Leadership in Crisis:
Ensuring Independence, Ethics and Resilience in the Electoral Process

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Authors:
Erica Shein
Katherine Ellena
Catherine Barnes
Heather Szilagyi

With contributions from:
Timothy Williams

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International Foundation for Electoral Systems
2011 Crystal Drive, 10th Floor
Arlington, VA 22202
Email: editor@ifes.org
Fax: 202.350.6701

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"To most people, the importance of leadership is self-evident no matter what the setting. In organizations, effective leadership provides higher-quality and more efficient goods and services; it provides a sense of cohesiveness, personal development, and higher levels of satisfaction among those conducting the work; and it provides an overarching sense of direction and vision, an alignment with the environment, a healthy mechanism for innovation and creativity, and a resource for invigorating the organizational culture. This is no small order, especially in contemporary times."

– Montgomery Van Wart, "Public Sector Leadership Theory: An Assessment"

"Being an election commissioner can be a very stressful, lonely, and thankless job."

– Interview with a former EMB chairperson in Africa

Introduction

Leaders of election management bodies (EMBs) operate in a unique and challenging space. They may be required to carry out their mandates during complex transitions involving all sectors of society, enormous political pressure and considerable tests of individual and institutional resilience. Effective leadership is also needed to navigate the many different crisis scenarios that can impact an election process, including technology failures, cybersecurity breaches,[1] public health crises, natural disasters and post-conflict flashpoints.

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems' (IFES) global experience has demonstrated that EMB institutions characterized by weak leadership are less likely to seek innovative solutions to emerging problems, instead focusing on maintenance of the status quo. Although ineffective electoral leadership is problematic in any context, the consequences can be magnified in new and fragile democracies. Seriously flawed or failed elections pose a potent risk to political stability in these environments, endangering investments in the electoral process along with other societal achievements. Credible elections, on the other hand, can catalyze democratization.

Despite the fundamental importance of strong electoral leadership to the integrity of elections and peaceful transitions, to date there has been no comprehensive body of research specifically focused on what constitutes effective leadership within and by EMBs. To address this gap, IFES initiated a project with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the Global Elections and Political Transitions mechanism to craft an executive leadership training curriculum that can foster the leadership skills necessary to preserve EMB independence and ethics even in the midst of crisis.

Given the dearth of literature specifically focused on leadership of EMBs, to inform the development of the curriculum IFES conducted in-depth interviews with 10 current or former EMB chairpersons[2] and deployed a survey to gather data on electoral leadership. The research team distributed the survey via email to a broad range of global electoral leaders in June 2017, garnering a total of 38 complete responses from individuals (25 men and 13 women) in 26 countries across the globe (25 percent of the total pool of

[1] Ellena, K., 'Cybersecurity in Elections: Developing a Holistic Exposure and Adaptation Testing Process for Election Management Bodies,' IFES (2018), available at https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2018_heat_cybersecurity_in_elections.pdf

[2] Mexico, Georgia, Moldova, Kosovo, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Liberia, Kenya, The Gambia and Libya.

invited participants). Given the limited sample size, responses should be seen as indicative of the views of electoral leaders, rather than representative of all electoral leaders.[3]

This paper draws on this research, a wide-ranging literature review and an examination of additional leadership case studies to evaluate which approaches to leadership are most effective in different electoral contexts and which are not, identify the leadership qualities and approaches that may be of greatest value to electoral leaders and highlight best practices in developing a culture of leadership, independence and autonomy within EMBs.

Overview of Key Findings

1. Meaningful stakeholder engagement and effective public communication are particularly important to reinforce institutional independence and resist political manipulation, exercise ethical leadership, respond to crisis and generate momentum for reform.
2. As with other complex organizations, it is essential to build a leadership culture that allows for the creation of a shared direction, alignment and commitment throughout the EMB to carry out its mandate efficiently, effectively and in accordance with a coherent set of values, and to address any challenges that may arise.[4]
3. Building a leadership culture also requires that an EMB become a learning organization: an organization that encourages learning, knowledge management and innovation; nurtures new and expansive ways of thinking (i.e., vertical development); and enables staff to increase their capacity to create results.[5]
4. Behavioral autonomy is becoming even more important as EMBs face new and compounding threats and challenges to the electoral process and to their role as stewards of this process.
5. Having a strong ethical foundation and a considered decision-making process will help leaders stand by their decisions when faced with negative implications or reactions.
6. Sexism and discrimination can strongly impact the efforts of women leaders to make and implement decisions in EMBs and within their departments and portfolios.

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[3] All regions were evenly represented among the 38 survey respondents except for Latin America and the Caribbean (two respondents) and the Middle East and North Africa (three respondents). Just over half of the respondents identified themselves as EMB chairpersons or chief electoral officers (20), with the rest of the respondents roughly split between EMB commissioners (six), unit or department heads (seven) and other positions (5) (including two deputy chief electoral officers). Most respondents (30) held their position in electoral administration at the time of their response. Respondents represented a range of experience in electoral administration; slightly over half (20) had worked in the field for three years or fewer, with an additional 11 having worked between four and eight years, and the remaining for more than eight years. Of note, female respondents to the survey tended to have fewer years working in electoral administration than the men taking the survey. A majority of respondents were between the ages of 35 and 54, with most of the remaining respondents older. Most respondents had at least some prior experience in the civil service (10), a legal profession (eight), or nongovernmental organizations (seven). An additional six respondents reported previous professional experience in election management.

[4] McGuire, J. et al. Transforming Your Organization (CCL 2015), p. 3,5.

[5] Garvin, D. et al. "Is Yours a Learning Organization?," Harvard Business Review, March 2008. Also, Garvin, D. "Building a Learning Organization," Harvard Business Review, July/August 1993.

7. A proactive and comprehensive approach to risk mitigation will greatly strengthen an EMB's crisis readiness and resilience. The best thing an electoral leader can do with respect to potential crises is to help the institution to prepare for them in advance and be willing to learn from them when they happen.
8. EMBs should incentivize rather than penalize risk or exposure identification.
9. Electoral leadership in a crisis requires that leaders be able to define the crisis beyond what is obvious; anticipate intended and unintended consequences of decisions; and assess impacts on all affected electoral stakeholders along with EMB infrastructure, assets, and human resources, without sacrificing the institution's values and guiding principles.[6]

Literature Review

Literature on public sector leadership is dwarfed by what is available in the fields of psychology, business and politics.[7] Historically, scholars have debated the amount of discretion to be afforded to public sector leaders. Some experts suggest that the primary role is managerial; i.e., that the role should not involve significant discretion or activism. Others contend that public administrators are uniquely qualified to lead change and should be given adequate leeway to do so. Recent reform efforts within the field of public administration involving institutional excellence, greater innovation and robust measures of performance and accountability have favored greater discretion.[8]

Given the dearth of research focused specifically on electoral leadership exercised by EMBs, this literature review briefly highlights research and practice drawn from psychology, the private sector, public administration and executive leadership programs that may be relevant within an electoral context.

Leadership Theories

Leadership studies have produced a vast array of theories, models, styles and survey tools. Some of these theories have lost their currency over time, while others have evolved to suit changing circumstances. Many models involve a degree of overlap. Little consideration is given herein to trait theory, which attributes leadership to innate, instinctive qualities that are also constants. While leadership traits are not unimportant, the concept of leadership training and development programs presumes that leadership knowledge, skills and capacities can be developed; otherwise, effective leadership would solely be a question of effective recruiting. Behavioral theories address different styles of and approaches to leadership. The next section of this paper will summarize some of the theories most relevant to EMBs, either by virtue of their nature and remit, or in terms of what is needed to meet current and future electoral challenges and to build resilient, sustainable institutions. In practice, electoral leadership will need to be multifaceted, with different leadership capacities needed during "routine" elections, crisis elections or electoral crises, and periods of significant reform to the electoral process or the EMB's institutional framework.[9]

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[6] Ibid.
[7] Van Wart, M. Public-Leadership Theory: An Assessment, p. 2, 11.
[8] Ibid, p. 10-11.
[9] Van Wart, p. 5.

Cultural Groups and Leadership

The Wharton School of Business has specifically studied the question of cultural differences in understanding leadership through its Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness research program (GLOBE).[10] GLOBE studies are based on the premise that leadership is contextual, with ideas of leadership shaped by culture and rooted in people's early experiences, which later form into leadership expectations. The studies confirm both universal views and culturally dependent views of leadership.[11] Despite consensus on some leadership characteristics, the value of particular leadership styles is understood variably among different cultures. For example, the GLOBE study found that participatory leadership – defined later in this document – is not highly valued by all societies, which presents obvious challenges to programming directed at greater inclusion and participation in decision-making. It also highlighted how "decisive" leadership is perceived differently in France or Germany (involving a deliberate and precise approach to decision-making) and the United States (where it tends to mean making quick and approximate decisions).[12]

Public Versus. Private Sector Leadership

Some important differences between private and public sector leadership are worth exploring here, including organizational aims and objectives; employee motivation (for example, career advancement and financial incentives versus a commitment to public service or career stability); public oversight and control and budgetary constraints (both typically much higher in the public sector); and the impact of rules and regulations on EMB decision-making (for example on discretion and flexibility). Highlighting these differences brings into clear focus the particular opportunities for – and limits on – the development and exercise of leadership in public institutions and illustrates why a more holistic approach to leadership development is required.

The Hudson European Research and Development Centre sought to test prevailing hypotheses about leadership in the public and private sectors, assessing the attitudes and characteristics of 485 public sector leaders and 700 private sector leaders.[13] Their findings suggest that while differences persist, there are actually more similarities between leaders in the two sectors.[14] The study's findings have important ramifications for those who want to build, through talent acquisition, training programs and other integrated solutions, current and future leaders within their institutions.[15] Specifically, the study found that public sector leaders are primarily focused on rules, regulations and formal requirements. According to this line of thinking, this group of leaders tends to be much less attuned to informal relationships,

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[10] GLOBE studies have involved more than 950 organizations and 17,000 people worldwide. The first GLOBE study was published in 2004 based on data from 62 societies. A follow-up study was released in 2007 with in-depth data from 25 societies. See Leader Effectiveness and Culture: The GLOBE Study, Center for Creative Leadership, 2014.
[11] Sharen, C. There Are Universal Leadership Traits, March 22, 2012. See also Grushala, L. and Grant, K. Cross-Cultural Leadership, slide 36. Adapted from House, R. et al. (eds.), Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies, Sage Publications: 2004.
[12] Center for Creative Leadership. Leader Effectiveness and Culture: The GLOBE Study, 2014, p. 7.
[13] Fieldwork for the study was undertaken in 2008. The BAQ is based on the "Big 5" personality model as applied to the work environment. For more see Bogaert, J. et al. (2008).
[14] Van Keer, E. and Bogaert, J., p. 1.
[15] Ibid.

proactive external communications and external networking with stakeholder groups or across institutional boundaries.[16] The study also found that public sector leaders exhibit lower social confidence and focus more on objectives than on people. Women leaders within public institutions were found to excel in areas requiring greater extroversion, for example with respect to communication, outreach and motivation, as well as being more open to change induced by the institution itself.[17] Young leaders under 40 in the public sector were less likely to exhibit autocratic or paternalistic leadership behaviors, but young leaders in public institutions often have comparatively less room for self-development and fewer opportunities to pursue new approaches.

One of the main conclusions of the Hudson study is that public sector leaders can draw a key lesson from their private sector peers with respect to influence versus authority.[18] Public sector leaders need to deal with confrontation without being confrontational.[19] Influence is essential because so many of the stakeholders that factor into strategic decision-making and strategic management processes are external to the institution.[20] In the case of EMBs, these include candidates and political parties, the electorate, marginalized groups, election watchdogs, the media, other government entities and policymakers. As a result, electoral leadership will require not just the exercise of authority within the EMB, but also the exercise of influence vis-à-vis external stakeholders. Public sector leaders, including those within the electoral administration, need to be able to communicate quickly and effectively with large numbers of constituent groups.[21] Given the weaknesses highlighted by the study, more needs to be done to develop capacities related to communication, relationship building and networking.

Trends in Leadership Development

A new area of research is beginning to look more closely at the effectiveness of leadership training and development programs. This research has identified multiple shortcomings in existing approaches to leadership development, which tend to focus almost entirely on what leaders need to learn; i.e., adding new knowledge and skills.[22] This approach is known as horizontal development.[23] In today's complex environments, however, new knowledge and skills must be accompanied by new mindsets, such as self-awareness, learning agility, adaptability, creativity, collaboration, comfort with ambiguity and the ability to set new directions and effectively manage change.[24] This requires vertical development, which advances a leader's capacity to think in more complex, systemic, strategic and interdependent ways.[25]

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[16] Ibid., p. 10, 23.
[17] Van Keer, E. and Bogaert, J., 2009, p. 12.
[18] Van Keer, E. and Bogaert, J., p. 25.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Petrie, N. Future Trends in Leadership Development, p. 5-6 and 12.
[23] Petrie, N. The How-To-of Vertical Leadership Development – Part 2: 30 Experts, 3 conditions, and 15 Approaches, a white paper of the Center for Creative Leadership: 2014, p. 1,3. And, Vertical Leadership Development – Part 1, p. 8.
[24] Petrie, N. Future Trends in Leadership Development, p. 9.
[25] Petrie, N. Future Trends in Leadership Development, p. 24 and McGuire, J et al. Transforming Your Organization (2015), p. 3.

Based on interviews with experts from the Americas, Europe, Asia and the Pacific Rim, one researcher identified three conditions required to achieve vertical development through new and more sophisticated processes: *heat experiences*, wherein the leader is exposed to complex situations that disrupt and disorient his or her habitual way of thinking;[26] *colliding perspectives*, exposing leaders to people with different views, backgrounds and expertise; [27] and *elevated sense-making,* in which leaders integrate and make sense of these experiences and perspectives. The last stage is a long-term process that allows for larger and more advanced worldviews to emerge and stabilize.[28] If you remove one of these conditions, according to this framework, the leadership training and development program becomes less effective.[29]

In complex environments, it is unlikely that one person alone can adequately define, much less solve, a problem. More likely, solutions to "adaptive challenges" will require collaboration between various stakeholders. This collaboration may require crossing reporting lines, teams, or units within an organization and with other institutions or stakeholder groups.[30] Increasingly, innovation stems from connection points within a network that allow existing ideas to be combined in new ways.[31]

Electoral Leadership Overview

While election commissioners must be both leaders and managers of the electoral process, and the skills required to successfully fill the role are thus intertwined, each component is worth examining individually. IFES experience has shown that election commissioners often view their role as purely administrative, though stewardship of credible elections and sustaining the quality of the electoral process over time requires more than the effective management of technical, operational and logistical processes. Effective leadership is required to overcome some of the most pernicious and protracted challenges to the electoral process. In IFES' experience with EMBs and election stakeholders globally, it has been observed that insufficient attention is given to distinct elements of leadership and how these elements can be strengthened.

Electoral management requires that the technical, operational and logistical aspects of an election be conducted in accordance with the law. Electoral managers develop plans and procedures to direct the electoral cycle, including registering voters and electoral contestants, regulating the electoral campaign, providing information and education to voters, conducting polling, counting and tabulating and announcing results. They also organize the human, financial, technological, logistical and material resources required to implement these plans to meet legal and operational requirements and deadlines.

Electoral leadership calls for individuals to address external and internal challenges confronting their organizations. This may require EMB leaders to transform the mindsets and behaviors of civil servants within EMBs; set high standards of ethical behavior; guide change associated with the introduction of

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[26] Petrie, N. The How-To-of Vertical Leadership Development – Part 2: 30 Experts, 3 conditions, and 15 Approaches, p. 3.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid, p. 4.
[30] Petrie, Nick. Future Trends in Leadership Development, p. 21. See also Heifetz, R. Leadership Without Easy Answers. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.
[31] Ibid; Ibid.

permanent, independent election structures; counter bureaucratic obfuscation and intransigence; constructively engage electoral stakeholders; build relationships across institutional boundaries; confront prejudices that impede the full exercise of voting rights; collaborate with stakeholders to mitigate violence; guide an EMB through crisis; push back against manipulation of elections; or put into place the systems and capabilities that will provide for institutional resilience and sustainable capacity.

As discussed above, there are debates in the literature regarding the extent to which public administrators should be leaders rather than simply managers. More than 30 years of IFES' international technical assistance to EMBs across the globe has illuminated the fact that credible election management is necessary but not sufficient to protect electoral integrity and support electoral reforms in complex environments. To test how electoral leaders view this dichotomy, IFES asked survey respondents to categorize a range of tasks that might be required of election administrators as either electoral leadership or electoral management. Respondents were not provided with a definition of either concept, to ensure that their responses – displayed in Figure 1 below – reflected their attitudes and assumptions about their role and mandate.

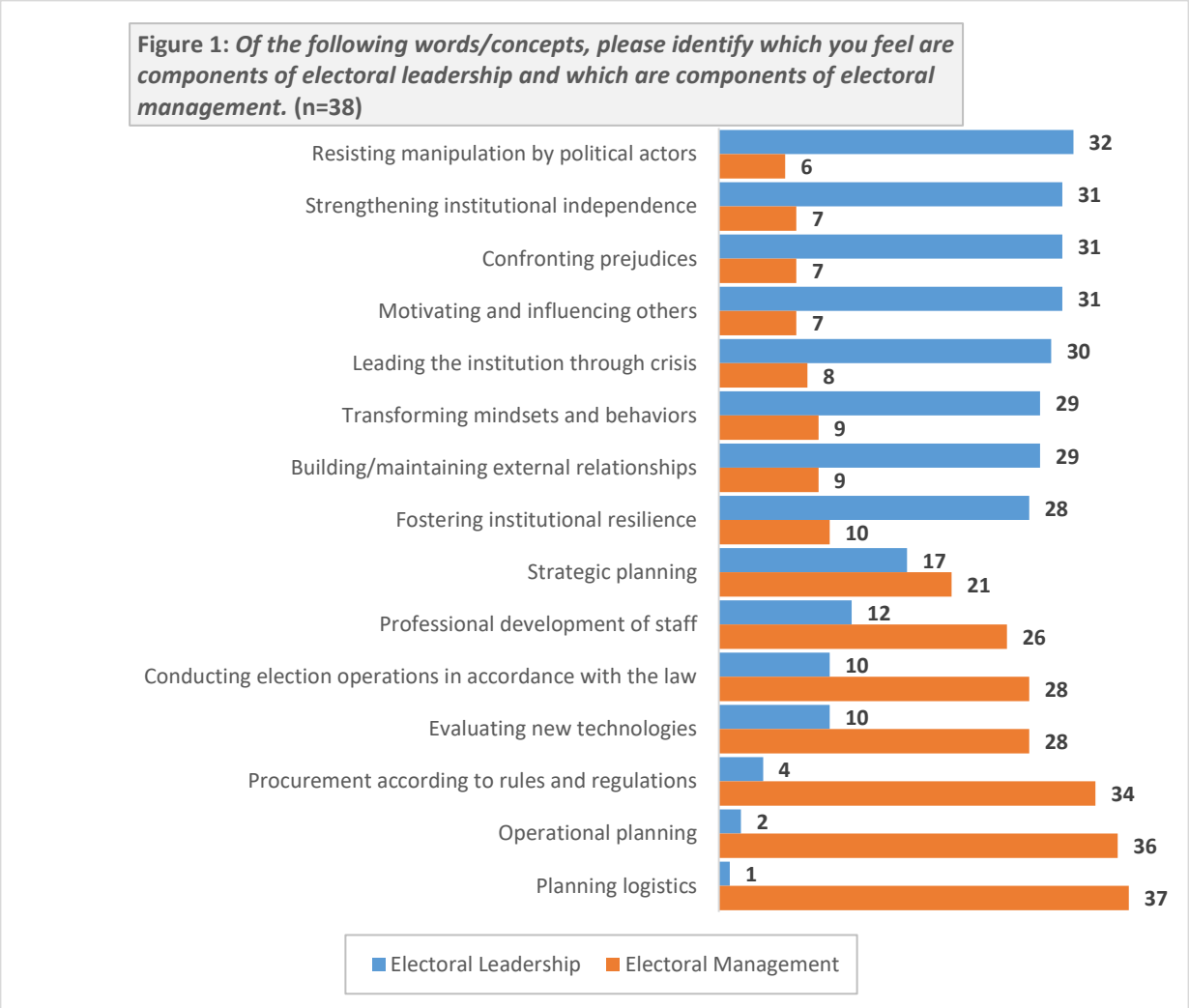
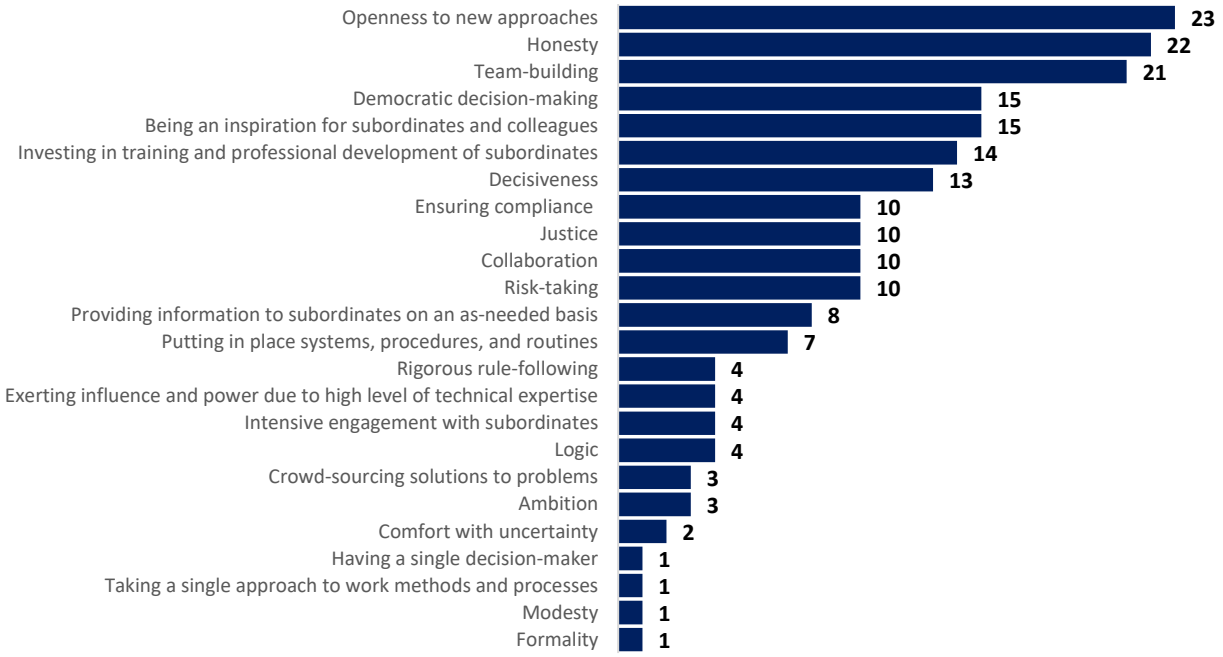


Figure 1: ***Of the following words/concepts, please identify which you feel are components of electoral leadership and which are components of electoral management.*** **(n=38)**

Interestingly, *operational planning* was nearly universally categorized as electoral management, while *strategic planning* generated more variation among survey respondents. The greatest amount of disagreement on characterizing concepts was over *strategic planning* and *professional development of staff*. On the former point, in-depth interviews underscored some EMB leaders' approaches to strategic thinking and the role of leadership. In an interview with a former chairperson from an EMB in Asia, the difference between leadership and management was defined as follows: "leadership means giving strategic direction; setting the target of where you have to go, and how to get there. Once you know your target, and how to get there, then the details can be left to the managers."

A current EMB chairperson in Europe observed that "what is important is to have a vision, that the vision is a shared vision within the institution, and that the vision is communicated to all. Also – strategic goals for the long term..." This EMB has been able to achieve a number of reforms, which the chair also attributes to risk-taking, which is discussed further below: "To develop, we must take risk. We assume risk every time we adopt new methods, approaches or tools…at the time, some of our ideas were sort of revolutionary, now no one can imagine elections without [candidate] debates, without an automated results management system, without political finance reporting…the expectations have been raised."

Figure 2*: "The following phrases describe different approaches to and traits of leadership. Please select the 5 phrases that you think most characterize an ideal electoral leader."* **(n=38)**



Leadership Approaches

Respondents were also provided phrases describing different approaches to and traits of leadership and asked to select the five phrases that they think most characterize an ideal electoral leader (Figure 2). In general, the most popular characteristics were those that encompassed flexibility and coordination with colleagues, as opposed to rigid reliance on systems, procedures or chains of command. However, traits that involved an even more inclusive approach to leadership, including *intensive engagement with subordinates, collaboration* and *crowd-sourcing solutions to problems* were less popular among respondents.

The table below outlines several approaches to leadership commonly exercised in other fields and identifies issues of relevance for EMBs and notable relevant comments from IFES' interviews with electoral leaders.

Leadership Approach	Description	EMB Application
Bureaucratic	Leaders follow the rules rigorously and ensure that their subordinates follow procedures precisely and uniformly. They focus on management – rather than leadership – and seek to maintain systems, procedures and routines that are viewed as paramount to success. Layers of control provide for compliance and accountability. Bureaucratic leaders tend to filter and control information.[32]	EMBs are often led in a bureaucratic style. This type of leadership can be inadequate to the task of overcoming bureaucratic intransigence when it interferes with the conduct of elections. *"Our influence is limited to what is based within the law. We don't go beyond the law. We don't assume any extra-legal responsibilities. But, we absolutely exercise all of the rights that we're provided under the law. We have [Memorandums of Understanding] with [various agencies] that clearly divide our competencies. We coordinate with them, but we don't interfere."* – EMB leader from Central Europe
Autocratic	Make decisions with little or no input from others and dictate work methods and processes. Rely on orders, tight controls and the threat of sanctions. Can be demoralizing, demotivating and subject to abuse. Fails to access knowledge and expertise within the group, thereby limiting creative problem-solving and innovation.[33]	Electoral leaders often exercise autocratic leadership. Autocratic leadership can sometimes be appropriately used in election situations where decisions need to be made quickly and in response to crises.[34] *"Preventing deaths is not in the election literature…I use an autocratic leadership style in these circumstances…if I had waited for consultation, it would have been a tragedy."* – EMB leader from Asia
Expert	Based on a person's knowledge, experience and technical skill. Ideally, enables a leader to understand a situation, suggest appropriate solutions and exercise sound judgment, thereby engendering trust and respect. A leader is able to exert power and influence over subordinates and other stakeholders due to a higher level of expertise.[35]	In some EMBs, leadership includes individuals with superior academic or professional credentials in the field of elections or public administration. *"It has been easy to collaborate with colleagues from other divisions because I know their work, because I did it before. I know how things work in practical ways as I was a part of the system. It has become a profession that I love."* – EMB chair from Central Asia

[32] MindToolsClub. Leadership Styles: Choosing the Right Approach for the Situation. http://mindtools.com/community/pages/article/new/LDR_84.php and Baldock, J. Bureaucratic Leadership. http://leadershiplime.com/Bureaucratic-Leadership.html.
[33] Cherry, K. What is Autocratic Leadership? 31 December 2015. http://psychology.about.com/od/leadership/f/autocratic-leadership.htm and MindToolsClub. Lewin's Leadership Styles Framework: Three Core Leadership Styles. http://www.mindtools.com/community/pages/article/lewins-leadership-styles-framework.php.
[34] Cherry, K.
[35] MindToolsClub. French and Raven's Five Forms of Power: Understanding Where Power Comes from In the Workplace. http://www.mondtools.com/community/pages/articles/new/LDR_56.php.

Leadership Approach	Description	EMB Application
Situational/ Adaptive	Leaders apply the most useful knowledge, skills and values gained from past situations to best plan and prepare for the future. Requires that leaders be comfortable with uncertainty, open to new approaches and learn through a process of self-correction. They strive to find "win-win" solutions.[36]	This type of leadership can advance the resilience of EMBs during crises and can boost the prospects for more sustainable institutions in the longer term. *"We try to learn from what we have done not too well in other elections."* – EMB commissioner from sub-Saharan Africa
Democratic/ Participative	Characterized by engagement, collaboration and listening. The knowledge and capabilities of the entire team are important, and followers provide input to problem-solving and decision-making processes. Recognizes that no one person will have all the answers or solutions to address the multitude of increasingly complex problems that organizations confront. Democratic leaders are driven both by the attainment of goals and the development of their organization.[37]	This type of leadership is not highly valued by all societies – see GLOBE studies discussed above – which presents obvious challenges to IFES as it contemplates the design and delivery of EMB leadership programs. *"Communication is extremely important, not just internally, but also externally with partners. These things are linked. If you are effective vis-à-vis external actors, this positively affects internal perceptions."* – EMB chairperson from Eastern Europe
Transformational*	Create profound change in structures, processes, organizational culture and among their followers. Characterized by a compelling vision, superior technical insight, integrity, accountability, self-awareness and emotional intelligence. Transformational leaders also exhibit strong communication and conflict resolution skills and invest in the training, development and growth of their followers.[38]	Much needed when a transition from a closed political system to an open one requires an entirely different mindset and behaviors on the part of the EMB. May also apply to shifts to permanent election administrative structures or from government and mixed EMB models to truly independent bodies. *"I turned [a myriad of] challenges into an opportunity to design a new electoral process…We held 100 plus big consultative programs. I focused on understanding the people and what they were looking for."* – Former EMB chair from Asia
Ethical*	At a fundamental level, ethical leaders internalize and practice moral concepts such as honesty,	Ethical leadership is not exercised universally within EMBs. Yet, ethics are critical to credible electoral processes and to resisting attempted

[36] MindToolsClub. Adaptive Leadership: Evolving to Thrive in Complex Environments. http://www.mindtools.com/community/pages/article/adaptive-leadership.php. See also Stippler M. et al., p. 25.
[37] Manktelow, J. Core Leadership Theories: Learning the Foundations of Leadership – Why Are Some Leaders Successful While Others Fail? http://www.mindtools.com/pages/articles/leadership-theories/htm and Maslennikova, L.
[38] Van Wart, p. 5 and Leadership Styles: Choosing the Right Approach For the Situation. See also Maslennikova, L

Leadership Approach	Description	EMB Application
	justice and care and respect for people. Ethical leadership forms the basis for various other leadership models and is also exercised in combination with other leadership approaches.[39]	manipulation of elections by political or governmental actors or other powerbrokers. *"Integrity means not finding yourself in a compromising position…Really stick to neutrality…Be forthright and upright in dealing with politicians. Listen to staff and deal with them fairly."* – EMB commissioner from sub-Saharan Africa

**Transformational leadership is an approach that may only be applicable to certain situations and exercised at pivotal points in an organization. Ethical leadership is a cross-cutting leadership approach that should be integrated into all leadership approaches and decision-making. Ethical leadership will be discussed in more detail later in this paper.*

Sources of Leadership: Power and Influence

Individuals exercise leadership in different ways in different situations. *Power* is exerted through formal authority and position, while *influence* is exerted informally to affect the actions, decisions, opinions or thinking of those over whom one does not necessarily have formal authority. Effective leadership is not limited to nor always best exercised through power. However, one advantage power has over influence is that it gives a leader the ability to formally hold people accountable when they act unethically, make management errors or are not meeting minimum standards of excellence. Exerting influence can be challenging, but the ability to influence others outside of formal chains of command can be developed through long-term efforts to build and sustain relationships.[40] Stakeholder goodwill is essential for an EMB to fulfill its mission in an increasingly democratic, informed and activist society and in response to increasingly "volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous situations."[41]

Research and experience suggest that women can face additional challenges in leading through influence.[42] To start, ingrained bias means that women often do not see *themselves* as leaders. Women should be empowered to take ownership of their work, but most importantly, others with authority in the EMB should be conscious of overcoming entrenched biases. Electoral leaders should consider the proper balance between power and influence, particularly when seeking both accountability and behavior change within – or outside of – the EMB. The Hudson study noted that – despite its findings that public sector leaders may be less willing than their private sector peers to lead through influence rather than authority – influence is extremely important because many of the stakeholders that factor into the strategic direction of public organizations are likely to be external to it.[43] This is especially true for EMBs, which rely on a multitude of stakeholders not only for the legal framework and institutional resources to

[39] Stippler M. et al. Leadership Approaches – Developments – Trends. Bertelsmann Stiftung Leadership Series, 2011, p. 56.
[40] Erica Hersh, "Leading Outside Your Authority," Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/ecpe/leading-outside-your-authority/.
[41] This terminology (known as VUCA) was first developed by the United States Army in its consideration of the need for strategic leadership in specific environments. *See* http://usawc.libanswers.com/faq/84869.
[42] Erica Hersh, "Leading Outside Your Authority," Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/ecpe/leading-outside-your-authority/.
[43] Van Keer, E. and Bogaert, J., p. 25.

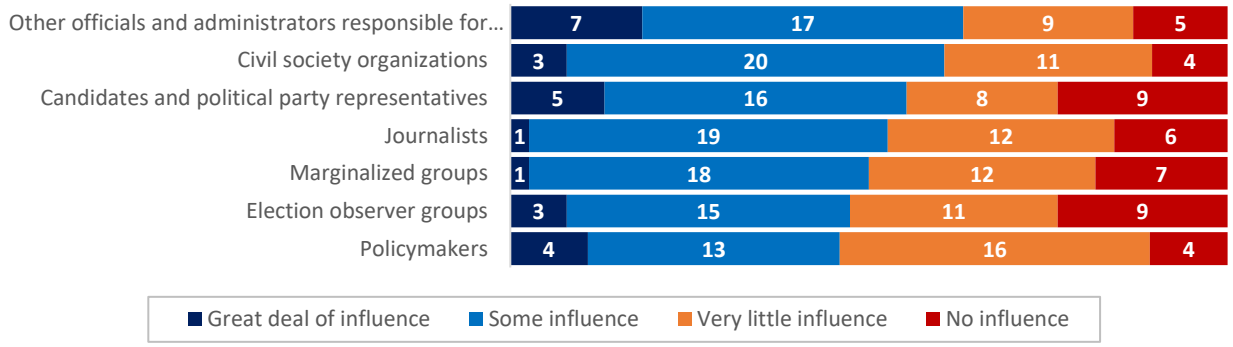
deliver on their mandate, but also in the actual delivery of election operations. Given this, the importance of stakeholder interaction and influence has been increasingly highlighted as fundamental. Overall, in the interviews IFES conducted, more interviewees referenced power based in influence than power based on position.

> ***"The law is silent on many things – for those things, our solution was to have consultative meetings with political parties…we did everything through discussion and agreement."***
> – EMB chairperson from Asia

As shown in Figure 3, respondents expressed having relatively mixed levels of influence over the external stakeholder groups mentioned in the IFES survey. Overall, respondents expressed having very little influence or no influence over *marginalized groups* (19), *election observer groups* (20) or *policymakers* (20). Groups over which respondents reported having the most influence – either a great deal or some influence – were *other officials and administrators responsible for supporting the electoral process* (24), *civil society organizations* (23) and *candidates and political party representatives* (21).

Female respondents overall reported lower degrees of influence over external stakeholders than male respondents. It is possible that this trend is related to the lower levels of contact female respondents reported having with these stakeholders in a separate survey question. The plurality and often majority of men across every category, other than *policymakers*, expressed some influence, while a plurality of women expressed no or very little influence in nearly all cases. In particular, almost half of female respondents reported no influence over *candidates and political party representatives*, compared to over half of males expressing some or a great deal of influence.

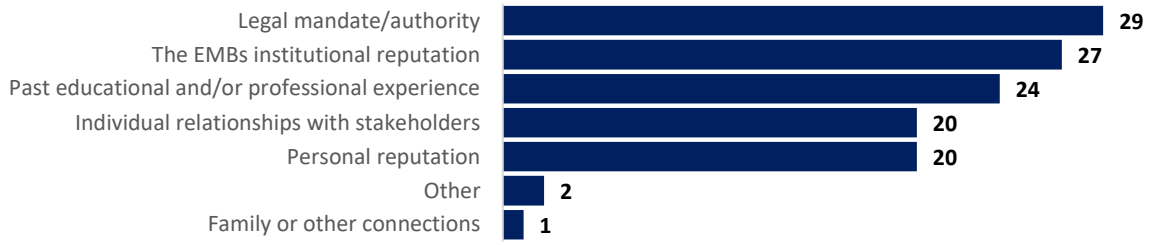
Figure 3: ***"On a scale from 1 to 4 (with 1 being no influence and 4 being a great deal of influence) how much influence do you have/did you have with external stakeholders who are not/were not under your authority?"*** **(n=38)**



Legal mandate/authority and *the EMB's institutional reputation* were the most commonly selected responses to the question: To what do you attribute your influence? (Figure 4). Participants were able to select more than one option. The next highest response was *past educational and/or professional experience*. This question generated the most significant gender differences for the responses *legal*

mandate/authority and *individual relationships with stakeholders*. A higher proportion of men noted their influence stems from their legal mandate/authority and individual relationships with stakeholders.[44]

Figure 4: *"To what do you attribute your influence?"* (n=38)



The importance of combining technical competence with influence and relationship building was acknowledged by one EMB commissioner during an IFES interview: "We have been able to exercise influence successfully both in terms of proposals for legal reform and for our budget. Our institutional independence is very important. It is essential." This success was attributed to using "all of the rights that we are provided under the law." That is, "we don't go beyond the law, but…we spend a lot of time communicating with [members of Parliament] to convince them."

Independence

In recent years, new and rapidly evolving challenges and threats have vastly changed the context in which an EMB carries out its mandate, making the institution's efforts to exert independent leadership over the electoral process much more complex. Previously serviceable models or practices of electoral leadership may no longer be practicable, and new approaches to ensuring independence need to be considered. This is true even for experienced or sophisticated EMBs that may have become extremely adept at delivering technically sound elections but now find themselves facing next-generation challenges without the tools or expertise to respond effectively. These include challenges affecting governments more broadly, including the pervasiveness of social media, foreign and domestic disinformation campaigns, terrorism and shifting demographics (for example, a youth bulge and urbanization). It also includes challenges specific to the electoral process or institutions, such as new forms of political manipulation or new expectations around election technology. Strong electoral leadership is essential to resolve protracted challenges or threats that may otherwise undermine institutional or individual independence and subvert the electoral process.

As discussed in the previous section, survey respondents were asked to characterize elements of an EMB's mandate as either *electoral leadership* or *electoral management.* A significant majority of respondents noted that *strengthening institutional independence* is a component of electoral leadership. *Resisting manipulation by political actors* was categorized the most by respondents as electoral leadership compared to all other concepts, with 32 categorizing it as such. This issue appears to be common among EMB leaders across the globe. A female EMB chair in Europe noted during an interview that she had

[44] Twenty-one of 25 men, compared to eight of 13 women, responded that their influence stems from their legal mandate or authority. Sixteen of 25 men and four of 13 women responded similarly with respect to individual relationships with stakeholders.

"inherited a secretariat that had been hired by political parties" and had to be very careful in how she led the organization. Another EMB leader in Europe made the connection between leadership independence and the independence of the institution as a whole:

> "In terms of attempted interference, you must have a very strong, very professional staff. We create an atmosphere to accept election administration as a profession, and have respect for the profession and their ethical responsibilities. This starts from the very top. We must provide the example. If we push-back against interference, they will do the same…integrity must start at the very top…The discipline of everyone on the team is expected, whether a commissioner or a driver."

EMB independence is widely referenced in the practitioner and scholarly community, often focused conceptually on statutory guarantees of independence and frameworks that distinguish between independent, governmental and mixed EMBs. As the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network notes,

> "There is some confusion over the meaning of EMB independence because the term 'independent' embraces two different concepts: (1) structural independence from the government (the Independent Model) and (2) 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. While one issue is formal and the other is normative, they are seen as linked; in many parts of the world, the Independent Model is regarded as the one most likely to ensure an EMB's independence of decision and action."[45]

There are three general categories of EMB institutional models in use around the world – *governmental*, *independent*, and *mixed* – although there is a high level of variability in how EMBs are structured, and some institutions may not fit neatly within this typology. Given that one dimension of independence is legal/structural – as discussed further below – it is useful to consider general models even if they are not perfectly descriptive in all cases.[46]

Despite its label, the "independent" EMB model does not guarantee full autonomy and impartiality, although structural independence is still an important feature of true independence. Some academic research offers a preliminary window into whether independent EMB models lead to genuine and democratic elections and if this structure correlates with public confidence in election credibility. For example, a study of both new and old democracies suggests the likelihood of genuine and democratic

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[45] ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, "Electoral Management," http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/em/ema/ema12 .

[46] According to this typology, in a governmental model, elections are implemented directly by a ministry of the executive branch or by local government. Election managers are accountable to the executive and resourced within the relevant ministry or local government. A structurally independent EMB is formally autonomous from the executive branch but may answer to another branch of government. Finally, a mixed model EMB provides for, generally, two separate units; there may be a policy or oversight EMB independent of the executive branch, while an EMB responsible for implementation is situated within a ministry or local government. The relative powers and capacity of the two institutions may vary; in some cases, unclear mandates can fracture or undermine the relationship between them. See ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, "Electoral Management," http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/em/ema/ema03/default.

elections increases when elections are managed by a body independent of the executive branch.[47] However, the relationship between EMB independence and public confidence in elections was found by Sarah Birch in 2008 to be negative or muted.[48] Institutional independence alone does not positively affect perceptions of clean and fair elections,[49] but nonpartisan appointments and professional staff are more likely to result in positive election assessments by election observers.[50] In a 2017 study, Birch and Carolien van Ham find that "elections of high integrity can be achieved *even in the absence* of impartial electoral management, if and when alternative formal and informal oversight institutions are present."[51] Their findings support the conclusion that *de facto* independence is the relevant threshold for electoral integrity.

To understand the true breadth of independent leadership over the electoral process – both *de facto* and *de jure* – it is helpful to look at the autonomy framework first described in Anne van Aaken's 2009 paper on independent EMBs, which in turn draws on the relatively more developed literature on independent administrative agencies (IAAs).[52] Van Aaken's original framework emphasizes five dimensions of independence, including accountability. This paper draws on that conceptualization and a subsequent enlargement of the concept by Alan Wall for a total of six dimensions.[53]

The first pillar of the framework is *institutional autonomy*, which matches the definition noted earlier for a structurally "independent" EMB model.[54] Institutional autonomy is supported and outlined in the constitutional and legal framework (*de jure*) but may be otherwise limited in practice (*de facto)*. An African Court of Human Rights case, Actions Pour la Protection des Droits de L'Homme (APDH) v. Republic of Côte D'Ivoire, is illustrative of the limits of de jure institutional independence. In its ruling, the court found that the government of Côte d'Ivoire had violated the African Charter on Democracy, the Economic Community of West African States Democracy Protocol, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international obligations by not establishing "an independent and impartial electoral body…"[55] The

[47] López-Pintor 2000
[48] Birch 2008
[49] Birch, Klassen, Rosas, Norris
[50] Hartlyn et al., 2008
[51] Sarah Birch and Carolien van Ham, "Getting away with foul play? The importance of formal and informal oversight institutions for electoral integrity," European Journal of Political Research 56: 487–511, 2017.
[52] Van Aaken, Anne, Independent Electoral Management Bodies and International Election Observer Missions: Any Impact on the Observed Level of Democracy? A Conceptual Framework. Published in: 20 Constitutional Political Economy, Issue 3/4 (2009), p. 296-322.; U. of St. Gallen Law & Economics Working Paper No. 2008-07. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=1137518.
[53] Alan Wall, presentation delivered at the *25th Anniversary of the First Democratic Elections in Czechoslovakia Following the Fall of Communism*, sponsored by IFES (with support from USAID), the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Union in Prague, Czech Republic, June 9-11, 2015.
[54] See van Aaken, Anne, Independent Electoral Management Bodies and International Election Observer Missions: Any Impact on the Observed Level of Democracy? A Conceptual Framework. Published in: 20 Constitutional Political Economy, Issue 3/4 (2009), p. 306-307.; U. of St. Gallen Law & Economics Working Paper No. 2008-07. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=1137518.
[55] http://www.african-court.org/en/images/Cases/Judgment/003-2017-Interpretation%20of%20the%20Judgment%20of%2018%20November%202016%20-%20Actions%20pour%20la%20Protection%20des%20Droits%20de%20l'Homme%20V.%20Republic%20of%20Cote%20D'ivoire-Judgment-28%20September%202017.pdf

court noted in its decision that – absent precision in the relevant international and regional standards on the characteristics of independence and impartiality – an EMB "is independent where it has administrative and financial autonomy; and offers sufficient guarantees of its members' independence and impartiality."[56]

The second pillar, *personnel autonomy*, addresses the way in which commissioners and other election professionals are chosen for their posts, and the type of resources and authorities they have available to do their jobs.[57] Appointees should have sufficient individual authority to withstand pressure and act impartially. Protections should include security of tenure and immunities, staggered terms in office, reappointment provisions and protections related to removal. Salary and benefits for individual commissioners and other election professionals should be adequate, secure and in line with judicial or other constitutional bodies.

In some EMBs, hiring decisions are made based purely or primarily on technical or bureaucratic competencies – that is, the knowledge and skills needed to do a particular job. To ensure that an EMB can carry out its administrative mandate *and* exercise effective leadership over the electoral process, however, hiring should also consider relevant *behavioral* competencies. The Institute of Risk Management maintains a useful framework for understanding behavioral competence at various levels. This framework calls on hiring managers to consider whether an applicant has a range of qualities, such as the ability to structure messages clearly and concisely "so that others can understand the implications of an issue" and that he or she "maintains a systematic but flexible approach to problem solving and decision making, using past lessons to inform future actions."[58]

The third pillar is *financial autonomy.*[59] Understanding how an EMB can exercise financial autonomy in practice is a complex undertaking. There is no single, ideal model for budget allocations and management to an EMB, but the following indicators of autonomy are representative of the nature of this type of independence: whether the budget is allocated specifically for the EMB, separate from other sources of state expenditure;[60] whether the EMB exercises control over decisions on how to use allocated funds to

[56] Ibid.
[57] This pillar of EMB autonomy is adapted and expanded from Anne van Aaken's criterion that EMBs have "personal autonomy."
[58] This discussion of behavioral competences is adapted from the Institute of Risk Management, Professional Standards in Risk Management. Available at: https://www.theirm.org/about/professional-standards-in-risk-management/framework-and-structure.aspx.
[59] See van Aaken, Anne.
[60] In models in which the EMB is part of the government, its budget allocation may be included within that of a ministry or other agency and more subject to the exercise of control by that institution.

meet its mandate; whether the EMB has sufficient resources to carry out that mandate adequately;[61] and whether and to what extent reporting requirements offer transparency but avoid overly detailed and burdensome disclosure and reporting requirements.

The fourth pillar is *functional autonomy,*[62] which considers the extent of the EMB's power, decision-making and resources that prevent political, executive or other powerbroker interference in its activities.[63] Van Aaken describes this pillar as "the level of delegation to the EMB."[64] Ideally, the EMB's responsibilities are clearly defined and the EMB has effective control over all electoral tasks; when responsibilities are unclear or are duplicated across multiple agencies, accountability is weakened. The voter registry should be under the full control of the EMB, even if extracted from a broader civil registry. An EMB with functional autonomy has – and uses – broad powers and independence in setting electoral policy and determining its internal rules and procedures. EMB strategic and operational plans should not be subject to governmental approval, and the EMB should have the resources (time, people, expertise, infrastructure, money) required to effectively deliver public goods and services.

The fifth pillar, *accountability*, is an obligation to accept responsibility for EMB actions and results, generally to a body not under executive control. Accountability can be both formal and informal. For example, a formal accountability mechanism may be an annual report by the EMB to parliament that is required by law,[65] while an informal accountability mechanism may consist of regular consultations or reports to stakeholder groups such as political parties and civil society groups.

Accountability differs from the other pillars in that it is an affirmative EMB responsibility to other stakeholders in the electoral process. There are a range of formal and informal accountability mechanisms that can support or impinge on EMB efforts to maintain independence. Informal accountability mechanisms – such as civil society consultations – can enable an EMB to achieve public credibility and support, which can in turn support its independence from the government of the day. As van Aaken notes, the judiciary may provide a rigorous formal accountability mechanism for an independent EMB as cases arise. The judiciary can support an EMB – assuming it is acting in good faith and administering elections according to the law and its mandate – by issuing well-reasoned, timely and fact-based decisions. However, per van Aaken's characterization, "the factual degree of accountability of the EMB depends on the independence of the courts…if the judicial system is biased and ineffective, it may actually

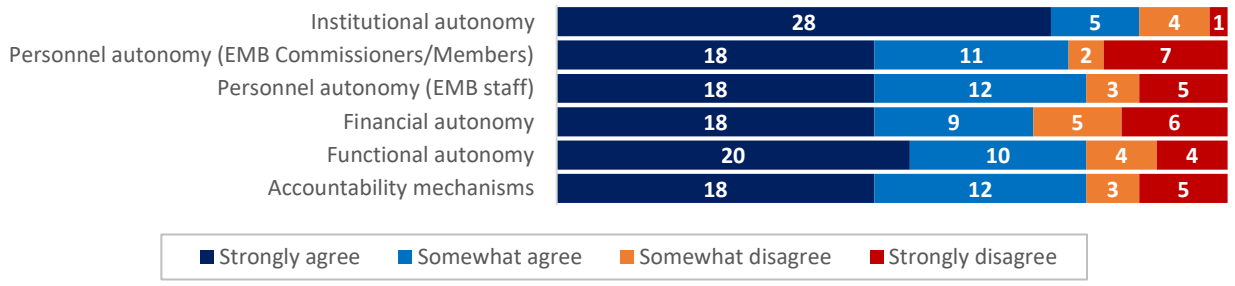
[61] One approach some EMBs have taken to reduce dependency on periodic disbursements is to advocate for the full allocation of the election budget at the start of the fiscal year. The ability to access funds from international donors or other actors may support this autonomy in countries in which funds are insufficient or otherwise problematic to access from the government. However, donor support may be earmarked only for specific types of expenditures or tied to procurement of goods and services from the donor country, or categories of countries. Timely release of funds has also been a problem for some EMBs receiving funding from international donors.
[62] See van Aaken, Anne.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] For example, Elections Saskatchewan, a provincial-level independent election management body in Canada, is required to provide annual reports to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, pursuant to Section 286.1 of The Election Act, 1996. Example reports are *available at:* https://www.elections.sk.ca/resource-centre/reports-publications/

subvert progress achieved in the impartial and professional administration of elections."[66]

In a 2017 publication, scholar Pippa Norris argues that there should be multiple forms of accountability for an EMB: upward accountability to the international community – including through election observation and internationally supervised post-election audits – horizontal accountability among state actors, and downward accountability from EMBs to civil society, political parties, the media and the public.[67] As Norris notes, where accountability linkages may fray or collapse in one direction – e.g., when horizontal accountability is limited by co-opted or overly politicized state agencies – strong accountability to the international community or civil society may bolster the EMB's support base and therefore its ability to exercise independence. This is particularly salient in an era of increasing threats and challenges to the electoral process and the role of the EMB, and it is for this reason that accountability mechanisms can serve to strengthen independence.[68]

The IFES survey explored these five dimensions of EMB autonomy – splitting personnel autonomy into two separate categories in order to understand whether there are important differences between EMB leadership and staff – finding that *institutional autonomy* was the dimension that garnered the most confidence. Respondents agreed somewhat less that their EMBs exercised the other five dimensions of

Figure 5: ***Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your EMB's level of autonomy in the following dimensions*** **(n=38)**



autonomy.

As displayed in Figure 6, respondents were also asked to select the two forms of autonomy that they felt are the most important for the exercise of effective leadership of elections. A majority of respondents said that the most important areas are institutional autonomy (24) and financial autonomy (23), with less than half of respondents selecting each of the other criteria. These findings suggest that electoral leaders may be accustomed to thinking about independence in terms of legal mandates and institutional structure.

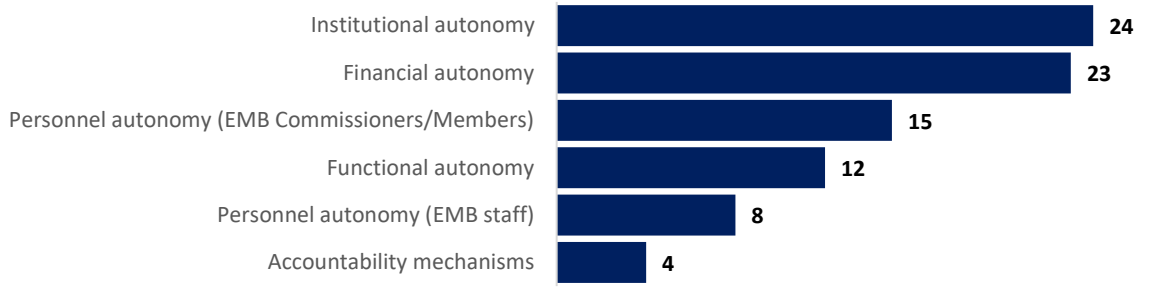
Van Aaken's framework captures the five types of autonomy discussed above. We also consider *behavioral autonomy* to be an essential sixth pillar for understanding EMB independence. Behavioral autonomy refers to the quality of leadership across the institution, the way in which decisions are made

[66] Ibid.
[67] Pippa Norris and Alessandro Nai, Election Watchdogs: Transparency, Accountability and Integrity, p. 4-5
[68] Pippa Norris and Alessandro Nai, Election Watchdogs: Transparency, Accountability and Integrity, p. 10-11

and communicated, how the EMB learns from its prior experiences and how an EMB anticipates and prepares for new challenges. Importantly, exercising behavioral autonomy can help an EMB to operate as independently as possible in restrictive environments where other elements of autonomy – for example, financial autonomy – may not be available. Key elements of behavioral autonomy include: impartial policy and decision-making; an administrative culture that places a priority on mission, public service, ethics, integrity, impartiality, competence and professionalism; institutionalized transparency;[69] effective and consistent collaboration between the EMB and other electoral stakeholders; and effective monitoring, evaluation and learning.[70]

Behavioral autonomy also addresses the extent to which leaders have empowered field and other staff to function in this manner, and whether the EMB has developed a culture of autonomous, professional behavior across its ranks. This latter point was probed in the IFES survey; 21 participants responded that

Figure 6: ***Please select the two aspects of autonomy that you feel are most important for effective leadership of elections*** **(n=38)**



leadership is exercised collectively based on learning and capacity distributed throughout the institution, while an even greater number (32) expressed that this is the most appropriate way to exercise electoral leadership, regardless of how it is actually exercised within their EMB. This suggests that many electoral leaders consider the democratic/participatory model of leadership to be the most appropriate for EMBs.

There were some gender discrepancies in the responses to the question regarding what is most appropriate for the exercise of electoral leadership, rather than what occurs in practice. Female respondents were somewhat split between *individuals with the legal mandate are formally responsible for leadership but often call on others based on alignment of knowledge and skills* (4/13) and *leadership should be exercised collectively based on learning and capacity distributed throughout the institution* (8/13). All but one of the male respondents chose the latter option. This may suggest an acknowledgment by female EMB leaders that *perceptions* of their leadership are as important as their leadership style and

[69] For example, advance notification of changes to policies and procedures, public consultation processes, timely access to electoral documents and data, independent review of systems and open EMB meetings with required minimum public notice and publicly available minutes

[70] This pillar was added to the EMB autonomy framework by Alan Wall in his presentation at the conference commemorating the *25th Anniversary of the First Democratic Elections in Czechoslovakia Following the Fall of Communism*, sponsored by IFES (with support from USAID), the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Union in Prague, Czech Republic, June 9-11, 2015.

influence. It may also suggest an awareness of the need to project strength as a female leader in what may be a male-dominated environment. A female EMB chairperson in Europe observed that:

> "in terms of leadership, you are listened to because of your nature, because you are a strong person, and because you are respected. When your opinion is important for everyone, your subordinates are more likely to accept your advice and opinions rather than just resigning themselves to being tasked."

Another female EMB chairperson interviewed in Europe noted that: "It is very difficult to be a woman, especially in EMBs. It is not common to have women in these bodies, and you have to be really independent. It is the only reason I survived." These interviews have also revealed that individual EMB leaders recognize that different leadership styles may be required, depending on the phase of the electoral process or the particular challenge at hand. For example, a current EMB chairperson in Asia noted that:

> "Preventing deaths is not in the election literature. I have seen it, and I don't want to have any deaths on my watch. My [deputy] says I use an autocratic leadership style in these circumstances, but it is the only solution for this kind of tragic moment. If I had waited for consultation, it would have been a tragedy. Some issues can be solved through a series of meetings, for example on propaganda. Others require more direct intervention."

Maintaining the independence of the EMB institution is an essential mandate for its leaders, regardless of whether an election is occurring in a routine or extreme context – such as the one referenced by our interviewee above – or in a country where democratic institutions and values are highly entrenched or one where they are still being shaped. This imperative is no simple task; each of the autonomies outlined above may bolster the others or be in tension with them. Regardless of the specific structural and contextual features for electoral administration, the available evidence suggests, as Pippa Norris notes in her publication *Why Elections Fail*, "widespread public doubts about the fairness of the voting process and the impartiality of the authorities serves to undermine turnout, fuel contentious protests, and erode confidence in political parties, parliaments, and governments."[71] Although there are other external factors at play, a consistent commitment to independent and impartial stewardship of the electoral process – in tandem with the ethical and crisis leadership described in the next sections of this paper – will support electoral leaders to maintain or bolster the credibility of the election process.

Ethical Leadership

As the stewards of fundamental rights, EMB leaders face a specific set of ethical demands and dilemmas, often under immense political pressure. Leaders in other institutions, such as human rights or anti-corruption bodies, face challenging ethical decisions related to their line of work, but the ethics attached to the distinct and often isolating roles of senior election officials are worth considering specifically. By consciously demonstrating ethical leadership and providing leadership according to a set of values specific

[71] Pippa Norris, *Why Elections Fail*, Cambridge University Press, 2015: p. 158.

to electoral management,[72] electoral leaders can demonstrate independence and reinforce the credibility of their institutions and the electoral process.

Ethics are a kind of norm associated with any role that we might hold in society, such as a member of a profession. They are typically aspirational, guiding members toward high standards of behavior. Ethical leadership within a particular organization or field involves a range of personal, social and organizational values and ethics as they are applied to work-related decisions. While a leader's values shape the organization, the leader's values are also shaped by the organization and its relevant history and culture.

EMB leaders make high-risk decisions with significant consequences, so it is particularly important to apply an ethical framework to the decision-making process. Ethical leadership is important even in situations of crisis where there may be many competing priorities, insufficient or conflicting information and little time to take decisive action. Many real-life decisions for EMB leaders may be best described as hard decisions with *ethical dimensions*. This means that in addition to ethical principles, there are other factors at play, such as cost for an EMB to take an action. Ultimately, having a strong ethical foundation and a considered decision-making process will help leaders stand by their choices when faced with the implications or negative reactions. Personal or social values are also relevant; for example, a particular societal context may have a set of norms surrounding women's political participation or other issues, but the unique role of an EMB demands a stronger adherence to values that favor inclusion.

[72] Extrapolating from existing research on ethical leadership and the universal aspirations of elections set out in international and regional documents, some of these key values include: adherence to the rule of law, transparency, centrality of the voter in the electoral process, impartiality, neutrality, inclusion and open-mindedness. These values are derived from IFES comparative experience and several guiding documents, including "Towards an International Statement of the Principles of Electoral Justice" (The Accra Guiding Principles) and International IDEA's "Code of Conduct for the Ethical and Professional Administration of Elections."

Gender and Ethical Leadership

The experiences of men and women during the electoral process are often different. As such, it is important for ethical leaders to consider gender both within the institutions they helm and throughout the electoral process.

Three of the four women leaders interviewed by IFES reported being subject to sexism and discrimination by other EMB members, even when serving in the position of chairperson. Those affected said this adversely impacted their efforts to lead and enact transformative change at the institution. In some cases, sexism and discrimination impacted the efforts of women leaders to make and implement decisions in their commissions and within their departments and portfolios.

Results from IFES' global survey of electoral leaders showed that six of the 13 women surveyed have experienced threats or physical violence for their actions or decisions as EMB leaders. These survey results align with research about violence and harassment faced by women in public life. For example, a study from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) found that 81.8 percent of women parliamentarians surveyed faced some kind of psychological violence, while 20 percent experienced physical violence.[73]

As leaders and managers of the electoral process, EMBs have a special responsibility to instill both an ethical workplace culture that addresses the specific challenges faced by women and an electoral culture that ensures that women and men have equal opportunities to participate as election managers, candidates and voters. EMBs can make a powerful contribution to advancing gender equality, not only in terms of how they approach the management of the key activities and processes relating to the conduct of elections, but also in terms of their own internal management policies and practices.

Research shows that workplace culture that promotes gender equality is good for the organization's functioning and has positive effects on the organization's ability to fulfill its mandate.[74] With an EMB at the frontline of the democratic process, it is in a unique position to lead by example, beginning by building an understanding and commitment to gender equality within the institution itself. Many peer organizations – including other EMBs, government bodies and international organizations – are increasingly placing value on inclusion and codifying specific initiatives to promote diversity and a safe, welcoming work environment.

In addition to workplace issues, the full, meaningful, equal participation of women and men in political and electoral processes is a basic human right that EMBs should actively promote. The right of women to participate fully and equally in elections is recognized by international law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and equality clauses in national constitutions. All of these

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[73] Inter-Parliamentary Union. "Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians." October 2016. https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2016-10/sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-parliamentarians.

[74] See Deloitte and Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission. "Waiter, is that inclusion in my soup? A new recipe to improve business performance." May 2013. https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/au/Documents/human-capital/deloitte-au-hc-diversity-inclusion-soup-0513.pdf, and Jonathan David Ostry, et al., "Economic Gains from Gender Inclusion: New Mechanisms, New Evidence," October 8, 2018, https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Staff-Discussion-Notes/Issues/2018/10/09/Economic-Gains-From-Gender-Inclusion-New-Mechanisms-New-Evidence-45543.

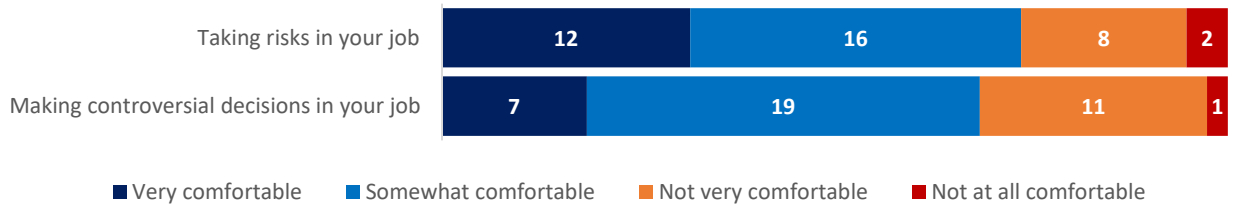
instruments are legally binding agreements that guarantee that women and men be treated equally in different facets of their lives, including in political processes and in workplaces like EMBs. Domestic laws around the globe reinforce these requirements. EMBs dedicate their work to ensuring that every eligible citizen who wishes to participate in an election may do so. As part of this mandate to ensure free and fair elections, it is essential that commissions consider how to ensure truly equal access for women voters and candidates in the electoral process.

Ethical organizations, including EMBs, will likely include several features and characteristics, including leaders who demonstrate ethical behavior. If a leader makes ethical challenges and dilemmas part of everyday conversations in the EMB, these challenges can be resolved while they are small and thus reduce the risk of escalation. An inclusive, engaging, open leadership style, rather than one based on fear, can also contribute to an ethical EMB. People who work in a fear-based leadership organization will not feel responsible for their own actions. EMB staff should be encouraged to have autonomy within the scope of their jobs and should also be given what they need to be able to do their job properly and without fear or temptation.

> ***"Have flexibility with your staff. You don't have to be indulgent, but you should have an ear to hear everything that concerns your staff. Make sure that your staff get the requisite training they need to do their job and the requisite materials to work with. Make sure that they have the emoluments/assurances that will make them feel comfortable. Get them their pay on time."***
>
> – EMB commissioner from sub-Saharan Africa

As shown in Figure 7, IFES survey respondents expressed comfort in taking risks in their job and making controversial decisions. Twenty-eight respondents noted that they are either very or somewhat comfortable taking risks in their job, compared to only 10 who are not very or not at all comfortable. Similarly, 26 note they are comfortable making controversial decisions, compared to 12 who are not

Figure 7: ***"How comfortable are you with_____?"***



comfortable.

Encouragingly, almost half (18) of respondents said they were "very likely" to receive support from others within the institution if they proposed something that has never been done before by the EMB, with a further 13 saying that it was somewhat likely they would receive support. Responses were also somewhat different between men and women, with women being somewhat less likely to receive support from others within the institution.

EMBs should also include standards of ethical behavior in staff recruitment and job descriptions and address them in performance reviews. Ethical organizations will have a process for rewarding staff who perform to a high ethical standard and for punishing those who fail. As much as possible, leaders should be transparent with the public and stakeholders about the EMB's failings as well as its achievements.

> ***"John Maxwell said that 'integrity is an inside job.' There are those among commissioners who by nature can be easily swayed, and the only way to deal with this, within the confidential***

space of the boardroom, was to name and shame each other. This worked, but was very painful. An occasional sense of humor helped to lessen the strain."

– EMB chair from Africa

Ethical values are built into electoral laws, professional codes and international guidelines. Sometimes directives in these documents are very specific, such as mandated term limits for EMB leaders, while others require interpretation, such as requirements to hold "genuine and democratic" elections. In many cases, these documents may only indirectly address what should be done and how, and ethical values implicit within the documents can be used to guide decision-making and actions.

***Code of Ethics*:** A statement of values of the organization with general principles to guide staff behavior and decision-making. The Code of Ethics will state the expectation that any staff member faced with a problem will choose the solution that most conforms with those values. The Code of Ethics guides decision-making but will be specific only about the most serious situations. The organization will usually have a procedure to address code infractions.

***Code of Conduct*:** A document that outlines specific behaviors that are required, acceptable or prohibited for someone who is a member of an organization. For example, it might forbid dishonest practices or viewing inappropriate content on the organization's information technology equipment. A Code of Conduct will be specific about those practices and the level of performance required and usually define minimum standards of performance. As distinguished from a Code of Ethics, it provides limited decision-making guidance if a problem is confronted that has not been anticipated. The organization will usually specify clear sanctions for not meeting the standards.

Codes of Ethics are developed to meet the special demands and sensitivities of a particular context: in this case, election management. Here, or in a Code of Conduct or a similar action-guiding document, ethics are made explicit. Unlike most laws or regulations, ethics codes promote more than simple compliance. They are generally action-guiding, and they require and foster the use of judgment and the recognition of responsibility for decision-making and its outcomes.

These tools and characteristics can all be useful in boosting the ethical profile of an EMB, but equally important is ensuring that ethical change within an EMB is effective and sustainable. Most organizations are risk-averse, and significant organizational changes are often resisted by both leaders and staff. Incremental, gradual change may be more palatable than trying to change entire systems, processes or institutional cultures. Significant reform may be necessary, however, when a change in culture is needed. Trying to create significant organizational change by only changing a few processes rarely works. Successful change in the organizational culture toward a clearer, higher standard of ethics can boost the credibility of EMB leadership in the eyes of the EMB staff and build the trust of the public and other electoral stakeholders, even among EMBs that already have a good reputation.

Adjusting standard procedures and processes, documents, training and staff development and leadership approaches to reflect an organizational commitment to ethics is the first step. Mechanisms for sustainability should be built into the change process – for example, requiring regular reviews or reporting measures, institutionalizing ethics training as part of ongoing training programs and new staff orientation and ensuring any required resources are in place to sustain change.

Staff and stakeholders must be engaged in the change process for it to be effective and sustainable. Leaders should seek views and input from staff to ensure they feel heard as part of the process, communicate to staff and other stakeholder the why, what and how of proposed changes and listen to the responses. EMB leaders must embed change in the organizational processes and procedures to make it easy to conform to the change so that it requires effort to *revert* to the old ways. For example, if new procurement policies are implemented, new systems could be put in place to match and the old systems removed, making it difficult for staff to initiate a procurement process following the old process or policy. New staff in an EMB need to be engaged with relevant codes and see ethical behavior implemented in practice to adopt the preferred organizational culture.

> ***"In the beginning of my tenure, it was difficult to instill ethical behavior [within the EMB], as staff and commissioners were thinking like third class politicians. However, they came to see that I care a lot about implementing the law, and I tried to instill this feeling with them. I started with small things – for example smoking inside the office. Maybe they don't completely agree with all laws, but they still have to implement them. I was using the law to drive them to do the right thing."***
>
> – EMB commissioner from Europe

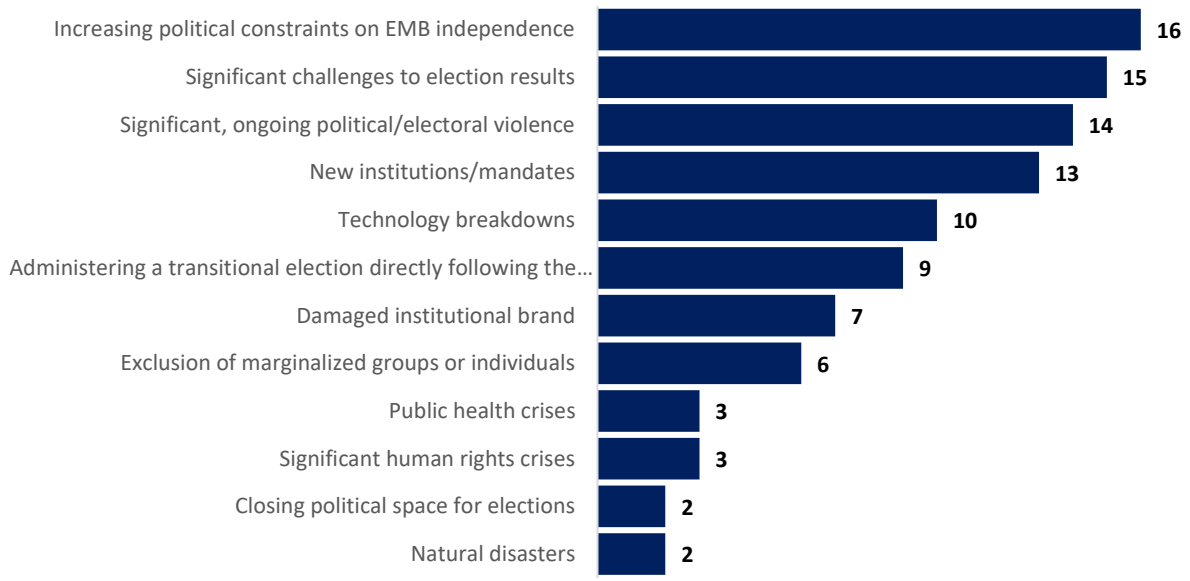
There are three key pillars of trust in elections: trust in the institutions that run elections, in the election process itself and in the results it produces. Ethical leadership is a foundational element of preserving public trust, particularly as we are increasingly living in an era when it is important to focus not only on the election, but on public perceptions of the election. As such, electoral leaders and institutions must not only be ethical, they must be seen to be so. One part of this is having guiding documents that set out the ethical commitments that undergird the institution. Even more fundamental is having electoral leaders who model ethical leadership and approach decisions with an ethical dimension in a strategic and consistent manner. As such, ethical leadership ties directly into the behavioral autonomy identified in the previous section as fundamental to electoral leadership.

Crisis Leadership

Elections – conducted against a backdrop of social and political dynamics – are highly vulnerable to crisis. Many elections are defined by the point in time in which they are delivered, such as following or concurrent to the cessation of a long-standing violent conflict or after the collapse of a government. As explored in the independence section of this paper, there are also risks to the electoral process from the rise of social media and related information technologies, changes in election technology and new apertures for interference, whether foreign or domestic. As such, it is imperative in the modern era of democratic elections that an electoral leader proactively consider the potential range of exposure to crises and prepare the institution to mitigate and manage them.

In IFES' global survey of electoral leaders, the most commonly cited leadership challenges or crises were: *increasing political constraints on EMB independence; significant challenges to election results; significant, ongoing political/electoral violence;* and *new institutions/mandates*. Respondents cited a variety of tactics and approaches that they used to overcome such leadership challenges. One common theme was reliance on the institutional credibility of the EMB or personal reputation, or conversely the need to overcome perceptions of a damaged EMB brand. Some emphasis was also placed on following electoral laws and procedures or reforming laws or procedures to adapt to challenges. Planning, transparency, consulting stakeholders and implementing new technologies and other procedures were

Figure 8*: "Have you faced significant leadership challenges due to any of the following issues?"* **(n=38)**



also common themes.

A crisis is defined herein as *a set of circumstances or a critical event presenting threats or nonroutine challenges to individuals, institutions or societies*.[75] An electoral crisis can be a set of threats specific to the electoral process – for example, the violence witnessed as part of the Kenya 2007 elections. It can also refer to an election in the midst or immediate aftermath of an external crisis – for example, a deadly outbreak of Ebola in Liberia during the 2014 election process, the devastating earthquake in Haiti in 2010, the 2004 earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean and the 2017 terrorist attack in Great Britain).

Potential crisis situations are typically characterized by several variables, including the speed with which the situation arises, whether it is predictable, how prepared the institutions or individuals might be to

[75] See Risk and Crisis Management in the Public Sector by Lynn T. Drennan, Allan McConnell, and Alastair Stark, p. 2. Published in 2007 (2nd ed.). Routledge Taylor & Francis Group: London and New York.

respond, the complexity of the situation, any politicization of the events or the facts and the persistence of the situation.[76] Whether a situation is or becomes a crisis is often directly linked to how individuals or institutions respond or how prepared they are to respond.[77]

In addition, crises are not only shaped or inflamed by the facts of the situation and responses to those facts, but also by perceptions. Framing an event as a crisis creates a sense of urgency, with the implication that unfolding events are so extraordinary and unacceptable that action is required. This can help to mobilize resources, raise awareness and drive a response. However, some stakeholders may have an interest in framing a situation as a crisis for political ends, including as a means of influencing public opinion in a way that can impact the electoral process. This is an increasing challenge for EMBs. Conversely, other political actors – or stakeholders with competing priorities – may have an interest in downplaying a genuine crisis that requires urgent action.[78]

Part of why strong electoral leadership is so fundamental is that electoral crises often involve complexity. External but interrelated factors can exacerbate and escalate electoral crises, and vice versa. These factors may include but are not limited to: corruption and poor governance; changing power dynamics in the government, political parties or EMB itself; the widespread dissemination of dis- and misinformation; foreign interference; group and gender-based hate speech and violence; post-conflict grievances; or armed nonstate actors or criminal groups. There can be many potential impacts of an electoral crisis, including significant human costs, such as loss of life resulting from widespread violence; economic or infrastructural impacts, such as loss of revenue and market shocks; damage to the credibility of the EMB institution; and systemic impact, such as damage to public confidence in a government or the democratic process.[79]

These impacts are important to understand when preparing for risks, but also when recovering and learning from them. For example, if an election has been marred by violence, poll workers or regional election officials may require different kinds of support from the EMB leadership. In some countries, local election workers have reported in post-election reviews that they feel “forgotten” by their EMB leadership after the election is over but when the effects of trauma still remain. This can be perceived as a failure of leadership, and may linger within an EMB, with the potential to be more damaging than the original crisis event.

Adopting a crisis management cycle approach, as described below, can help an EMB to focus on each stage of the process, from risk identification to the application of learning.[80] It also enables an EMB to move away from being reactive and tactical toward a more strategic state of readiness that anticipates,

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[76] See Risk and Crisis Management in the Public Sector by Lynn T. Drennan, Allan McConnell, and Alastair Stark, p. 22-24. Published in 2007 (2nd ed.). Routledge Taylor & Francis Group: London and New York.
[77] https://www.brightline.org/resources/learning-from-crisis-mode/
[78] Risk and Crisis Management in the Public Sector by Lynn T. Drennan, Allan McConnell, and Alastair Stark, p. 28-29. Published in 2007 (2nd ed.). Routledge Taylor & Francis Group: London and New York.
[79] Risk and Crisis Management in the Public Sector by Lynn T. Drennan, Allan McConnell, and Alastair Stark, p. 27-28. Published in 2007 (2nd ed.). Routledge Taylor & Francis Group: London and New York.
[80] Based upon the Crisis Management Cycle introduced in Risk and Crisis Management in the Public Sector by Lynn T. Drennan, Allan McConnell, and Alastair Stark, p. 30-32. Published in 2007 (2nd ed.). Routledge Taylor & Francis Group: London and New York.

plans for, mitigates and manages risk in ways that allow the organization to resolve and successfully emerge from crisis.

The Crisis Management Cycle
Adapted from Drennan, McConnel, and Stark's *Risk and Crisis Management in the Public Sector* (2007)

Prevention and Preparation

The first two phases of the crisis management cycle are *prevention* and *preparation*. Proper structures are needed to enable decision-makers to acquire all of the available information about an unfolding event. As scholars describe in *The Politics of Crisis Management: Public Leadership under Pressure*, "Even when a more composite threat picture emerges in the organization, it does not always make it to the top-level policy makers."[81] The same holds true for information and data held by multiple organizations and agencies. This underscores the need for senior EMB leaders to be in communication with and receive feedback from government stakeholders, civil society and staff at all levels of the organization to prepare for and anticipate crises to the fullest extent possible.

Risk is the chance of something happening that will undermine the EMB's ability to carry out its mandate or meet its strategic goals or objectives

Risk mitigation and management is a methodical means of identifying, evaluating and monitoring risks and applying various methods and tools to minimize adverse effects and maximize opportunities.

A ***scenario*** is a written outline of a potential event or sequence of events and can help an EMB think through how a crisis may unfold in practice.

Some risk or exposure is unavoidable, and it is impossible to plan for every contingency. Effective crisis response will require planning, adaptation and innovation, guided by the EMB leadership. Scenario planning is a useful tool if the EMB focuses on creating scenarios for those risks or threats that are most likely and have the greatest potential impacts. Contingency plans corresponding to these scenarios should be simple, straightforward and realistic. For example, a potential risk might be a power failure that impacts the electronic transmission of results, and a contingency plan might be the provision of batteries or generators to ensure transmission can continue.

There are multiple reasons that contingency planning may fail, including politics, bureaucratic inertia, budgetary constraints, low prioritization or plans that are too prescriptive and inflexible. Strong leadership can overcome some of these limitations, including by modeling a clear commitment to contingency planning and drawing on established relationships and influence to overcome internal organizational hurdles. As an EMB chairperson from Central Europe noted in an interview,

[81] A Arjen Boin, Paul 't hart, Eric Stern and Bengt Sundelius, The Politics of Crisis Management: Public Leadership under Pressure," 151.

> "In the beginning I might have been shocked when confronted by things we didn't expect. That's no longer the case. Of course, we can't anticipate everything… but we are doing our best to anticipate as much as possible, plan in advance, have appropriate strategies in place, and respond in a timely way."

Response

The third phase of the conflict management cycle, response, tends to involve many things happening simultaneously and in quick succession. That is, it is usually complex and messy. EMB crisis response will involve a blending of pre-established contingency plans, decisive and effective leadership and improvisation under conditions of high stress. As such, effective leadership of a crisis depends in large measure on the ability of responsible persons to deal with ambiguity, stress and external pressure. During a crisis, electoral leaders must gather and process information from a range of sources, including traditional and social media, political parties, election observers and other stakeholders, depending on the crisis. The information environment may be contradictory, confusing and incomplete.

Accordingly, information flows and hierarchies should be properly organized in advance.[82] In particular, during a crisis, decision-makers need mechanisms for handling and deciphering large amounts of information. Without such mechanisms, "policy makers can become paralyzed or indiscriminately attentive to particular items of information, which may unduly affect their judgements."[83] EMB leaders must acknowledge that stress during a crisis can impact their behavior, and then develop the capacity to regulate it.

Decision-making during an electoral crisis may be centralized or decentralized depending upon the nature and scope of the crisis. Highly centralized decision-making is the fastest form of decision-making and may be required to save lives and to demonstrate a decisive response. At the same time, there are drawbacks to such an approach: the potential failure to consider lower level input, exclusion of key stakeholders and potential for politicization. More participatory approaches, even if limited to an elite group, are beneficial as they provide for balancing discussion and action, diversification of input, built-in checks and balances and potentially greater legitimacy. However, participatory approaches are sometimes slow and subject to bottlenecks and breakdowns.

Other than engaging stakeholders in consultation during the decision-making process, EMB leaders will often need to rely on larger interagency networks in implementing decisions and adapting as needed. The EMB may be the lead agency in the crisis response, or it may be one member of a network. When natural disasters, public health crises or terrorism are involved, specialized actors with whom the EMB may have little experience may be involved – for example, health ministry or public works. The best approach to heading off institutional politics is to address it during the planning phase by building relationships, establishing a commonality of purpose, predetermining roles and responsibilities and

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[82] Arjen Boin, Paul 't hart, Eric Stern and Bengt Sundelius, The Politics of Crisis Management: Public Leadership under Pressure," 152.

[83] Arjen Boin, Paul 't hart, Eric Stern and Bengt Sundelius, The Politics of Crisis Management: Public Leadership under Pressure," 33.

creating coordination structures. In short, leaders should "invest in creating the institutional and social conditions that facilitate effective network coordination during crises."[84]

For example, drawing on lessons from the violent 2007 elections in Kenya, the EMB and National Police Service instituted the "Election Security Arrangement project" ahead of the 2017 elections. This initiative brought together relevant agencies, including the judiciary, director of public prosecutions, attorney general, National Cohesion and Integration Commission, Registrar of Political Parties, Peace Building and Disaster Response Agency and Independent Policing Oversight Authority.[85] The project established a joint monitoring and rapid response mechanism in an attempt to mitigate and manage the risk of violence leading up to and during the elections.

After decisions are made, they need to be implemented. Consequences of decisions can be both intended and unintended. Leaders need to anticipate both, and electoral leaders need to assess impacts on all electoral stakeholders including the EMB, its people, infrastructure, assets and reputation. For a crisis specific to the election, responses may be technical (e.g., recount, technical fixes mid-process, adjudication) or political, and therefore generally outside the ambit of the EMB (e.g., interim government, power-sharing arrangement, constitutional convention or transitional justice) or some combination of the two.

However, the EMB may have a role in defining whether a challenge is technical or political, or in avoiding a political solution being applied to what is a technical challenge. Again, strategic external relationships can be important in this instance, where the EMB needs to be able to influence a given situation while at the same time maintaining both actual and perceived independence and impartiality.

For example, in Afghanistan in 2014, an audit was conducted to help verify the outcome of the presidential race. In the end, the audit applied ad hoc procedures in an effort to respond to significant political tension and insecurity:

> "This audit was conducted amid allegations of widespread fraud and with the credibility of the electoral management bodies in question. Observer missions reported that electoral authorities and the international community were compelled by a political agreement to begin the audit in haste, which made it challenging to properly address key considerations, including the criteria that should be used to invalidate votes and which organization should have ultimate authority over the process. While this kind of response to political turmoil is not uncommon in developing and post-conflict states, it leaves the process vulnerable to ad hoc processes and decision-making…[t]hese challenges in turn can fray or sever the accountability linkages detailed in this publication by complicating the efforts of stakeholders to support a legitimate post-election audit and broadly credible electoral process."[86]

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[84] Arjen Boin, Paul 't hart, Eric Stern and Bengt Sundelius, The Politics of Crisis Management: Public Leadership under Pressure," 154.

[85] http://www.nationalpolice.go.ke/2015-09-08-17-56-33/news/209-election-security-arrangement-project-esap.html

[86] Erica Shein and Chad Vickery, "Election Audits: Principles and Practices" in Election Watchdogs: Transparency, Accountability, and Integrity, ed. Pippa Norris and Alessandro Nai, Oxford University Press (2017).

Recovery and Learning

The final phase of the crisis management cycle is *recovery and learning*, which focuses on accountability, review and reform. At this stage of the crisis cycle, leadership is about realizing that a crisis is not over once the operational and managerial tasks have been completed. In the immediate aftermath of a crisis, an EMB must account for its decisions and responses. This involves "explaining (repeatedly if necessary) in a public forum what was done to prevent and manage a crisis and why."[87] As discussed earlier, accountability is an obligation to accept responsibility for EMB actions and results. Just as different kinds of formal and informal accountability mechanisms can support EMB efforts to maintain independence, they can also help an EMB navigate, explain, recover and learn from a crisis.

Sometimes direct accountability is required: for example, if an EMB has triggered or exacerbated a crisis or handled a crisis response poorly. This accountability can take many forms – e.g., political, legal, professional, democratic. It can be achieved through official investigations, internal reviews, independent and expert reviews, adjudication, investigative reporting, observer reports and public debate.

The ability to provide responsible accounting for the events of a crisis involves some preparation by the EMB. Leaders should "carefully document the crisis response as well as the process which produced it. In addition, they should closely monitor the events and the stances taken by major political actors for possible long-run, second-order consequences, those that come back to haunt leaders if they ignore them. They should. They should check how the media report the crisis and the government's handling of it. They need to follow and contribute to social media debates and narratives."[88] Especially in the modern era of diminishing trust in democratic institutions, it cannot be assumed that the public will attribute electoral crises to external factors. They are likely to hold the EMB accountable, even if some events were legitimately outside the EMB's control.

Electoral leaders should make a good faith effort to truthfully account for the events of a crisis, but this should not involve attempts to shift the blame or create scapegoats. Blaming others "only undermines one's authority, whereas proactive, genuine, and well-communicated responsibility-taking may well underpin it."[89] Ultimately, the review process should result in learning that is applied to reforms. This may involve fine-tuning – i.e., small-scale and incremental tweaks to existing practices and procedures – reform of policy and institutional frameworks or a more substantial paradigm shift that changes the consensus around values, ideals and goals that undermine policies, institutions or society as a whole. However, sweeping, large-scale reforms enacted in the aftermath of a crisis can be produced in a noninclusive and hasty manner that undermines their effectiveness and may ultimately result in more harm than good.

Increasingly, EMBs are running elections within a crisis context or are having to react to crises as they

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[87] Arjen Boin, Paul 't hart, Eric Stern and Bengt Sundelius, The Politics of Crisis Management: Public Leadership under Pressure," 15.
[88] Arjen Boin, Paul 't hart, Eric Stern and Bengt Sundelius, The Politics of Crisis Management: Public Leadership under Pressure," 161.
[89] Arjen Boin, Paul 't hart, Eric Stern and Bengt Sundelius, The Politics of Crisis Management: Public Leadership under Pressure," 161.

emerge during the electoral process. The best electoral leaders have anticipated these crises and prepared for them in advance, included by having preexisting relationships and networks in place to draw on as part of a solution. While crisis planning and preparation require resources that may be otherwise needed for the quotidian tasks of election administration, the risk for electoral leaders in neglecting proper crisis planning can be much greater than the upfront investment and has been seen to have far-reaching positive impacts.

Conclusions

As noted at the start of this paper, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems' (IFES) experience has shown that election commissioners often view their role as purely administrative or managerial. Without sufficient emphasis on the less tangible elements of leadership, the electoral process may not survive protracted crises or challenges. Conducting credible elections, sustaining quality electoral processes over time and demonstrating resilience in the face of a crisis requires not just competent management of the technical, operational and logistical aspects of elections, but also effective leadership. Malign actors seeking to manipulate and undermine elections are increasingly nimble and innovative, and many election management bodies (EMBs) do not have the capacity to respond effectively. The proliferation of new media and new election technologies provides these bad actors with evolving modes and opportunities to undermine electoral and governing institutions, processes and public perceptions.

As with other complex organizations, it is essential to build a leadership culture that provides direction and inspires commitment throughout the EMB to carry out its mandate efficiently, effectively and in accordance with a coherent set of values, and to address any challenges that arise.[90] Developing and sustaining this type of leadership requires a detailed understanding of leadership theories and their application to the electoral context. Traditional professional development programming focused on building electoral knowledge and skills must be complemented by a continued emphasis on ethics, crisis leadership and building and sustaining effective, independent and inclusive organizations. Training programs for electoral leaders are one important approach, and the IFES Executive Curriculum in Electoral Leadership (iEXCEL) was designed using this body of research to provide an effective tool for professional development mentorship. It emphasizes the key findings of our research, as discussed in this paper, including a focus on: meaningful stakeholder engagement and effective public communication; developing an ethical leadership culture that creates a shared direction for the organization and nurtures new ways of thinking; ensuring that decision-making processes are well-considered and value-based; and applying a proactive and comprehensive approach to risk mitigation.

Electoral leaders must also be aided in their efforts to build resilient electoral institutions by a sound legal framework that enables their autonomy and accountability. Support for the legal reform process should consider each element of the autonomy framework introduced earlier, including both formal guarantees of structural independence and the necessary elements of personnel, financial and functional autonomy, as well as accountability linkages that support, but do not stifle, the EMB mandate. Technical assistance programs should also be designed to enable EMBs to take steps internally

[90] McGuire, J. et al. Transforming Your Organization (CCL 2015), p. 3,5.

to bolster independence, cultivate learning and leadership across the organization and prepare for and manage crises. Such programming may include, for example, the development of internal codes of ethics to drive value-based decisions and practices; new policies that drive a workplace culture that values and supports both men and women; and data-driven contingency planning.

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