

# Electoral security and its impact on electoral processes

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- No election can be credible if basic levels of security are not present. Those elements that need to be secured include:
  - Election officials, either permanent (to administer the elections) or temporary (to travel to and open registration and/or polling centres, etc.)
  - Equipment – both to and from polling/registration locations, packing and storage locations;
  - Voters – to participate in the election without fear of violence or intimidation;

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- Contestants – in order to campaign;
- Premises – both headquarters, lower levels and temporary (polling centres, etc.);
- Voter educators, whether from the EMB or civil society organisations – to educate and inform the public;
- Observers and party agents – as confidence-building measures and to enhance transparency of the process;
- Media – to inform the public;
- The people, the country, neighbouring countries, etc.

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- An insecure election, in its most extreme form, would mean:
  - polling centres can't open due to the threat, or the actual occurrence, of violence;
  - materials can't be delivered;
  - polling staff can't travel to work;
  - voters don't know where polling locations are, can't reach polling stations, don't have an informed choice, etc.

**In other words, there is no election without electoral security.**

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So who provides this security?!

It is obvious that there can be **no election without involvement of the state security sector**. Depending on the overall political and security context of the country, it may be sufficient for the police force to provide limited security. In other cases, however, the army may be required to play a much great role.

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### International commitments on electoral security?

- Few! Treaty-level commitments? Arts. 9 (security of person), 21 (peaceful assembly) and 22 (freedom of association) of ICCPR.
- HRC's General Comment 25 on ICCPR – states obliged to report on how the “*secrecy, security and validity of the voting process are guaranteed by law.*”

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Biggest EMB 'policy dilemma'? Where the state security sector:

- *is itself a source of insecurity*; (UN Human Rights Council 2010 A/HRC/14/24/Add.7: “*Many killings of candidates or voters are the result of politicised security forces, controlled by political leaders and used for unlawful political purposes.*”)
- is associated too closely with one political option (usually the ruling party).

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## Biggest EMB 'policy dilemma'?

- the independence of the security sector may be in question and the election can lack credibility. E.g. Fiji.
- Furthermore, an EMB associated itself too closely with the state security sector can risk politically compromising itself.



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- Other policy dilemmas/choices?
  - Cost issue – should the cost for securing the elections be part of *regular government funding of the security sector*, or it should be *paid for by the EMB* as part of its budget?
  - Risk of the security sector using elections to boost its income. Costs can be enormous. Security equipment (e.g. air support) for deliveries, security upgrades to premises, *per diems* for soldiers, police, etc. (400,000 soldiers and police on duty across Afghanistan this weekend)

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- The security sector may wish for a far greater role than the law or the EMB is willing to give them. E.g. Police/army *accompany* materials or *deliver* materials? Who decides levels of security required? E.g. air vs. road?
- Security sector may want access to EMB databanks for security purposes.
- Police/army themselves require securing.

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- Best practices?
  - Drafting of an **electoral security plan** with the security sector, and accompanying **security committee** under the chairmanship of the EMB. Set up well in advance. Meet regularly. A good plan includes thorough *electoral risk assessments*, *EMB ops plan details*, *contingency plans*, etc.
  - Engage **security sector focal points**. Engage focal points with all other stakeholders via security committee. Facilitate regular liaison between security sector and parties via political party liaison committees, etc.

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- **Train security forces** on electoral procedures.

There is an assumption that security forces know their role. Trainings to focus on, e.g., police/army not entering polling stations, no excessive searches/intimidating practices, weapons, etc. They should allow staff, observers, agents, media to do their job.

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- **Facilitate security sector participation in the elections:** e.g. police-army entitled to vote in ‘special circumstances.’ This allows for ‘buy-in,’ if also creating additional work for EMB.

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- **Interact with EDR mechanisms.** Engage security sector in informal EDR mechanisms from the start: ‘code of conduct’ committees, both at HQ and in the regions; foster inter-party dialogue mechanisms. Encourage self-policing. Where possible, work out mechanisms govern campaigning engaging security sector with parties.

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- Gender dimension to security. Security sector are.....men. Vital that female security officials engaged to consider female issues such as female body searchers, etc., and other female specific matters related to identification, freedom to campaign, vote, register, etc.