Do Elections Create or Further Path Dependencies?

MURAT ABUS

ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Central Research Questions & Introduction

❑ Do elections still matter?

❑ Is the perception that electoral assistance does not work justified?

❑ Is the fact that electoral authoritarian regimes now constitute the modal category of regimes a further proof that elections do not function as theorized except in developed countries?

❑ Are the claims of incremental democratization credible?

❑ "Power of Elections" (Lindberg 2006) and "Democratization by Elections" (Lindberg 2009)

Path Dependency Through Elections-1

Studies Supporting Thesis of Furthering Path Dependency of Authoritarian Regimes:

- ❑ Institutionalization and tenure of autocrats (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007)
- ❑ Information revelation through elections (Miller 2015)
- ❑ Types of opposition parties and elections as safety valve(Geddes 2005)
- ❑ Potential opposition unity (Norris 2014)
- ❑ Elite co-optation through elections (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009)
- ❑ Geographical disparities with respect to the power of elections (Morgenbesser and Pepinsky 2019, McCoy and Hartlyn 2009)
- ❑ Post-communist ambiguities (Kaya and Bernhard 2013, Bunce and Wolchik 2009 & 2010, Rose and Mishler 2009)
- ❑ Noticeable development stemming from elections might be due to other underlying processes (Gandhi 2015).
- ❑ The use of lagged DV (level of democracy) essentially cancels the effect of elections (Kim 2019).

Path Dependency Through Elections-2

Studies Supporting Thesis of Elections Creating a New Path Dependency of Incremental Democratization:

- ❑ Opposition actors and strategies to benefit from the institution of elections (Howard and Roessler 2006)
- ❑ Specific attributes of authoritarian systems which facilitate improvements through elections (Hadenius and Teorell 2007, Roessler and Howard 2009, Donno 2013)
- ❑ Unintended side effects of authoritarian emulation of democracy in the form of regime vulnerability (Bernhard, Edgell and Lindberg 2019)
- ❑ Impact of elections undertaken prior to democratization (Brownlee 2009, Miller 2013)
- ❑ Large-N studies to check the effect of holding repeated elections on democratization (Edgell et al. 2018)
- ❑ Effect of electoral protests on democracy (Beaulieu 2014)
- ❑ The effect of international actors on democratizing outcomes of elections (Donno 2013)

A Theory of Elections and Electoral Integrity

- ❑ Correction to the tests of the "Power of Elections" or "Democratization by Elections" thesis
- ❑ Temporal scope standardization
- ❑ These allow for a parsimonious theory which is a direct and empirically focused extension of the original Lindberg thesis
- ❑ Learning and habituation process
- ❑ Supply and demand framework
- ❑ "Polyarchy" (Dahl 1971)
- ❑ Transitions and the ultimate type (Wejnert 2005)
- ❑ Number of assumptions and the level of abstraction aid in the level of generalizability
- ❑ The length of time necessary for the theorized effects to become apparent (and their falsifiability)
- ❑ Finalizing the number of elections
- ❑ Application of the logic of path dependency

Summary and Research Hypothesis

Reiteration of Electoral Contests

Quality of Democracy
(Electoral Integrity)

H_1: Countries that have a higher number of reiterated elections are more likely to have a higher quality of democracy as measured by electoral integrity.

Dependent Variable

- Expert survey of the integrity of the entire electoral cycle spread over 11 dimensions and 49 components
- Normative approach that international norms and standards apply to elections worldwide
- FH and Polity not deep enough to detect incremental changes (Peceny 2010)
- Prior attempts to operationalize electoral malpractice limited (i.e. Birch 2011)
- As competition is at the heart of whether a country is democratic, we need to assess the structure and process of competition (Bogaards 2007)
- Composite score standardized 0-100

The PEI Electoral Cycle
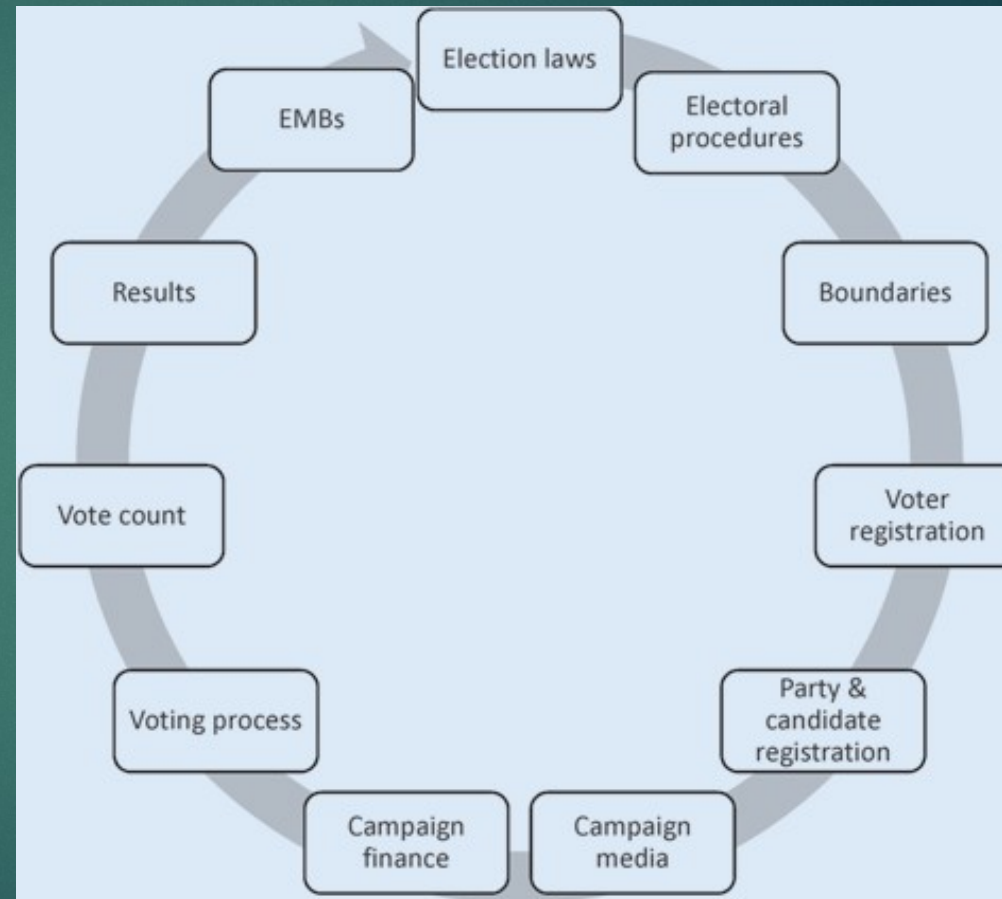
Source: Electoral Integrity Project. *The expert survey of Perceptions of Electoral Integrity.*

Independent Variables

❑ Number of Elections: Interval level variable, starts with third wave of democratization
❑ Parliamentary Fractionalization: Interval level variable, values between 0 and 1
❑ Fourth Wave of Democratization: Dummy variable (fourth wave=1)
❑ Year of First Multiparty Elections: Interval level variable, checks for temporal effects
❑ Coup Event: Dummy variable (successful coup event=1)
❑ Legacy of Civil War: Dummy variable (experience of civil war=1)
❑ Ethnic Fractionalization: Interval level variable, values between 0 and 1.
❑ Inequality (GINI Coefficient): Interval level variable, values between 0 and 1, or standardized to 0 and 100
❑ Wealth: GDP per capita, PPP (log): Interval level variable
❑ Population (log): Interval level variable
❑ Legacy of British Colonialism: Dummy variable (British colonial administration=1)
❑ Parliamentary System: Dummy variable for system of government (parliamentary=1)
❑ Proportional Representation: Dummy variable for electoral system (proportional=1)
❑ Regional Controls: Dummy variable, base category is "Latin America"

Method

❑ OLS Regression Analysis as suitable method for cross section analysis as of 2019 due to continuous dependent variable (Perception of Electoral Integrity score)

❑ The V-Dem Electoral Democracy and Clean Election Index scores will be used for robustness checks.

❑ The models were checked for collinearity with VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) analysis.

❑ Robust standard errors are utilized to address heteroskedasticity.

Results

	PEI 7.0	V-Dem Electoral Democracy Index	V-Dem Clean Elections Index
Number of Elections	**1.420 (0.626)**	**0.024 (0.008)**	**0.031 (0.012)**
Year of First Election	-0.116 (0.204)	**-0.005 (0.002)**	-0.003 (0.004)
Fourth Wave of Democratization	-2.103 (2.778)	-0.005 (0.033)	-0.033 (0.050)
Population (log)	**-1.745 (0.787)**	**-0.043 (0.009)**	**-0.042 (0.015)**
Ethnic Fractionalization	-2.645 (5.473)	0.007 (0.071)	0.001 (0.102)
Income Inequality (GINI)	0.123 (0.178)	0.000 (0.002)	0.002 (0.004)
GDP per capita, PPP (log)	**6.131 (2.040)**	**0.095 (0.026)**	**0.120 (0.040)**
Legacy of Coups	-1.360 (3.641)	**-0.085 (0.050)**	**-0.132 (0.073)**
Legacy of Civil War	**-6.875 (3.201)**	-0.057 (0.039)	**-0.105 (0.058)**
Legacy of British Colonialism	-1.059 (2.562)	-0.038 (0.030)	-0.042 (0.049)
Proportional Representation	1.305 (2.505)	-0.002 (0.028)	0.002 (0.042)
Parliamentary System	-1.961 (2.660)	0.008 (0.035)	-0.002 (0.044)
Parliamentary Fractionalization	**18.176 (6.572)**	**0.281 (0.091)**	**0.285 (0.123)**
Number of Observations	86	86	86
R^2	0.57	0.66	0.65

Results

	PEI 7.0	V-Dem Electoral Democracy Index	V-Dem Clean Elections Index
Number of Elections	**1.420 (0.626)**	**0.024 (0.008)**	**0.031 (0.012)**
Year of First Election	-0.116 (0.204)	**-0.005 (0.002)**	-0.003 (0.004)
Fourth Wave of Democratization	-2.103 (2.778)	-0.005 (0.033)	-0.033 (0.050)
Population (log)	**-1.745 (0.787)**	**-0.043 (0.009)**	**-0.042 (0.015)**
Ethnic Fractionalization	-2.645 (5.473)	0.007 (0.071)	0.001 (0.102)
Income Inequality (GINI)	0.123 (0.178)	0.000 (0.002)	0.002 (0.004)
GDP per capita, PPP (log)	**6.131 (2.040)**	**0.095 (0.026)**	**0.120 (0.040)**
Legacy of Coups	-1.360 (3.641)	**-0.085 (0.050)**	**-0.132 (0.073)**
Legacy of Civil War	**-6.875 (3.201)**	-0.057 (0.039)	**-0.105 (0.058)**
Legacy of British Colonialism	-1.059 (2.562)	-0.038 (0.030)	-0.042 (0.049)
Proportional Representation	1.305 (2.505)	-0.002 (0.028)	0.002 (0.042)
Parliamentary System	-1.961 (2.660)	0.008 (0.035)	-0.002 (0.044)
Parliamentary Fractionalization	**18.176 (6.572)**	**0.281 (0.091)**	**0.285 (0.123)**
Number of Observations	86	86	86
R^2	0.57	0.66	0.65

Results

	PEI 7.0	V-Dem Electoral Democracy Index	V-Dem Clean Elections Index
Number of Elections	**1.420 (0.626)**	**0.024 (0.008)**	**0.031 (0.012)**
Year of First Election	-0.116 (0.204)	**-0.005 (0.002)**	-0.003 (0.004)
Fourth Wave of Democratization	-2.103 (2.778)	-0.005 (0.033)	-0.033 (0.050)
Population (log)	**-1.745 (0.787)**	**-0.043 (0.009)**	**-0.042 (0.015)**
Ethnic Fractionalization	-2.645 (5.473)	0.007 (0.071)	0.001 (0.102)
Income Inequality (GINI)	0.123 (0.178)	0.000 (0.002)	0.002 (0.004)
GDP per capita, PPP (log)	**6.131 (2.040)**	**0.095 (0.026)**	**0.120 (0.040)**
Legacy of Coups	-1.360 (3.641)	**-0.085 (0.050)**	**-0.132 (0.073)**
Legacy of Civil War	**-6.875 (3.201)**	-0.057 (0.039)	**-0.105 (0.058)**
Legacy of British Colonialism	-1.059 (2.562)	-0.038 (0.030)	-0.042 (0.049)
Proportional Representation	1.305 (2.505)	-0.002 (0.028)	0.002 (0.042)
Parliamentary System	-1.961 (2.660)	0.008 (0.035)	-0.002 (0.044)
Parliamentary Fractionalization	**18.176 (6.572)**	**0.281 (0.091)**	**0.285 (0.123)**
Number of Observations	86	86	86
R^2	0.57	0.66	0.65

Results

	PEI 7.0	V-Dem Electoral Democracy Index	V-Dem Clean Elections Index
Number of Elections	**1.420 (0.626)**	**0.024 (0.008)**	**0.031 (0.012)**
Year of First Election	-0.116 (0.204)	**-0.005 (0.002)**	-0.003 (0.004)
Fourth Wave of Democratization	-2.103 (2.778)	-0.005 (0.033)	-0.033 (0.050)
Population (log)	**-1.745 (0.787)**	**-0.043 (0.009)**	**-0.042 (0.015)**
Ethnic Fractionalization	-2.645 (5.473)	0.007 (0.071)	0.001 (0.102)
Income Inequality (GINI)	0.123 (0.178)	0.000 (0.002)	0.002 (0.004)
GDP per capita, PPP (log)	**6.131 (2.040)**	**0.095 (0.026)**	**0.120 (0.040)**
Legacy of Coups	-1.360 (3.641)	**-0.085 (0.050)**	**-0.132 (0.073)**
Legacy of Civil War	**-6.875 (3.201)**	-0.057 (0.039)	**-0.105 (0.058)**
Legacy of British Colonialism	-1.059 (2.562)	-0.038 (0.030)	-0.042 (0.049)
Proportional Representation	1.305 (2.505)	-0.002 (0.028)	0.002 (0.042)
Parliamentary System	-1.961 (2.660)	0.008 (0.035)	-0.002 (0.044)
Parliamentary Fractionalization	**18.176 (6.572)**	**0.281 (0.091)**	**0.285 (0.123)**
Number of Observations	86	86	86
R^2	0.57	0.66	0.65

Marginal Effect of Number of Elections on PEI
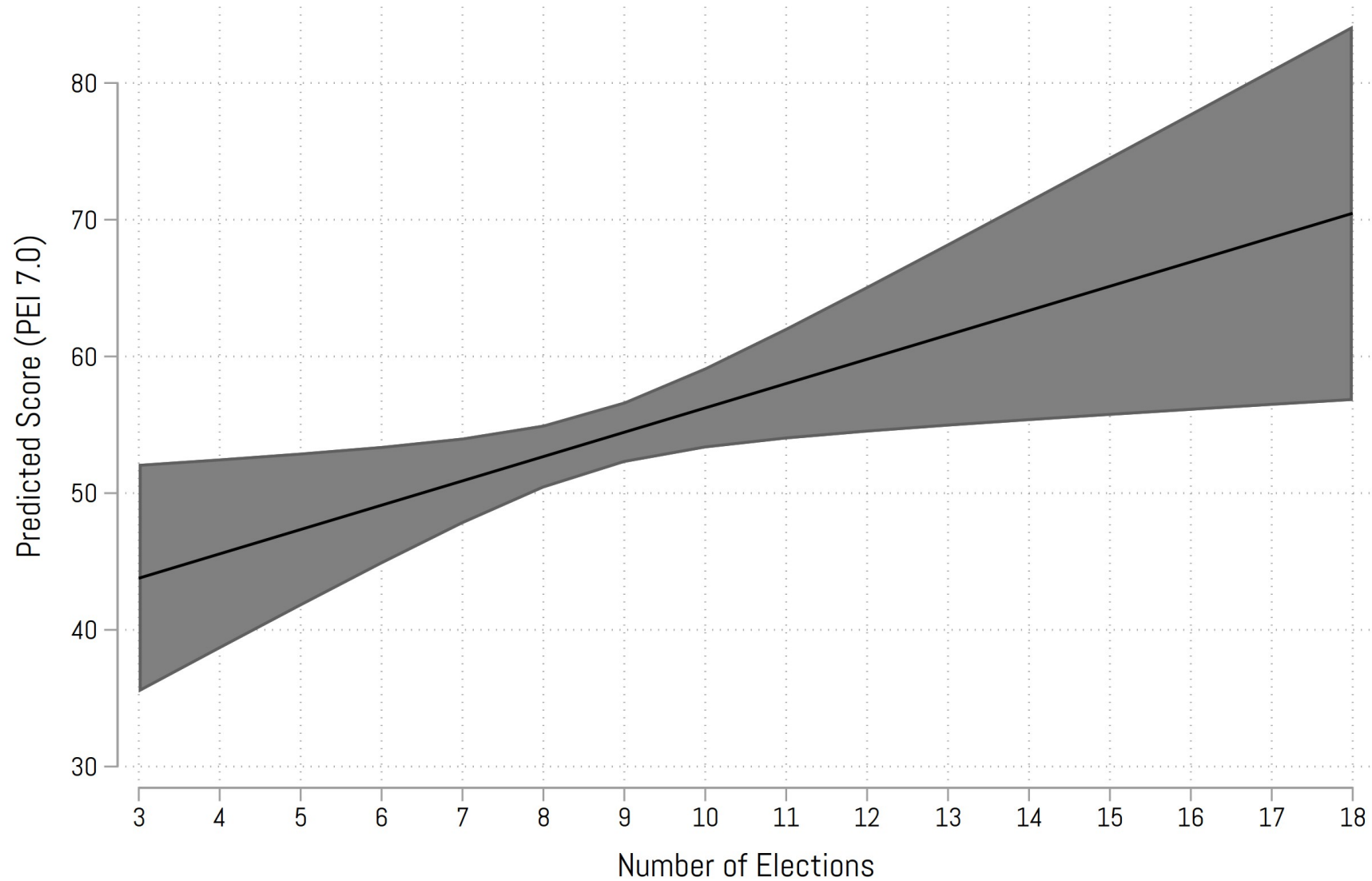
Implications and Limitations - 1

❑ Unified time frame including third- and fourth-wave is well-suited for an investigation of the theorized power of elections.

❑ The finding that regardless of the quality of individual elections, the experience of a series of contests will have a positive impact on electoral integrity has implications:

   ❑ Placing undue significance (together with unsustainable levels of foreign assistance) on a single election might distort democratic development.

      ❑ This has led international actors to deemphasize electoral processes.

      ❑ Continuous engagement is necessary, acknowledging that there may be incremental changes.

   ❑ Usage of Freedom House civil liberties scores for the period before and after an election and designating certain elections as "liberating" fails to take into account the incremental developments taking place (both positive and negative).

      ❑ Efforts should be aimed at facilitating the establishment of credible challenges to governments in electoral contests for the process discussed here to have maximum impact without placing undue stress on electoral turnovers.

Implications and Limitations - 2

❑ The study is subject to the limitations of a large-N study with respect to the level of abstraction and depth of explanatory power.

❑ As of 2020, the world is in the middle of an autocratization wave and it will be interesting to see if these results also hold in the near future in the established democracies.

THANK YOU

MURAT ABUS

murat.abus@smail.astate.edu
mabus@tamu.edu

Web: muratabus.com
Twitter: @muratabus
LinkedIn: muratabus