

Quality of Elections Data (QED)*

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Version 1.0
June 2010

* This material is based on work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 0550111. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

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DESCRIPTION

This data set codes the quality of national level legislative and presidential elections in 172 countries from 1978 to 2004. The overall election quality variables as well as the seven categories of violence and irregularities in the pre-election period and on Election Day are the same categories as were also coded in the DIEM data set.

SOURCE

“Country Reports on Human Rights Practices,” Washington D.C. Annual reports submitted to the United States Congress, 1977-2004, by the State Department. Sections 1 through 3.

CODING PROCEDURE

All reports were coded twice by the same two coders, one a PhD. student and one an undergraduate student. Both students were trained extensively by the Principal Investigator. To improve consistency, all reports were coded in a full-time work environment. After initial coding, reports were reconciled under the supervision of the Principal Investigator. Reconciliation variables were tracked on the major variables, as listed at the end of this coding manual. Codings were recorded on paper coding sheets and later entered using the Epidata software (<http://www.epidata.dk/>) to reduce entry errors.

BASIC INFORMATION

newid: *unique identification number for an election in the dataset*

cow: *Correlates of War ID*

country: *Name of the country*

year: *Year of the election.*

legelec: *Legislative election.* This is coded "1" only for legislative elections, "0" otherwise.

dateleg: *Month of the legislative election*

exelec: *Executive election.* This is coded "1" only for executive elections, "0" otherwise.

dateexec: *Month of the executive election*

seltrans: *Transitional election.* This is coded "1" only if the report indicates that this election was "transitional" election, "0" otherwise.

selrunoff: *Run-off election.* This is coded "1" if the report indicates that there was a run-off election, "0" otherwise.

sp1: *number of pages.* This is an indicator of the extensiveness of the report. It is equal to the number of pages devoted to the intro and sections 1-3.

sp2: *number of paragraphs.* This is an indicator of the extensiveness of the report. It is equal to the number of paragraphs devoted directly to the election in the intro and section 3 on the rights of citizens to change their government.

sobsdom: *domestic observers.* This is coded "1" if the report mentions the presence of domestic observers. "0" otherwise.

siemass: *international observers.* This is coded "1" if the report mentions the assessment of international observers. "0" otherwise.

ELECTION QUALITY VARIABLES

sa1: *Overall election quality.*

0: Acceptable

1: Ambiguous

2: Unacceptable

The measure captures whether the State Department report, notwithstanding the level of problems (Sa2 below), considered the election acceptable. Thus it is possible for an election to have a lot of problems, yet for the State Department to conclude that it was nonetheless acceptable, or, conversely, for the election itself to proceed with fewer problems, yet for the State Department to consider it unacceptable, perhaps because of major flaws in the legal framework.

This is coded "0" if the report indicates that the election results represent the will of the people. The coding is based on the information in the introduction and sections 1-3 combined, but most of the weight is given to section 3 which is directly on the election.

Words in section 3 to indicate a level "0" may be:

- Fair and orderly
- Relatively free and fair
- Generally free and fair

The report may note that the country is a multiparty democracy and outline the rights and procedures of the election system without offering any criticisms.

The report may state, for example, that "the citizens have the right and ability to change their government" without any qualifiers or additional issues listed.

The report may note, for example, that "the Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage."

This is coded "0.5" if the report is ambiguous about whether the elections represented the will of the people.

This is coded "1" if the report indicates that the election results do not represent the will of the people. One-party systems or authoritarian governments are coded as a "1".

Words in section 3 to indicate a level "1" may be:

- Citizens of (country x) do not have the right to change their governments by peaceful means."

- “Although citizens have the legal right to change their government democratically, in practice.....(proceeds to list problems)”
- “There were limitations on citizens' ability to change their Government.” (you here have to read further to see whether it says that these limitations were very extensive, or only mild)
- “regarding the parliament as illegitimate”
- “The Constitution and the law allow citizens to change their government by peaceful means; however, the Government continued to restrict citizens' ability to do so by interfering in local and national elections.” (you here have to read further to see whether it says that these interferences were very extensive, or only mild)
- “The ... election failed to meet international standards due to a number of serious irregularities...” (again, read to see if there is any statement that it nevertheless represented the will of the people).

sa2: *extent of problems.*

This variable assesses the extent of the problems in the election. This is a combined assessment that considers problems in the legal framework, political and administrative problems in the pre-election period, and then the integrity of the election day itself. It is coded as follows:

0: Good	-- no problems
1: low	--minor problems only
2: moderate	--moderate problems
3: high	--major problems

Notes:

Level “0” is only used when no problems at all are mentioned.

Level “0” or “1” can only be used in conjunction with a “0” for Sa1.

Level “3” can only be used in conjunction with a “1” for Sa1.

Thus, the real assessment is whether an election which is assessed as a “0” for Sa1 should be coded as “0”, “1”, or “2” for Sa2 and whether an election coded as “1” for Sa1 should be assessed as a “2” or “3” for Sa2.

Problems - *A variable that combines sa1 and sa2*

The levels of the variable is as follows

Table 7.2: Coding of the “Problems” variable

Sa1	Sa2	Value
Acceptable	None	0
Acceptable	Minor	1
Acceptable	Moderate	2
Ambiguous	Moderate	3
Unacceptable	Moderate	4
Unacceptable	Major	5

Some elections were left as “missing” because their order in the ranking system was unclear

Figures do not add to 100 due to rounding

sr0str: *structural environment*

- 0: Good -- no problems
- 1: low --minor problems only
- 2: moderate --moderate problems
- 3: high --major problems

This variable pertains to the quality of the legal framework for holding the elections. The problems noted here must be legal in nature, not simply behavioral. That is, if the underlying law is fine, but the problems are with implementation, then they do not get coded under the legal framework. Legal problems include, but are not limited to criticisms about the election law that report stresses as:

- Vague wording that can be interpreted in multiple ways
- 'Constitutional issues': Uncertainty in the role of a caretaker government, when or who can call elections or dissolve parliament etc.
- Some citizens, such as women, are not allowed to vote
- Any restrictions on who can vote that are not in the standard range of 18-21 years of age and citizen.
- Clauses that are clearly questionable- - prohibition against campaigning through the private media, etc.
- Flaws in the complaints procedures
- Giving full authority to a group that is obviously tied to the incumbent
- Law promotes ethnic divides
- Elections held under old laws that had been proven to be flawed
- Serious omissions in the legal framework

- Composition of electoral commissions – for example: members of the election commission are political appointees which takes opposing sides when the rules of the game are at stake.
- Does not provide the necessary conditions for free elections if applied
- Setting high minimum percent of votes needed and therefore affecting minority parties
- High threshold for parties to get registered
- Law makes people identify themselves by their ethnic group in order to participate in election
- Undemocratic legal provisions
- Allowing for multiple repeated elections
- Legal barriers for who can run for office
- Certain subgroups of the population such as women or minorities are not allowed to run for office
- Certain skills, such as language requirements or literacy skills, prevent some citizens from running for office
- Law has ambiguous requirements such as a prerequisite being that a citizen is honorable, or of good character, or patriotic
- There are official tests or educational requirements for running for office
- Limiting scope and jurisdiction of elective offices
- Situations where the legislature is elected in direct elections, but the legal framework effectively limits the power they will have once in office
- Situations where some seats in the legislature are appointed and decisions cannot be made without the consent of these appointed officials, effectively providing a veto by appointed officials.
- Situations where the head of state is elected in direct elections, but the position is a figure head with no real implementation powers

sr11cheat: *Overall pre-election political conditions*

0: *Good* -- *no problems*
 1: *low* -- *minor problems only*
 2: *moderate* -- *moderate problems*
 3: *high* -- *major problems*

This variable includes a number of behaviors that violate the international standards of a proper pre-election environment. This variable captures improper use of public funds and unfair use of government resources. All incumbents have certain advantages. However, the issue is whether the report points out this particular category as an area of concern. Note, if the incumbent controls media outlets, this is not coded as improper use of public funds but as a media restriction. However, the report may mention concerns of the following types:

- Substantial public campaign funding enjoyed by the party in power compared to other parties
- Misuse of public infrastructure for campaigning
- Distribution of humanitarian aid for campaigning purposes
- Interference by executive authorities with political campaign
- 'Promises of funding / development that is contingent on incumbent winning'
- Use of public employees in campaign activities

The variable also captures whether the report mentions restrictions on the freedom to campaign. Note that general poor conditions or lack of infrastructure does not qualify as a restriction. These must be political restrictions. Intimidation of candidates and misuse of media, while these interfere with campaigning, are not included in this variable. Examples of concerns reported are:

- Constraints on freedom of movement
- Disruption of party meetings
- Political pressure on candidates
- Abuses of rules on freedom of association
- Representatives have not been allowed freedom of movement
- Limiting candidates possibilities for public debates, meetings and demonstrations
- Not allowing opposition to rent office

The variable also captures restrictions on media/ misuse of the media. All violations pertaining to the media should be coded under this heading. Thus, if an incumbent misuses his resources to influence or curtail the media freedom, this goes under this coding. Examples of concerns include:

- Imprisonment of journalists
- Candidates had no direct contact with the press
- Newspapers closed during the election campaign
- Only permitted media outlets are biased
- Journalists being sued for libel during elections or legal action being taken against journalists
- Can only use state owned media
- Not fair, not clean and not honest media coverage
- Harassment from tax inspectors and safety inspectorates
- Threats of losing privileges, including media licenses

Finally, this variable also captures various forms of intimidation, which is coded separately from violence. It includes reports of the following examples of behavior:

- Aggressive behavior of some party representatives
- Undue political pressure on voters
- Extraordinary tax inspections

- Administrative fines
- Dismissal from employment
- Declaration of martial law on day of election
- Threats made by some parties to voters in general or to groups in particular villages etc.
- Intimidation of candidates- trying to get them to drop out of the race
- Detention of election commission members/ police interference
- Arrest or detention of voters taking political initiatives

sr12cap: *Overall pre-election administrative capacity.*

0: *Good* -- *no problems*
 1: *low* --*minor problems only*
 2: *moderate* --*moderate problems*
 3: *high* --*major problems*

This variable captures administrative problems with the voter lists and registration that that reports notes as occurring in the pre-election period. These problems may be corrected prior to the election, but if the report mentions them, they are coded here. Examples include:

- Missing names
- Dead people still on lists
- Duplicate voter cards issued
- Not delivering voter cards in time
- Incomplete/ inaccurate/out of date lists
- Voters unable to get their names on the list

This variable also captures problems with the electoral commission. These problems may be corrected prior to the election, but if the report mentions them, they are coded here. Examples include:

- Irregularities in nomination of election commission
- Composition/appointment questionable
- Failure on part of the commission to establish a credible and consistent procedure to verify signatures
- Arbitrary decision making by the commission
- Uneven enforcement of election law by the commission
- The commission does not function in a transparent manner

The variable also captures problems with the voter information that that the report notes as occurring in the pre-election period and contribute to confusion in the pre-election period. Examples include:

- Failure to provide information about the electoral rules
- Failure to provide information about the candidates

- Failure to provide information about polling places
- Finally, the variable captures technical/procedural problems that that the report notes as occurring in the pre-election period. Examples include:
 - Misprinted ballots that had to be fixed (or should have been fixed)
 - Poor quality paper used to make the ballots which led to need to reprint ballots

sr13viol: *Pre-election Violence and Unrest*

0: *Good* -- *no problems*
 1: *low* --*minor problems only*
 2: *moderate* --*moderate problems*
 3: *high* --*major problems*

This captures the level of violence reported in the pre-election period. If the election takes place in a general condition of war, this is coded here as high. If a subpart of the country is in war, this may be coded lower depending on the effect the report notes this to have on the election. Note that violence is different from intimidation as coded separately. The following are examples of behaviors that would qualify as violence and unrest:

- Grenades and other weapons use
- Murders
- Physical Assaults/abuse/beatings
- Protests turned violent
- Ongoing civil conflict or war in isolated areas

sr21cheat: *Election Day explicit cheating.*

0: *Good* -- *no problems*
 1: *low* --*minor problems only*
 2: *moderate* --*moderate problems*
 3: *high* --*major problems*

This variable captures fraud related to the tabulation of the votes such as

- Vote padding
- Inflated Vote Count/
- Ballot stuffing
- Tampering with ballots or ballot box
- Falsification of election protocols
- Voter turn out higher than 100% / Suspicious high turn out figures
- Evidence of attempts to tamper with the ballot boxes

- Problems in the counting/tabulation
- Invalidated too many ballots for unsound reasons

The variable also captures fraud more directly related to the casting of the vote, such as:

- Vehicles were observed taking voters to multiple polling places
- Voter Impersonation
- Double Voting
- Vote buying
- Voters reported having been offered payments
- Parties were observed distributing favors
- Voters had fake IDs
- Voters were physically obstructed from reaching the polling booths (note, not intimidated, but actually prevented)
- Voters were denied access to polling station (again, not intimidated, but actually just denied entry)
- Forbid or limit numbers of domestic observers allowed during the casting of the ballots

The variable also captures intimidation, including

- Aggressive behavior of some party representatives
- Having to show ballots to prison/military/hospital staff
- Political pressure on voters in the vicinity of the polling booth
- Presence of unauthorized people at the voting station (particularly police, secret police, military, militia)
- Detention of election commission members/ police interference
- Arbitrary arrests

sr22cap: *Election Day Administrative Capacity*

0: *Good* -- *no problems*
 1: *low* --*minor problems only*
 2: *moderate* --*moderate problems*
 3: *high* --*major problems*

This variable captures a number of administrative problems that may arise on election day. Examples include information-related failures that lead to voting difficulties:

- Large crowds
- Long waits
- Not enough information
- Confusion
- Failure to inform voters how to use the ballot or equipment

- Polling places poorly marked
- Complicated ballots- numerous, long, etc.
- Lack of needed bilingual ballots

This variable also captures administrative and logistical failures that lead to difficulties on the election day, such as:

- Lax polling booth officials/ procedures
- Inadequate lighting at polling stations
- Polling booths opening late
- Fictitious polling places
- Defective organization, inadequate provision of voting cabins
- Family voting/ husband voting for the rest of the family/proxy voting
- Unfamiliarity with elections laws by officials present
- Officials do not look at people's IDs
- Some lack of supervision of ballot boxes, not properly sealed (but no sign that this is systematic or intentional as much as it is neglect)
- Not signing/ stamping all ballot papers properly (non-intentional)
- Lack of training
- Incompetence
- Insufficient number of polling stations
- General administrative issues affecting secrecy - ballot paper too thin, ballot papers not put into envelopes in clear ballot boxes, numbering ballots according to how people enter the polling station
- Electronic voting causes problems such as the lack of a paper trail
- Too many party observers leads to overcrowding
- Quality of materials, e.g. ink to mark fingers

This variable also captures any problems with the voter lists on the day of election, such as:

- Missing names
- Dead people still on lists
- Not delivering voter cards in time
- Lists Not in polling stations on time
- Incomplete/ inaccurate
- Out of date
- Voters turned away because they were not on the lists

Finally, this variable captures any complaints about the behavior of officials from the electoral commission on the day of the election.

sr23viol: *Election Day Violence and Unrest*
 0: Good -- no problems

- 1: *low* --*minor problems only*
 2: *moderate* --*moderate problems*
 3: *high* --*major problems*

This variable captures physical abuses, overall violent clashes, or manhandling of persons on the day of the election.

- Security was a concern
- Grenades
- Murders
- Physical Assaults/abuse
- Mentions of protests turned violent

CIVIL LIBERTIES

These variables were coded based on very simple rules and are only crude measures.

sf1: *Freedom to change government.* This is based on section 3. It is coded “3” if there is an unqualified statement that citizens have the right to change their government, “2” if it is stated that the right exists, but that there are some problems, and “1” if it says that the citizens do not have the right to change their government.

sf2: *Freedom of association.* This is based on section 2a. It is coded “3” if there is an unqualified statement that citizens have freedom of association, “2” if it is stated that the right exists, but that there are some problems, and “1” if it says that the citizens do not have freedom of association.

sf3: *Freedom of speech.* This is based on section 2b. It is coded “3” if there is an unqualified statement that citizens have freedom of speech, “2” if it is stated that the right exists, but that there are some problems, and “1” if it says that the citizens do not have freedom of speech.

INTERCODER RELIABILITY SCORES PRE-RECONCILIATION

srec: This is an indicator of whether the sa1 and sa2 variables had to be reconciled by the coders. 0= No reconciliation, consensus. 1= one variable had to be reconciled. 2= both variables had to be reconciled.

sintercoder: this variable captures the number of variables (0-7) between sr0str and sr23viol that had to be reconciled between the datasets two coders

rec_score: this variable captures the number of variables between sf1, sf2 and sf3 that had to be reconciled between the datasets two coders

Calculation of INTERCODER RELIABILITY SCORES PRE RECONCILIATION

Srec: This is an indicator of whether the sa1 and sa2 variables had to be reconciled by the coders. 0= No reconciliation, consensus. 1= one variable had to be reconciled. 2= both variables had to be reconciled.

```
. tab srec
```

srec	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
0	879	77.24	77.24
1	254	22.32	99.56
2	5	0.44	100.00
Total	1,138	100.00	

There was agreement on both of these variables 77.24 percent of the time. Since there were 1,138 sets of variables coded, there were in all $252 + (2 \times 5) = 262$ disagreements on a total of 2×1138 codings. Therefore, the average agreement on these two variables was $1 - 262/2276 = 1 - 0.1151 = 88.49$ percent of the time. The disputed variables were then reconciled between the coders under the supervision of the Principal Investigator.

Sintercoder: this variable captures the number of variables (0-7) between sr0str and sr23viol that had to be reconciled between the datasets two coders

```
. tab sintercode
```

sintercode	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
0	596	55.19	55.19
1	254	23.52	78.70
2	156	14.44	93.15
3	58	5.37	98.52
4	14	1.30	99.81
5	1	0.09	99.91
6	1	0.09	100.00
Total	1,080	100.00	

In 55.19% of the cases, none of the 7 variables had to be reconciled. In 78.70 percent, one or zero variables had to be reconciled. In all there were $7 \times 1,080 = 7560$ variables to be coded. Of these, $1 \times 6 + 1 \times 5 + 4 \times 14 + 3 \times 58 + 2 \times 156 + 1 \times 254 = 807$ variables had to be reconciled. Therefore, $1 - 807/7560$ percent = $1 - 0.1067$ percent = 89.33 percent had to be reconciled.

Rec_score: this variable captures the number of variables between sf1, sf2 and sf3 that had to be reconciled between the datasets two coders

```
. tab rec_score
```

rec_score	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
0	896	85.09	85.09
1	137	13.01	98.10
2	18	1.71	99.81
3	2	0.19	100.00
Total	1,053	100.00	

Note that in 85.09 percent of cases, no reconciliation was needed and in 98.10 percent of cases max one variable had to be reconciled. In all there were $1,053 \times 3 = 3159$ variables to be coded. Of these, $1 \times 137 + 2 \times 18 + 3 \times 2 = 179$ variables had to be reconciled. Therefore, $1 - 179/3159$ percent = $1 - 0.0567$ percent = 94.33 percent had to be reconciled.

CODING MANUAL

CODING STATE DEPARTMENT HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS

Fill in the data on the election, date, run-off and any other provided information for the first page of the coding sheet. If it states that the election was transitional (does the report state that the country was in transition), post conflict (was this the first election after a civil or international conflict that the country was involved in?), first multi-party elections (does the report say that this was the first time opposition parties were allowed to run?) and “otherwise high profile”(does the report discuss these elections as particularly important for some reason?), mark this. Also, if there is information about change of government and margin of victory, also mark those.

Country: _____ Date ____/____/____ (Day/Month/Year)
Election: Presidential _____ (Margin of victory:____) Legislative _____ (___Run-off Date ____/____/____)
Transitional election _____ / First multi party election _____ / post conflict _____ / otherwise high profile _____
Change of presidential party/prime ministerial party: YES _____ NO _____ No information _____

Note the number of pages devoted to the introduction and section 1-3. Note the number of paragraphs devoted specifically to the election in the introduction and in section 3.

Pages coded: ____ (number of pages) intro until and including section 3 ____ number of paragraphs on election in introduction and section 3 combined
--

Write page numbers in the coding sheet as you enter information.

Make sure you pay attention to the date of the election so that you can discount information that is dated after the election.

Then read the introduction and sections 3, the rights of citizens to change their government. After this, return to read sections 1 and 2, paying particular attention to: section 2a, Freedom of speech and press, section 2b, Freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

Relying on the first sentences of section 2a, 2b and 3, note the following

MAIN SPECIFIC CRITICISMS:

Does it say that

- **The constitution gives citizens the right to change their government through peaceful means?** YES____, YES BUT____, NO____
- **There is freedom of peaceful assembly and association?** YES____, YES BUT____, NO____
- **There is freedom of speech and press?** YES____, YES BUT____, NO____

Now, do not fill out the bottom part of the coding sheet page 1, but turn the page over to the detailed sheet on page 2.

The coding on this page goes as follows:

0=good
1=low
2=medium
3=high
7=problems but level not known

Fill in here as much information as you can from reading the introduction, section 2a and 2b and section 3. In the first column you can check off particular problems if they are apparent. Most of the time you will not be able to code an actual level of any of these items, but you may be able to gather information on whether those types of problems were present, in which case you will mark “7”. There may be cases when it is actually feasible also to indicate a level, in which case you can indicate 0 for good, or 1 for low, 2 for medium and 3 for high. This may be particularly evident if the structural legal problems are very prominent as discussed below.

If you cannot tell if a reference is to the pre-election period or the Election Day, mark both. Thus, if it says there was intimidation, but it does not specify when or how much, mark intimidation as “7” in both pre-election period and on Election Day.

Sometimes you may not have specific references to the kinds of fraud. It may simply say that there was a lot of fraud on the Election Day. In that case you can simply mark the box to the far right. If you can determine that it is described as good, low, medium or high, then you can write 1, 2 or 3 in the box.

Thus, you may simply mark the sheet:

Election period (day and after)		Overall
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints of explicit cheating 		
Vote padding: inflated vote count/ballot stuffing/ tampering with ballot box/etc		3
Voter fraud: voter impersonation/ double voting /vote buying/etc		
Intimidation: opposition candidates/opposition supporters/international observers/etc		

Or, if present, but level not known:

Election period (day and after)		Overall
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints of explicit cheating 		
Vote padding: inflated vote count/ballot stuffing/ tampering with ballot box/etc	x	7
Voter fraud: voter impersonation/ double voting /vote buying/etc		
Intimidation: opposition candidates/opposition supporters/international observers/etc		

If a lot of details are available, you can get more specific:

Election period (day and after)		Overall
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints of explicit cheating 		
Vote padding: inflated vote count/ballot stuffing/ tampering with ballot box/etc	x	2
Voter fraud: voter impersonation/ double voting /vote buying/etc	x	
Intimidation: opposition candidates/opposition supporters/international observers/etc		

After filling in as much as possible, turn back to page one of the coding sheet to code:

FILL OUT BACK PAGE AND THEN CODE THIS LAST:

STATE DEPARTMENT: BASED ON ALL THE RELEVANT INFORMATION, WHAT IS THE OVERALL QUALITY OF ELECTION ASSESSMENT

<i>Comment</i>	<i>Does NOT Represent</i>	<i>Extent of problems</i>
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	<i>will of people</i>	
Free and fair, no criticisms	0	0
Free and Fair, minor issues	0	1
Reflected the will of the people, major issues	0	2
Fraudulent, but moderate criticism	1	2
Fraudulent, strong criticism	1	3
Ambiguity/ no clear conclusion /unsure if it represented the will of the people	N/A	Problems: 1, 2 or 3

Contrary to the election monitoring reports, these state dept. reports are coded in their entirety. That is, all the information should be considered in making the above assessment. General statements about the freeness and fairness of the election should be reflected in the column of whether the elections represented the will of the people and all the information, even on the more detailed page 3 of the coding sheet, should be considered for coding the extent of the problems.

The goal is to get as comprehensive and objective as possible an assessment of the overall level of fraud. Therefore, even if the state dept report makes some superficial statements about the quality of the elections, if it later makes more specific criticisms, we want to code all that information in the overall assessment.

ASSESS WHETHER THE ELECTIONS REPRESENTED THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE:

If the election represented the will of the people, section 3 will often use the words and phrases, such as:

- Fair and orderly
- Relatively free and fair
- Generally free and fair
- Note that the country is a multiparty democracy and outline the rights and procedures of the election system without offering any criticisms
- “----- have the right and ability to change their government.”
- “The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage”
- Sometimes it will be necessary to distinguish between the reported assessment of international and domestic observers, which the report may mention, but then the report itself may or may not actually concur with in the assessment of other observers.

When elections do NOT represent the will of the people, the reports in section 3 may often say:

- Citizens of (country x) do not have the right to change their governments by peaceful means.”
- “Although citizens have the legal right to change their government democratically, in practice.....(proceeds to list problems)”
- “There were limitations on citizens' ability to change their Government.” (you here have to read further to see whether it says that these limitations were very extensive, or only mild)
- “regarding the parliament as illegitimate”
- “The Constitution and the law allow citizens to change their government by peaceful means; however, the Government continued to restrict citizens' ability to do so by interfering in local and national elections.” (you here have to read further to see whether it says that these interferences were very extensive, or only mild)
- “The election failed to meet international standards due to a number of serious irregularities...” (again, read to see if there is any statement that it nevertheless represented the will of the people).

N/A:

This coding should be used when the report does not itself say whether the elections represented the will of the people, either by not saying that they were free, or by making severe statements without outright condemning the result.

Example:“The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their Government peacefully; while citizens generally have exercised this right in practice, the elections *failed to meet international standards in a number of areas*”

In particularly harsh cases, the intro may even make statement such as:

“Although the voting process itself generally was peaceful, most election observers agreed that there were widespread and serious irregularities and that the election process was not free and fair.” A 1,3 coding is given to countries that have significant structural flaws, *in addition* to severe intimidation / violence and a complete lack of choice for the electorate. A one-party system that offers some choice and the possibility of replacing an incumbent in a peaceful election is generally coded as a 1,2.

Extent of problems:

Even if the report says that the citizens had the right to change their government, there still may be comments in section 1-3 or the introduction which criticize elements of the election. For example, there may be text about persons who are not allowed to stand in elections, unequal distribution of powers between the executive and the legislative, police intimidation, media bias or restrictions on campaigning, unfair use of government funds etc.

Section three may also note that “The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government; however, there were limitations in practice. International observers judged elections to be generally free and fair and there was a marked decrease from previous years in election related violence; however, there were some problems with underage voting, confiscation of ballot boxes, voter intimidation and election related violence.” In that case, the extent of the problems is clearly not 0, but depending on the discussion, it could be as high as 2. However, it cannot be a level 3 since the report says that there were “SOME” problems and the report says only that there were “limitations” on the rights to change the government, not that citizens outright did not have this right. The coding therefore must be a 1 or a 2, depending on the overall picture.