



## **About the Referendum Case Study**

The referendum to be held before June 2020 on the future status of Bougainville provides both risks and opportunities for Papua New Guinea and Bougainville. While all referendums involve risks, the forthcoming referendum in particular is above all a momentous event, which could potentially provide a template for other countries or regions contemplating independence.

Like the independence referendum in South Sudan (2011), but unlike the referendum in Timor Leste (1999), the forthcoming referendum in Bougainville is a result of a negotiated settlement between leading players from both sides of the political divide. This bodes well. The Bougainville Peace Agreement (BPA) states that: “[t]he choices available in the referendum will include a separate independence for Bougainville” (BPA, paragraph 310). However, for a referendum to produce a credible, legitimate and accepted outcome it is imperative that both the citizens and the authorities clearly understand the nature, process and implications of the referendum; the authorities in particular have to appreciate its potential benefits and shortcomings, and draw lessons from other countries and jurisdictions for its design and implementation.

The objectives of the research study are to provide this critically required understanding of what a referendum is, why are they held, and the context and the nature of the upcoming referendum. The report presents lessons from the experience of these and other referendums in relation to conducting a vote, which not only accurately captures and reflects the wishes and preferences of the people, but which is also accepted by all parties and stakeholders involved, regardless of the result. In short, the report summarizes the factors that are required in order to achieve a peaceful and beneficial outcome.

## **About the Author Professor Matt Qvortrup**

Described by the BBC as “the world’s leading expert on referendums”, Professor Matt Qvortrup is an internationally recognized comparative political scientist and lawyer with a strong presence in the world of practice – in politics, diplomacy and the media.

Currently Professor of Political Science at Coventry University, he was a special advisor to the House of Commons Constitutional Affairs and Public Administration Committee in 2015 and drafted key sections of the regulations pertaining to the 2016 Brexit referendum. Having advised respectively The British Electoral Commission and Elections Canada as a special consultant, he served as part of President Barack Obama’s Special Envoy Team for the South Sudan referendum on independence 2008-2011.

He holds a (PhD) from the University of Oxford and a Graduate Diploma in Law from the University of Law (London).

### **Recent select publications include;**

- Qvortrup, M. (2017) *Referendums Around the World* (Editor), London, Palgrave.
- Qvortrup M (2014) *Referendums and Ethnic Conflict*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.
- M. Qvortrup (2018, Forthcoming) *Government by Referendum*, Manchester, Manchester University Press.

**This report was launched on the 30th of May 2018 and is now available on the PNG NRI website: [www.nri.org.pg](http://www.nri.org.pg). If you want a copy you can contact us on email; [referendum.research@pngnri.org](mailto:referendum.research@pngnri.org).**