

Electoral integrity in a variety of regimes

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This panel focuses on electoral integrity and its relationship to the level and type of democracy. There is widespread and growing concern that elections around the world and in a variety of regimes are commonly marred by malpractices violating electoral integrity. These may include, but are not limited to, pro-government media bias, maladministration in electoral registers, limits on equal ballot access for opposition parties, discrimination against opposition parties by district boundary demarcation, intimidation of candidates, election violence, and vote-rigging at the count. Social media and online campaigns have added new items to the “menu of manipulation, and pose new challenges to electoral management bodies.

Violations of electoral integrity appear in a variety of different regimes, yet the specific ways in which the political regime shapes the room for different forms of electoral malpractices needs further scrutiny. Research on the varieties of democracy increasingly takes into account both the level of democracy and its qualitatively different aspects. This panel seeks to unpack the concept of electoral integrity while explicitly acknowledging the variety of regimes in which malpractices occur.

The complex relationship between electoral integrity – the quality of elections – and the quality of democracy challenge important assumptions in development research. Is there a relevant North/South division here? What is the relationship between electoral integrity and democracy? To what extent is electoral integrity protected and respected in different regimes? And how can we understand variation in electoral integrity within and between countries and different types of regimes?

Within this broad topic we invite all kinds of papers that address one or more aspects of electoral integrity, theoretically, in a single country or comparatively, and using a broad range of research methods, including quantitative and/or qualitative approaches.