021b).

In countries where risks are pronounced, risk management systems may be stretched and fail to prevent risks from materializing or mitigate them effectively. In such instances, it may be the resilience of democratic systems to stresses and shocks that will determine whether electoral processes suffer critical damage. Therefore, the next method to examine is resilience-building.

Chapter 4
RESILIENCE-BUILDING IN ELECTIONS

The literature on resilience-building is rich, but no methodological guidelines for building resilient elections exist. With democratic backsliding and the Covid-19 pandemic, the term resilience appears to be increasingly used in the context of elections. However, similar to how Mitchell (2013) refers to the opportunistic use of the term 'resilience' in international development, electoral resilience is often a 'buzz word' devoid of clear technical guidance and real programming meaning.

The concept of resilience is often linked with attributes of individual organizations or systems. The International Organization for Standardization, in ISO 22316 (ISO 2017: v), defines organizational resilience 'as the ability of an organization to absorb and adapt in a changing environment to enable it to deliver its objectives and to survive and prosper'. However, it acknowledges that 'there is no single approach to enhance an organization's resilience' and that 'established management disciplines contribute towards resilience, but on their own, these are insufficient… Instead, organizational resilience is the result of an interaction of attributes and activities, and contributions made from other technical and scientific areas of expertise.' Taking a system-wide lens may be of particular relevance when discussing resilience of electoral processes because of the well-established relationship between the integrity of elections and the attributes of other democratic institutions and processes (International IDEA 2017b, 2021a; V-Dem 2021).

In political science, resilience is a term used to describe the capability of political systems to withstand pressures. Burnell and Calvert (1999: 4) define a democracy as resilient if an attachment to democratic ideals persists in spite of hostility from the officially prescribed values and norms and apparent indifference from many elements in society. According to Sisk (International IDEA 2017b: 37): 'Resilience is the property of a social system to cope with, survive and recover from complex challenges and crises. The characteristics of a resilient social system include flexibility, recovery, adaptation, and innovation.' According to Merkel and Lührmann (2021: 874):

The literature on resilience-building is rich, but no methodological guidelines for building resilient elections exist.

Democratic resilience is the ability of a democratic system, its institutions, political actors, and citizens to prevent or react to external and internal challenges, stresses, and assaults through one or more of the three potential reactions: to withstand without changes, to adapt through internal changes, and to recover without losing the democratic character of its regime and its constitutive core institutions, organizations, and processes. The more resilient democracies are on all four levels of the political system (political community, institutions, actors, citizens), the less vulnerable they turn out to be in the present and future.

In terms of how resilience is exhibited, Manca, Benczúr and Giovannini (2017: 5) refer to a resilient society that copes with shocks or structural changes by either: resisting it—known as absorptive capacity; adopting a degree of flexibility and making small changes—adaptive capacity; or transforming—transformative capacity when disturbances are not manageable. Aldrich (2018) finds that—reading through the multitude of reports studying resilience strategies around the world, from government agencies in the United States to the UN, the World Health Organization and non-governmental organizations—the principal need for 'social cohesion' is seen time and time again, where cohesion is defined as the willingness of members of a society to cooperate in order to survive and prosper.

Key takeaway

Electoral resilience may be defined as the ability of electoral institutions and processes to maintain continuity in the face of stresses and shocks. It can mainly be exhibited through three types of behaviours: (a) sustaining stresses and shocks without the need to change how things are done; (b) adopting some flexibility in how things are done to absorb stresses and shocks that are occasional; or (c) transforming yourself to be able to deal with new realities.

4.1. PROGRAMMING RESILIENCE-BUILDING IN ELECTIONS

Theoretical insights from the introduction of this chapter provide benchmarks for programming resilient elections.

The first is that electoral resilience-building effort should happen at the level of a system in which elections take place rather than at the level of an organization mandated to manage elections only. The second is to ensure the optimal response of the system elements to threats. In this respect, resilience is exhibited through three types of behaviours: in maintaining continuity without any change, in flexing to absorb shocks, and/or in transforming to deal with new realities. The third is to ensure the cohesion of system elements. These are elaborated in more detail in the following sections.

4.1.1. Defining the scope of electoral resilience-building

The electoral system refers to a mechanism for electing parties and candidates, and, as such, does not offer a practical framework for deliberations on electoral resilience.

However, the democratic political system may have the right programming scope. There are numerous ways in which political systems are defined. This paper follows the International IDEA democracy framework, which incorporates a variable for 'credible elections'. The framework identifies four categories of democratic performance: Representation, Rights, Rule of Law and Participation (see Figure 4.1). Each attribute has a number of subattributes, with Credible Elections being a subattribute of Representation.[3]

Figure 4.1. **International IDEA's Global State of Democracy framework**
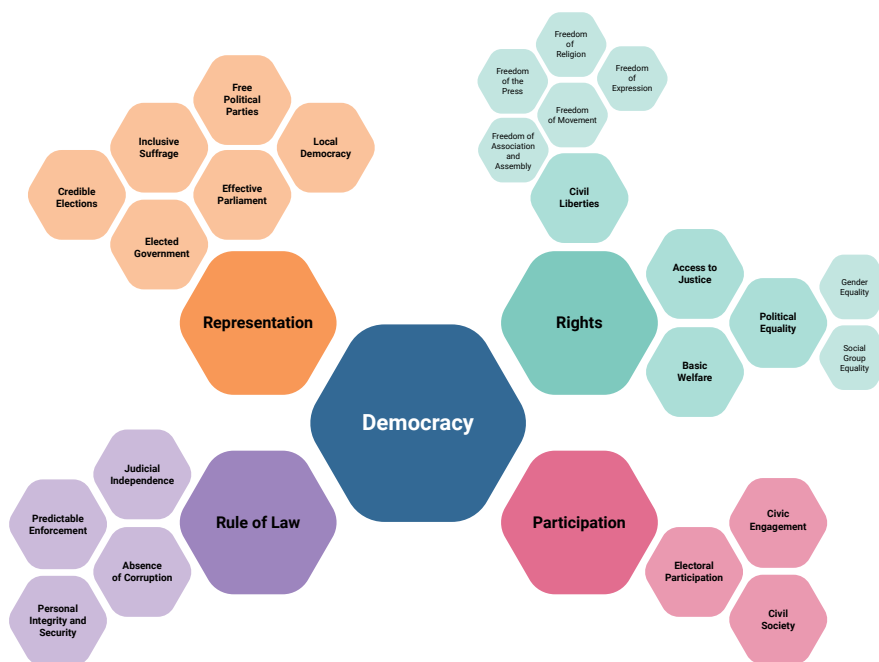
Source: Based on International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices, v. 7, 2023, <https://www.idea.int/gsod-indices/democracy-indices>, accessed 20 June 2023.

This model allows for the hypothesis that, when other democratic subattributes are solid, electoral processes will be more resilient to stresses and shocks resulting from flawed internal processes or external disturbances. Existing grey and academic literature offers much evidence in this regard. For example, effective parliaments play an important role in ensuring the integrity of elections through their legislative and oversight functions

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3   The indicators of Clean Elections are: EMB autonomy, EMB capacity, election other voting irregularities, election government intimidation, election free and fair, and competition. These are based on V-Dem and LIED databases.

(AGORA n.d.). At the same time, judicial independence that enables the fair resolution of electoral disputes will protect electoral processes from losing credibility because of genuine or perceived technical failures (International IDEA 2010). Media integrity will help EMBs to counter disinformation and serve multiple roles, including voter information and education, and being a watchdog and platform for campaigning (ACE n.d.). Free political parties and strong civil society participation will prevent a single political party from corrupting electoral processes; and so on. However, one should not assume that all subattributes will have the same weight in every context. Instead, their relevance may change from country to country and from election to election.

Table 4.1. **Correlation between democratic subattributes, GSoD Indices 2023**

Democratic subattributes	Correlation with Credible Elections
Elected Government	0.946
Effective Parliament	0.929
Free Political Parties	0.878
Civil Liberties	0.859
Inclusive Suffrage	0.854
Civil Society	0.790
Local Democracy	0.770
Personal Integrity and Security	0.770
Predictable Enforcement	0.762
Access to Justice	0.760
Political Equality	0.757
Judicial Independence	0.754
Electoral Participation	0.647
Absence of Corruption	0.631
Basic Welfare	0.602
Civic Engagement	0.592
Direct Democracy	0.383

Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices, v. 7, 2023, <https://www.idea.int/gsod-indices/democracy-indices>, accessed 20 June 2023.

Table 4.1 presents the original analysis of data collected for the Global State of Democracy Report (International IDEA 2023) to portray correlations between democratic subattributes. The table reveals a globally wide positive correlation between all the variables from the model and Elections, while robust correlations exist with the specific subattributes Elected Government, Effective Parliament, Free Political Parties, Civil Liberties, Inclusive suffrage and so on. Although correlation does not imply causation, one may deduce that programming resilient electoral processes entails strengthening key democratic institutions, processes and actors, based on prior context assessment.

On the one hand, when other democratic institutions and processes perform their roles, they will absorb many electoral integrity shocks and stresses. On the other hand, when the electoral process is assaulted, a critical mass of democratic actors' joint action will make it more difficult to derail credible elections.

4.1.2. Defining types of responses
Responses to electoral disturbances should be contingent on the nature of the very disturbance.

Maintaining continuity without change (staying on the course) is appropriate for dealing with electoral stresses and shocks that are undemocratic in their nature—because adapting to them may result in the undermined integrity of elections. An example would be an effort to limit civil liberties and the freedom of political parties. For a credible electoral process to exist, such efforts must be resisted. For example, International IDEA (2014a) refers to 'the "fearless independence" expected of all EMBs, no matter which model is used, in that they do not bend to governmental, political or other partisan influences on their decisions'. Such EMBs, together with an independent judiciary, civil society organizations, democratic political parties, a free media, engaged citizens and other democratic institutions, are a bedrock of electoral integrity.

When the electoral process is assaulted, a critical mass of democratic actors' joint action will make it more difficult to derail credible elections.

Key takeaway

Electoral resilience-building may include the combination of: strengthening EMBs, modelling institutional collaboration and strengthening social cohesion to protect elections.

The ability to *adapt* is vital in environments where factors that cause stresses are not undemocratic in their nature, but their effects may be undemocratic. For example, the pandemic is not undemocratic in its nature. However, if an EMB does not adapt to it by introducing temporary measures to protect the health of voters and its staff, the hazard of infection may derail the process or decrease voter turnout which, if large in scale, may undermine the integrity of elections. Other examples involve natural disasters and conflicts, when

resilience can be strengthened by introducing special voting arrangements or allocating additional human and financial resources.

Finally, *transformative* responses may be necessary for dealing with stresses that are not undemocratic but represent a risk that will not fade with time. An example of such disruption is the possibility of cyber-hacking and the malicious use of social media to undermine the integrity of elections. Intervention to eliminate such practices or adopt flexibility to overcome them may be challenging to achieve, if it is possible at all. Instead, the transformation of the electoral process to minimize exposure to such risks may be a more optimal strategy.

Programming resilience in electoral processes at the system level will require that all the multiple system elements work together.

4.1.3. Defining institutional and social mandates and processes

Programming resilience in electoral processes at the system level will require that all the multiple system elements work together. Therefore, essential aspects of programming resilience in electoral processes are: strengthening EMBs, modelling institutional collaboration and strengthening social cohesion for protecting elections. In most democracies, the network of institutions and organizations that have roles, mandates and interests in protecting the integrity of electoral processes is already broad. Mandates sit with executive and regulatory agencies, legislators and the judiciary. Non-state actors, such as political parties, civil society organizations and media, have vested interests in the integrity of elections.

In terms of programming resilience-building engagement in general, Kania and Kramer (2011) propose five generic conditions. One may argue their applicability to electoral processes. They comprise: a common agenda; a shared measurement and information system; mutually reinforcing activities; continuous communication; and backbone support organizations. Many of these are achieved by building on risk management processes that are standardized across different agencies. During challenging times, it may be that the critical mass of organizations taking a clear stand to defend democratic electoral processes and institutions can make a difference. This concept also taps into a wealth of knowledge of institutional checks and balances described by Merkel and Lührmann (2021) and the whole-of-society approach and community resilience explained by Bach (2015). What is needed is a comprehensive effort to contextualize the concept to specific national and electoral contexts, which is addressed through development milestones, as outlined in Chapter 6.

In a similar way to how risk management may not always prevent all risks from materializing, resilience may not always be sufficient to protect electoral processes. Crisis management is a crucial recovery path for restoring undermined or lost electoral integrity.

Chapter 5

CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN ELECTIONS

As with electoral resilience-building, the experiences relating to electoral crisis management are not systematically mapped. A 2014 study on crisis prevention and management in Africa, developed by the Electoral Reform International Services (ERIS) and the Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC Countries (ECF-SADC), exists—but remains unpublished. According to the study (Afari-Gyan, O'Grady and Isaac 2014: 4), an electoral crisis is 'a point or situation which, because of its significance, puts at risk participation in, or acceptance of, an electoral process or an electoral outcome'. The study also points out that 'electoral crises take different forms and include: an overt or de facto boycott of the electoral process by parties and/or voters, non-acceptance of the legislation, non-acceptance of the results of an electoral process, e.g. voter-registration, non-acceptance of the outcome of the whole electoral process, and electoral violence before, during or after the election', which EMBs address through judicial remedies, or as part of longer-term political solutions (Afari-Gyan, O'Grady and Isaac 2014: 54–56).

With the Covid-19 pandemic, the topic of electoral crisis attracted increased attention (Birch et al. 2020). In this respect, International IDEA has collected a significant number of case studies, first relating to the management of electoral crises caused by the pandemic (International IDEA n.d.b) and then expanded to cover electoral crises resulting from impacts of other forms of natural hazards (International IDEA 2022). Still, methodological guidance about electoral crisis management anchored in the theoretical and empirical literature is missing. Therefore, the rest of this chapter links key theoretical perspectives with EMB mandates.

Research shows that sociopolitical crises feature a threat to core values, a sense of urgency and a high degree of uncertainty, but their manifestations are unique in every individual crisis (Cohen 1979; Quarantelli 1998; Boin et al. 2005). Dyson and 't Hart (2013) distinguish between situational and institutional political crises. Situational crises reflect 'havoc inflicted by adverse forces, whether they be the deliberate actions of political opponents

As with electoral resilience-building, the experiences relating to electoral crisis management are not systematically mapped.

or lawbreakers, turbulence in money markets, forces of nature, or human and organizational error in critical infrastructures' (Dyson and 't Hart 2013: 397). Institutional crises occur 'when the performance of public officeholders, organizations, or governments themselves is so widely and vehemently called into question that they interpret the situation as an acute threat to their legitimacy, their political survival, or even the stability of the administrative, political, or constitutional order in which they are embedded' (Dyson and 't Hart 2013: 397).

These definitions hold true for electoral crises. Because periodic elections are critical for the functioning of democratic institutions (Dahl 1989), delayed or failed elections undermine core democratic values and create situations of uncertainty that need to be overcome urgently. To avoid deeper crises resulting from dysfunctional political institutions, constitutions and electoral laws mostly provide strict timelines for holding extraordinary elections. However, there are instances in which deep and protracted political crises derail the holding of elections within prescribed timelines (International IDEA 2019b). Numerous examples also exist when emergencies, such as environmental hazards (natural and man-made/technological), disrupt ongoing elections by posing health risks or creating operational hurdles and legal ambiguities for proceeding with elections. In such instances, the democratic character of elections can be jeopardized (James and Alihodžić 2020).

Key takeaway

Situational electoral crises may result from deep political crises, conflicts, natural disasters, failure of critical infrastructure and so on. Institutional electoral crises can happen when the performance of EMBs or other organizations with electoral mandates (for example, the electoral justice system) is widely and heatedly called into question, to the point when it becomes an acute situation that jeopardizes electoral integrity.

Crisis situations in elections can be triggered by technical and human errors—such as malfunctioning of voter registration or voting equipment, inaccuracies in the voter register, or actual or perceived manipulations, to mention a few.

At the process (institutional) level, crisis situations in elections are common. Given the high level of social mobilization and the geographical scope of electoral activities, and the race against the clock to deliver elections on a specific date, it is inevitable that something can—and usually does—go wrong. Crises can be triggered by significant technical and human errors—such as malfunctioning of voter registration or voting equipment, inaccuracies in the voter register, or actual or perceived manipulations, to mention a few. As the electoral cycle reaches the voting phase, the window for recovering from crisis situations narrows rapidly and emergencies may be more severe.

Responding to a crisis is a serious challenge because it requires decisions to be made in situations with a lack of information and severe stress (Boin and 't Hart 2003). Currently, though, the challenge may be in the overload of conflicting information. When EMBs end up operating in 'crisis mode', it may lead to 'rushed, last-minute approaches to solve the problems that day-

to-day management of any election normally entails' (IFES 2011b: 11). But the decision making should rely less on improvisation and more on a crisis management method with an element of crisis leadership and clear-cut responsibilities, specialization and coordination between different actors (IFES 2020; Boin and Bynander 2015).

5.1. **PROGRAMMING CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN ELECTIONS**

In societies, crisis management is seen as a key responsibility of governments (Baubion 2013). Therefore, governmental organizations often institutionalize crisis management as part of a government-wide effort to manage any significant crisis effectively. For example, the Swedish Government highlights:

> The Prime Minister's Office is responsible for coordinating crisis management at the Government Offices. The State Secretary to the Prime Minister is responsible for leading the overall crisis management process.... Each ministry must have a crisis management plan and a crisis management organisation. There must be an appointed crisis management group that has participated in exercises… [to] be fully prepared to manage all types of major emergencies.
> Government Offices of Sweden 2023

Within the earlier version of this framework in 2018, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency implemented 'a wide range of activities and supported other organizations in their work to conduct and safeguard the election' (Tofvesson 2018).

While recognizing that political crises can open windows for policy reforms and political change, one should also understand the managerial challenges and political perspectives of crisis termination ('t Hart and Boin 2001). These include the premature termination of a crisis, by underestimating its complexity and thereby losing policymaking opportunities. From the other angle, overextending a crisis in order to pursue opportunities comes with the risk that decisions are taken without crisis managers. Political perspectives on crisis termination relate to tensions between defenders of and challengers to the institutional status quo, and conflicting preferences among the public for calming or extending the crisis mode.

When crisis management is institutionalized at the level of an organization, there will be significant potential for synergy with the 'strategic management' in protecting an organization's objectives (Preble 2003; Chong 2004). This also works for electoral administrators because 'strategic planning is never a quick fix to solve a major crisis affecting the EMB' (IFES 2011b: 7). In terms of institutionalization, Sapriel (2003: 1) argues that crisis management requires 'a corporate custodian that ensures plans and skills are up to date throughout the organization'.

In societies, crisis management is seen as a key responsibility of governments.

Crisis management processes can take different formats. By referring to the work of Tanifuji (2000) and Haddow, Bullock and Coppola (2011), Sakaki and Lukner (2013) define four phases of a crisis management cycle: (1) prevention and mitigation; (2) preparedness; (3) response; and (4) recovery and learning—whereby the first phase involves the risk management strategy. Alexander (2015) distinguishes 'resilience building, preparation, emergency response, recovery, and reconstruction' phases. Carmeli and Schaubroeck (2008) point to the importance of preparedness and learning from failures, while the OECD emphasizes the preparedness and response phases (Baubion 2013). Because risk management and resilience-building—referred to in some models— are already elaborated and the issue of overlap is already explained, the programming aspects of *preparedness, response,* and *recovery and learning*— which are common denominators of all crisis management models and remain unaddressed thus far—will be detailed for the case of electoral crisis management.

Key takeaway

Common denominators of electoral crisis management models may include preparedness, response, and recovery and learning.

- *Preparedness* relates to the pre-crisis period in which practical ways for responding to potential crises are considered (Carmeli and Schaubroeck 2008). 'Effective crisis response will require planning, adaptation and innovation, guided by the EMB Leadership' (IFES 2020: 30). In this respect, practical activities may involve mapping situations that could cause severe damage to EMB objectives and options for actions and crisis communication strategy. EMBs with formal risk management processes in place will benefit from risk identification and monitoring systems put in place through such a process. An EMB should distinguish actions that can be sufficiently implemented within an organization and those requiring involvement and support from other state agencies and non-state actors. Preparedness of EMBs is additionally achieved through capacity development (IFES 2021). When possible, an EMB should exercise its responses to crises, both internally and with partners. The Swedish Government highlights that 'experience shows that organizations that continuously participate in exercises are more effective at managing serious incidents and crises' (Government Offices of Sweden 2023).

- The second phase is crisis *response*, during which the pre-crisis plans are put to a reality check. If properly done, planning will pay dividends by enabling EMBs to rapidly deploy their resources according to already charted processes. However, not all crises can be predicted and resolved through already prepared contingency plans (Gundel 2005). Even if a contingency for a specific situation exists, it may be too broad or need modification. Therefore, a decision on an appropriate course of action may

require the situation to be assessed and prioritization to take place on the spot. Whereas leadership is necessary for resolving crises, researchers warn that decision making should not be a narrow process because leaders may lack crisis management competencies or be hesitant to accept crises and release timely information about them (Boin et al. 2005). Internal expertise, the allocation of crisis management responsibilities, the availability of resources, and the use of analytical and communication tools for making and implementing crisis management decisions quickly will all determine the prospects of effective risk management (Sapriel 2003; Coombs 2014).

- The third phase, *recovery and learning*, starts with restoring or establishing the sense of normalcy. In this phase, the EMB senior leadership and crisis management team should revisit the crisis response, to evaluate it and the lessons learned. This entails 'dealing with questions of accountability and responsibility and drawing lessons to reduce future vulnerability through mitigation and preparedness measures' (Sakaki and Lukner 2013). However, it is essential that such discussion is honest and constructive and delivers actionable guidance about how to be better prepared for inevitable future crises. One of the positive effects of crises is that they allow innovation and implementation of long-overdue reforms. Such an example is the broader use and codification of special voting arrangements during the Covid-19 crisis (International IDEA 2020, 2021b).

A back-to-back review of the risk management, resilience-building and crisis management theory, practice and programming avenues in elections provides the outline of a roadmap for promoting the increased implementation of these methods by EMBs and other electoral stakeholders. International electoral assistance organizations may play an essential role in pushing this through. That is the focus of the next section.

Chapter 6

TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK FOR PROTECTING ELECTIONS

Lessons learned from decades of practising and improving risk management, resilience-building and crisis management teach us that the journey from policy decision to implementation requires many incremental steps.

Lessons learned from decades of practising and improving risk management, resilience-building and crisis management across different sectors teach us that the journey from policy decision to implementation requires many incremental steps. Therefore, this paper's final section proposes a roadmap for developing and implementing *an integrated framework for protecting elections*. While this narrative derives logic from earlier sections, it is, admittedly, more speculative. Its value is intended to be in promoting discussion and inspiring further research.

As elaborated in Chapter 1, electoral assistance organizations have a wealth of experience in integrating electoral resources, whether that is knowledge platforms, training programmes or databases (for example, ACE and BRIDGE). The common departure point is the consolidation of what already exists. This is the first step in creating a roadmap. Two organizing criteria need to be considered when consolidating existing remedies for protecting electoral integrity. One is to distinguish remedies in terms of their primary focus: preventing negative occurrences (prevention of risks); withstanding stresses and shocks (resilience from threats); or restoring normalcy (recovery from crises). The second is to categorize resources based on their desired learning outcomes, specifically whether they help to: develop knowledge—such as handbooks, guides, policy papers and similar; develop skills—such as training curriculums; or establish awareness necessary for decision making—such as assessment and analysis tools (Alihodžić 2016). The result of such an exercise will populate the protecting elections toolbox with what exists and yield an understanding of which remedies and resources may be missing or need further development.

The second step is to take these three methods of protection—risk management, resilience-building and crisis management—and customize them further for electoral processes. Thus far, only the use of risk management in elections has been charted through specific policy recommendations (International IDEA 2016), a guide on practical steps for EMBs (International

IDEA and AEC 2021) and the availability of the Electoral Risk Management Tool with related resource materials (International IDEA n.d.a). While this body could usefully be expanded, the development of similar resource packages for electoral resilience-building and electoral crisis management should be prioritized. In this respect, it is critical to tie all methods to the electoral cycle approach.

The third step is the development of an assessment methodology, for use in any given national context, to comprehensively assess the state of critical national infrastructure for protecting elections. The assessment should examine relevant legislation, institutional mandates, policies and management processes, as well as available resources. In addition to state organizations, assessments should also extend to non-state actors, such as media, civil society and companies that are vital for conducting various electoral activities—for example, postal service providers where postal voting is an option. In terms of processes, it is important to establish how responsible stakeholders understand and prevent electoral risks, how electoral continuity is ensured in the face of stresses and shocks that may materialize, and what protocols exist for recovering from electoral crises. The assessment should consider sources of knowledge (such as reports and analysis on the topic), capacity development opportunities (e.g. training access for those with mandates and interests to protect elections) and practical tools that stakeholders use to ensure informed decisions. The value of self-assessing tools should be explored.

The final step concerns charting programming options for EMBs and governments. Findings from the prior assessment will inform the scale of such an effort. The ideal case scenario will be the context where formal risk and crisis management practices are implemented by government organizations collaborating with civil society and recognizing electoral integrity as a social public good that must be protected. In such instances, the focus may be on further strengthening processes, knowledge, capacity and tools. Where government agencies have no formal risk or crisis management processes in place and where deep distrust and conflict between state agencies and civil society prevent coordination and joint action, a systemic intervention will require greater institutional reforms. In this respect, efforts to strengthen electoral integrity should actively pursue opportunities to link with efforts to strengthen democracy, peace and development, among other things.

Organizations that provide electoral assistance globally and regionally have a strong track record in developing such frameworks and supporting national efforts in the Global South and North.

Chapter 7
CONCLUSIONS

There is evidence that risk management, resilience-building and crisis management are increasingly recognized and used for protecting elections.

There is evidence that risk management, resilience-building and crisis management are increasingly recognized and used for protecting elections. However, governments and agencies that embark upon these methods often find themselves in uncharted terrain. Overlaps between methods may lead to conceptual, regulatory or operational ambiguities that can add to confusion within and among the organizations that wish to apply them. This makes national and international lesson-learning processes more complicated than they need to be.

Developing and implementing a single framework that integrates the three methods for protecting elections will offer two major benefits. First, it will help to understand and manage the specificities of the three methods, which is essential to enable the synergies between them to be identified. Second, it will help to unlock synergies between different remedies developed by practitioners and researchers to address different specific electoral challenges—whether they are designed to prevent risks, withstand threats or recover from crisis situations.

In the face of increasing threats to democratic institutions and processes, the pace at which we become well versed in protecting elections matters. Consensus-building, including between national and international actors, will be necessary for achieving a fast track for learning, consolidation and diffusion of good practices, which can respond to existing and emerging threats.

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About the author

Sead Alihodžić is a Senior Advisor in the Electoral Processes Programme. He manages a broad portfolio of election-related topics, including electoral conflict and violence prevention, risk management and resilience-building in elections, and the conduct of elections in transitional contexts. In over a decade with International IDEA, he has led the design and development of International IDEA's Electoral Risk Management Tool, managed several technical assistance projects in partnerships with electoral management bodies and acted as lead author of International IDEA guides and policy papers. In addition, he has contributed articles on electoral violence, early warning and democracy promotion topics to external journals and publications. He leads International IDEA's work on developing an Integrated Framework for Protecting Elections, a project funded by the Government of Canada.

Prior to joining International IDEA in 2008, Sead gained extensive experience in dealing with elections, post-conflict democratization and security issues, during 11 years with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), on its Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, where he was Programme Officer and Head of Field Office.

About International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with 34 Member States founded in 1995, with an exclusive mandate to support and advance democracy worldwide.

WHAT WE DO

We produce comparative, policy-friendly knowledge and provide technical assistance on issues relating to elections, parliaments, constitutions, money in politics and political representation, all under the umbrella of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We assess the performance of democracies around the world through our unique Global State of Democracy Indices and reports. Our work is expanding to address issues related to climate change and democracy.

We use our knowledge to provide technical assistance and expert advice to governments and civil society around the world. We publish books, databases, and primers annually in several languages on topics ranging from voter turnout to Indigenous peoples' rights in constitution-building. Gender equality and inclusion are mainstreamed in all our work.

We engage in conversations and convene agenda-setting dialogues and partner with like-minded organizations, including the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations, to achieve greater impact.

WHERE WE WORK

Our headquarters is in Stockholm, and we have regional and country offices in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. International IDEA is a Permanent Observer to the United Nations and is accredited to European Union institutions.
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When elections go wrong, they can contribute to political crises that undermine democratic processes and institutions, trigger violent conflicts and instability, and harm governments' domestic and international legitimacy. Therefore, calls to protect electoral integrity against manipulation from autocratic figures, malicious foreign interferences, negative impacts from natural hazards, and technical and human errors are ever increasing.

The main objective of this Discussion Paper is to outline the importance of and avenues for an increased use of risk management, resilience-building and crisis management methods to protect electoral integrity.