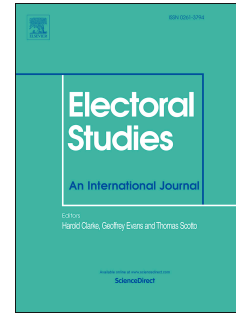


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## Public Trust in Manipulated Elections: The Role of Election Administration and Media Freedom

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### Abstract

As multiparty elections have become a global norm, scholars and policy experts regard public trust in elections as vital for regime legitimacy. However, very few cross-national studies have examined the consequences of electoral manipulation, including the manipulation of election administration and the media, on citizens' trust in elections. This paper addresses this gap by exploring how autonomy of election management bodies (EMBs) and media freedom individually and conjointly shape citizens' trust in elections. Citizens are *more likely* to express confidence in elections when EMBs display *de-facto* autonomy, and less likely to do so when mass media disseminate information independent of government control. Additionally, we suggest that EMB autonomy may not have a positive effect on public trust in elections if media freedom is low. Empirical findings based on recent survey data on public trust in 47 elections and expert data on *de-facto* EMB autonomy and media freedom support our hypotheses.

Keywords: election integrity, electoral management bodies, media freedom, electoral manipulation, democracy, public opinion.

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