

Forum: Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM)

Issue #09-01: Measures to address electoral fraud

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Introduction

Despite the fact that democracy is painted as a concept that promotes balance amongst governmental systems by helping us prevent unjust hierarchies in our current society, this is not always the case. The world has had more than its fair share of alleged electoral fraud instances. In fact, electoral fraud is considered to be the root of issues regarding the safety of citizens, economic market and social policies in a variety of nations. Because of this, it is important to analyse the United Nations's involvement in governmental elections worldwide in order to address the issue at hand.

Despite the fact that UN electoral assistance has undergone changes throughout the years, its premise has remained the same. In Resolution 46/137 of 1991, the General Assembly endorsed the idea that a "Focal Point for Electoral Assistance should be designated to advise [the Secretary General] on electoral matters and ensure coherence and consistency in UN electoral assistance". In addition, the creation of a small unit in support of the Focal Point was also endorsed. It is also important to note that the UN has assisted more than 100 member states, as well as implementing more than 300 electoral projects, since 1991.

The UN gained significant public attention for their large scale electoral operations. Nonetheless, most of their electoral assistance nowadays is provided through short to medium-term technical projects that aid the construction of national election authorities. As a consequence, electoral observation is no longer a core activity of UN

support. Technical support has become more frequent, with the United Nations providing a wide variety of electoral assistance in this regard. *The ACE Project* emphasized some examples, including “[the provision of] advice and support for electoral administration and planning, constant review of electoral laws and regulations, electoral dispute resolution, boundary delimitation, voter registration, election budgeting, logistics and procurement, use of technology, training, voter and civic education, voting and counting operations and election security”.

It is also possible for UN experts to be included in the national electoral administration, as was seen in Afghanistan (2004-2005) and Iraq (2005). This meant that responsibility in the electoral process was shared between the member state and the United Nations.

In rare cases, it is also possible for the UN to be granted full responsibility of organizing and conducting a member state's elections. This was seen in Cambodia in 1992-1993 and Timor Leste in 2001-2002.

Definition of Key Terms

Elections

In order to discuss electoral Fraud, we first need to define elections themselves. An election is a formal and organized process in which a group of people partake in choosing a representative for office. Largescale, this can be seen in presidential elections, which get a vast amount of press and attention in the public eye. There are two types of elections: a special election or a general election. Special elections take place most often in times of 'emergency', they are non scheduled, and are used to correct an issue - for example, if a place in office suddenly becomes vacant, these are not regularly scheduled elections, thus, they are referred to as special elections.

Fraud

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines fraud as an “intentional perversion of truth” aiming to result in financial or personal gain. Placing this definition alongside the electoral process, fraud is defined as illegal interference with the electoral process, aiming to skew the election's results. This can include both election manipulation and vote rigging. In addition, the term “electoral fraud” is also used to describe acts that are in violation of the principles of democracy (in other words, morally incorrect).

Vote

A vote is defined as one's expression of choice and/or opinion through an official remark. All citizens of democratic states have a right to vote. Bribery and manipulation are considered unethical and, at times, illegal ways to gain someone's vote in the electoral process. It is of utmost importance for votes to be counted in an honest and open manner, whilst at the same time respecting the voter's privacy of choice in any democratic election. Close supervision of the voting process by unbiased entities can help achieve transparency during elections.

Corruption

A form of dishonest or criminal activity, usually conducted by those in a position of power for personal gain.

Bribery

To give or receive something of value in exchange in exchange for influence or a favor usually through illegal or dishonest means.

Gerrymander

To manipulate the boundaries of the electoral constituency in order to favor one party or class.

General Overview

Forms of Electoral Fraud

To understand Electoral Fraud it is important to understand the several forms in which Electoral Fraud can happen. In this part I will be explaining the different methods in which electoral fraud is done.

First of all, there is Intimidation. This technique of electoral fraud is characterized by pressuring of a pool of voters in order to make them cast a vote for a specific candidate. When first coming to this term it is usually assumed that intimidation is solely conducted by physical violence. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that this can be done in multiple forms. Legal threats are a way in which intimidation could occur. A specific party or organization targets a group of individuals through the judicial system in order to make them vote. Another form of intimidation is through economic threats which could happen from a both macro and microeconomic perspectives. When referring macroeconomic repercussions it means that a set form of authority such as at the federal level will impulse shortcuts to a towns or communities budget. In microeconomic terms is as simple as employers targeting employees if they don't vote for the candidate of their choice.

Vote Buying is another common form of electoral fraud and its term is self implied, candidates through monetary terms offer a rewards for voting for a specific candidate. Though its definition can imply physical currency exchange it doesn't necessarily have to be monetary. For example, in many latin american countries it is common for candidates to offer food or services in exchange for loyalty from the voters. It is necessary to understand that sometimes this is implied and not directly stated by these organizations.

Another form of electoral fraud revolves around Misinformation. This is the idea that a candidate or organizations will present an image to the public which doesn't align with the actions that they/he/she has offered. For example, a candidate which promoted

being part of a liberal party but his or her actions have been proven to be very conservative. Due to the rise of the digital era and social media this is one of the ways in which the youngest voter population is usually manipulated.

The next ways in which electoral fraud can happen unlike the ones being discussed before are very direct and easy to understand. Direct manipulation of votes is done physically and can alter the votes that are being directly placed in a ballot. These ways are done after the candidate has already casted their legitimate vote. One of these ways in which electoral fraud is displayed is through Ballot Stuffing. Ballot stuffing is the act of casting more votes than an individual is supposed to. Alteration and Destruction of votes are another self-explanatory ways in which votes can be manipulated. This is when the vote ballot are physically altered or simply destroyed.

Dead Voting is one of the most controversial and extremist ways in which electoral fraud can happen. This is when a deceased individual is still registered as a liable voter and a vote is casted in their name. For example, in April 2014 it was announced by the state of North Carolina that there were 13,416 registered dead voters for the election.

Foreign meddling, also referred to as foreign electoral interventions, are attempts by foreign governments to intervene in another country's electoral process. This is done to skew a country's authorial regime in a specific way. Whether its purpose is to benefit their own interests or for the common good of our society is highly debated. As of late 2011, research on the global occurrences and effects of foreign meddling had been acknowledged and characterized as vastly weak. However, many more formal studies have been conducted since then as a way to address and analyse each circumstance on both a national and international level. One study signaled that the member states with the tendency to intervene in foreign elections the most were the United States and Russia (the former Soviet Union). Moreover, in the study coined as PEIG, it was discovered that the US and Russia had a combined intervention rate of "117 elections around the world from 1946 to 2000 — an average of once in every nine competitive elections".

Analysing the practice of foreign meddling and its tendencies is extremely important when discussing the issue of electoral fraud, especially due to the increase in technological advancements which have facilitated the infiltration of foreign voter registration systems.

Types of Cases Regarding Electoral Fraud

As the forms in which Electoral Fraud can happen have already been discussed it is important to understand the common ways in which the governmental system attempts to deal with these alterations of the democratic process. By analyzing the types of cases the effects of this issue will be highlighted. A lot of this data was collected by the Heritage Organization in collaboration with the White House.

One of the types of cases in regards to Electoral Fraud is a Criminal Conviction. Criminal Conviction is *“any case that results in a defendant entering a plea of guilty or no contest, or being found guilty in court of election-related offenses.”* Those who have been found to support the process of Electoral Fraud to a minimal or noninvasive manner would be likely to follow under this. Nevertheless, this remains on a criminal record for some time. A Civil Penalty, in terms of severity, is found to be higher than a criminal conviction and this deals with a direct offense or violation of election laws which would result in a form of penalty or fault.

Diversion Programs. There have been several reported cases all over the world although it's more prevalently seen in the Western Hemisphere. For example, in Washington, Jane Kay Balogh, *“was found guilty of making false or misleading statements to a public servant, as well as absentee ballot fraud and registration fraud.”* This came after registering and mailing a ballot successfully for her dog. She claims it was done in order to highlight the flaws in the system. Due to this she received a one-year deferred

sentence, and was ordered to perform 10 hours of community service and pay court fees of \$240.

Judicial Findings are considered to be one of the severe ways in which Electoral Fraud is seen within the legal system. This consists of a finding by a court of law which states that fraud has happened in an election. This would then lead to the creation of judicial order which would cancel and order a new election due to electoral fraud. These are usually imposed on a local level.

An Official Finding is *"a finding by a government body that fraud occurred in an election, including order overturning election results or ordering a new election due to fraud."* Much like Judicial Findings these are considered to be very severe. In 2014, the New York City Department of Investigation were testing the integrity of NYC's elections. They came to find that in the 63 trials they ran in 61 of them they were able to cast a vote using "using the names of ineligible voters, known felons, and deceased city residents (Hearn 2013)." Nevertheless, it could be argued that official findings could also come from extraordinary members such as the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD) which oversee the electoral process in many corrupt countries.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

United States

The Federal Election Commission have that claimed that voter impersonation fraud is the most common type of electoral fraud within the United States. The large reports of voter impersonation are mainly due to the scarce documentation and rare prosecutions. Since 2013 the US Supreme Court has ruled that a provision of the Voting Rights Act would no longer be reinforced as several states passed a voter ID law. Several experts argue that the voter ID law will not be effective in the long term as it only tackles some forms of impersonation. However those ID laws have been challenged by minority groups who claim that the law acts against them. In 2016 four federal courts overturned

parts of the the ID voter law as they agreed it caused a disadvantage for minority populations. Lots of controversy and accusations follow the 2016 Presidential elections as suspicion of hacking of electronic machines arose in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania. The N.C. Board of Elections conducted a report in 2017 where results showed that the ID voter law would be ineffective in preventing illegal voting.

Rusia

Since Vladimir Putin became President of Russia, the international levels of criticism on elections have gone up. European institutions believed that the 2007 elections were not genuine ones. The President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) made it a point to state that the elections failed to meet the commitment and standards necessary for it to be considered a fair election. Since then, the Russian government has prevented international parties from monitoring the Russian elections. In February of 2008 the European Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights stated that no observer would be sent to monitor the upcoming presidential elections. In 2011 the legislative elections were believed to have been tampered with, in favor of the ruling party. More recently in 2016 the Russia government was accused of interfering with the US Presidential elections.

India

The elections within India's lower house of parliament; Lok Sabha is the biggest showcasign of democracy around the world. Due to India's extremely large population organizing the vote has become a complex and expensive operation, causing over tens of trillions of rupees. Prior to this year's election, the 2014 elections lead Narendra Modi to become prime minister causing the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to dominate parliament. For the elections held in May of this year, the Bharatiya Janata party won 303 seats and the BJP-National Democratic Alliance won 353 seats. The Indian National Congress won 52 seats and the Congress0led United Progressive Alliance won 91. To be able to administer free and fair elections the ECI administered a Code of Conduct (MCC) which provide candidates and political parties with a list of guidelines to follow as soon as election dates are announced. Per the guidelines political parties are

prohibited from invoking religions and caste while campaigning. During this years elections the ECI has received hundreds of complaints stating clear violations of the guidelines yet no concrete action was taken.

Venezuela

Following the death of President Hugo Chavez in 2013 Venezuela was subject to a severe socio economic crisis. This was caused by the presidency of his successor; Nicolas Maduro. Due to the high levels of violence, provision shortages and inflation the Venezuelan bolivar was devalued. After years of the crisis, the Venezuelan people pursued a referendum against the President Maduro, presenting a petition to the National Electoral Council (CNE) in May of 2016. On May of 2018 new Presidential elections were held in Venezuela during which Maduro was re-elected for a second six-year term. They were several pushbacks and rescheduling of the electoral dates leading to suspicion the election. Additionally the elections had the lowest voter turnout in the country's democratic history. Those irregularities caused the Foro Penal Venezolano and other Venezuelan NGOs to voice their concern and lack of Constituent's Assembly. Due to this, the European Union (EU), Australia and the United States amongst others rejected the electoral process. However other countries such as China, South Africa and Cuba recognized the election's results. The two leading candidates opposed Maduro; Falcon and Bertucci rejected the results due to the irregularities and asked for Maduro to be disqualified and for a re-election. However this was not the case and Maduro was reinstated as President on January 10th of 2019 leading to the 2019 Venezuelan Presidential Crisis.

Nigeria

Nigeria's voting population is extremely big with 73 million able voters. Nevertheless, only one third of this electorate population voted in the Nigerian elections earlier in 2019. Year by year the population that actually votes in the Nigerian elections has decreased and this is to a greater extent due to the lost of faith from the citizens in governmental and political practices. Nigeria in the elections held in 1999, 2003 and 2007 were viewed by the international and national public as extremely fraudulent. Measures of direct

manipulation of votes were the ones that were the biggest issues in these elections as manipulation, burning, stealing, and mishandling of the voters ballots were done. Nevertheless, “in the 2011 general elections in Nigeria, the Independent National Election Commission (INEC), the electoral management body (EMB) that organized the elections pulled what may pass as an electoral feat in achieving one of the most open, credible, peaceful and transparent elections within Nigeria’s recent memory.” (Journal of Political Science). This feat didn’t last so long. The elections held in 2019 were riddled with doubt and violence. As said by European Union observers, ““The elections became increasingly marred by violence and intimidation, with the role of the security agencies becoming more contentious as the process progressed.” At least 58 people were killed due to voting related violence including election officials. The ways in which the Nigerian 2019 election turned out expect to have an impact in future decrease of voters in the process.

UN Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD) of the UN Department of Political Affairs (UNDPA)

The United Nations has provided help and assistance in several election procedures around the globe. Their main goal is to aid, not conduct, in the process of democratic elections. The information this division provides explain thoroughly that their goal is to aid in the logistical aspect though once it also provided the aid of observing in order to help with corruption issues revolving electoral fraud. In the 1990s, this organisation helped organize and observe several elections and consultations throughout the world such as in Cambodia, East Timor, El Salvador, Mozambique and South Africa. Nevertheless, UNEAD has also “provided crucial technical and logistical assistance for important elections in countries such as Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq and Nepal.” (The Electoral Knowledge Network). In very atypical situations has the UNEAD been fully responsible for conducting an election. Nevertheless, this was the case in Cambodia (1992-1993) and Timor-Leste (2001-2002).

“Influencer Culture”

In the digital era, the youngest population of voters have been shown to be very affected by the opinions of “influencers”. In the social media world, influencers are said to be people, usually artists, models, and actors, who have a high number of followers and in some way have the power to influence the ways in which their audience (followers) view events around the world. There are several countries around the globe that have used influencers in very beneficial ways. For example, Canada was planning to use a list of influencers in order to promote content that would help increase voter turnout among young people. Nevertheless, creation of projects like this has received backlash. Pierre Poilievre, a Member of the Parliament of Canada, has said that “(influencers) have to be non-partisan of any particular party affiliation, that was a concern from the get-go”. By this Poilievre means that it is implausible to think that these influencers will be impartial in their promoting towards a certain party therefore the government subsidizing these ideas is considered unfair. An example of these effects could be seen in Latin America with the elections held in May, 2019. Nito Cortizo, current president of Panama, held several events before election day in order to promote him as a presidential candidate as well as his political party. It has been publicly discussed that Cortizo's campaign decided to focus part of their budget in the use of influencers such as doing concerts and other events. These in fact raised the young voter turnout and promoted him as a candidate online through social media and possibly be to some extent part of the reason he is won Panama's election.

Timeline

508–507 BC	The term “democracy” first appeared in Greece. It is said to be the time for the rise of modern democracy.
Middle Ages	This is the time when the law became more formalized. Not only did the process of elections happen but also the

formation of assemblies or other forms involving small populations.

Early Modern Period	Civil society grew in which conceptual, refined networks were created in order to deal with the growing popularity of democracy.
1927	The Liberian elections were held in which Charles. D.B. King won the elections with a margin of 96.43% and an estimate of 2,29,000 illegal votes. This is especially shocking due to the fact there were only 15,000 voters.
1933	The Enabling Act was placed in Germany which gave Hitler the power to pass and enact laws without the involvement of the Reichstag and the Reichsrat, the legislative bodies of the Weimar government.
1948	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations. Article 21 emphasizes on voting rights.
2016	Controversial allegations were held against the Russian government in the involvement of the United States Presidential elections.
2018	Venezuela's presidential elections are deemed by the majority of the international community as illegitimate.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

There have been several attempts from the UN which have tried to find a solution to the issue of electoral fraud. As discussed before, the creation of the UNEAD has allowed a tool for countries around the globe to conduct their elections in a way that is considered fair and reliable. However, it is important to understand that the use of this

system has been reserved for specific, usually controversial, circumstances. These are other relevant events:

- Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization, 19 December 2011, (**A/RES/66/163**)
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 21
 - o 1. *Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.*
 - o 2. *Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.*
 - o 3. *The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.*
- Respect for the principles of national sovereignty and diversity of democratic systems in electoral processes as an important element for the promotion and protection of human rights, 22 December 2003, (**A/RES/58/189**)
- Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization, 19 December 2018, (**A/RES/72/164**)

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Nations are responsible for preventing electoral fraud in their community as a venue towards protecting their citizens and values. Prevention strategies are commonly summarised by the concepts of confidentiality and transparency throughout the election process. The three most common tactics for preventing electoral fraud and guaranteeing transparency nowadays are: auditing the electoral process, deterrence achieved through prosecution, and discouraging corruption in our society through the cultivation of mores. In regards to confidentiality, the use of the “secret ballot” is

thought to be one of the most effective ways to combat corruption in the electoral process.

Election audits come in two forms, a result audit and a process audit. This essentially refers to a review conducted after an election in order to assure that the votes were counted accurately and that the election followed proper protocol. Audits vary depending on the case and typically include the inspection of seals on ballot boxes and storage rooms to detect any interferences, checking that the number of ballots matches the number of voters signed in at the distinct polls, and ensuring that counts are totaled meticulously.

Though prosecution of past political figures may seem inefficient in regards to the prevention of corruption in the present, it is an effective way to instill doubt and fear of possible consequences as a way of discouraging fraud (also known as deterrence). It is very common for governments to seek out criminal investigations against their allegedly fraudulent predecessors, making them subject to sentences of up to 21 months for first-time offenders.

The cultivation of mores/customs refers to nations that inculcate a strong behavioral pattern within their society that stands against electoral fraud. Focusing on establishing and developing such mores has been proven to effectively tarnish political corruption. A good example is Sweden, where there is a presence of a culture instilled by positive values and integrity. This has resulted in a low number of incidences that relate to corruption in their government. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that the cultivation of mores should be used as a subordinate resolution that serves to strengthen alternate efforts to examine electoral transparency worldwide.

The Secret Ballot is a practice under which only the voter knows how they have voted. This allows voters to feel safe by dismantling any kind of intimidation from hierarchies, as well as preventing vote selling. However, others argue that the concept of the secret ballot is counterproductive in the quest for transparency since it makes it more difficult

to detect interferences in the voting process. A valuable way to prove to voters that they witnessed accurate results is through the public release of tabulations from each specific polling place available. In certain cases, the use of secret ballots is thought to entangle such efforts. Hence, it is of utmost importance to find a functional balance between the different methods that aim to eradicate electoral malpractice.

Possible Solutions

In issues regarding political shams, as can be one of political fraud, it is important to consider not only direct action, but also preventive measures. Policy wise, nations should adopt clauses on voting that cover the effect of new international development. For example, fraud now commonly makes use of electronic gadgets, ones for which there are no policy regulations. If legal frameworks surrounding elections were updated frequently to keep up with technological advances, there could be a tougher front to get through for anyone trying to manipulate voter results. Additionally, it is important that the population is well educated, and aware of the current political situation in their country. Education and awareness are likely to increase voter attendance, which increases the difficulty to change the results of a popular vote. The more voters in an election, the more secure it is, thus why voter attendance is relevant in the grand scheme of a country's political results.

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Appendix

- I. Electoral Fraud Cases in the United States
<https://www.heritage.org/voterfraud>
- II. Report Made by UN Reporter
http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/49/675
- III. Elections Around the World and Information
<http://www.electionguide.org/countries/>