

# GA3 – Social, Humanitarian and Cultural

Measures to prevent the manipulation of governmental elections



<b>Forum:</b>	General Assembly 2
<b>Issue:</b>	Measures to prevent the manipulation of governmental elections
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## Introduction

Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “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.”

Democracy is a governmental system, which gives people the freedom of voting and have their say in determining who or which party will govern their country. The manipulation of governmental elections is best described as corruption of democracy as it is the interfering with the electoral process of a state or region corrupting the means of collecting data or the data itself. What needs to be understood from the very beginning is at the manipulation of governmental elections is not limited just to electoral fraud but also includes circumstances where elections are run poorly with too little measures to prevent false data from being collected or where not enough measures are taken to prevent corruption. Countries where this occurs need to be addressed with as much importance as those where electoral fraud occurs. The UN has offered help to other nations by providing them with the option to request aid in their electoral processes. These requests are moderated by a subdivision of the UNDP.

In recent times the issue of Voter fraud and election manipulation has been attracting great amounts of media attention, but also the attention of governments, which has led to many advancements in voting technology.



## Definition of Key Terms

### Democracy

Democracies are currently the most popular governmental system in place. This is because they are dependent on the people determining who or what party is in power. This allows for a majority of the population to be properly represented and allows the people to feel involved in their country's agenda. A key feature of democracies is elections, which are held every few years in order to reassess the priorities of the people and to allow for the chance to evaluate the success of the party or person previously in power.

### Election

Elections are a key feature of democracy. An election is a chance to change the country's leadership and adopt a new government. Elections are held every few years in order to regularly reassess the priorities of the people and to allow for the chance to evaluate the success of the party or person previously in power. If elections were not held then a true democracy would not be possible as the people would have less say in the government.

### Electoral system

An electoral system is the system used to determine democratic decisions. The main electoral systems are; Majoritarian electoral systems, Semi-proportional systems and Mixed Systems. Each of these systems determines the value of votes differently and is used in different circumstances. It is very possible that a country uses various electoral systems for different levels of their government.

### Vote

A vote is defined as a formal expression of opinion or choice. In the context of elections a person's vote is for their preferred choice for a leadership position, whether it be a specific candidate or a party.

## General Overview

### The Unintentional manipulation of governmental elections

The manipulation of governmental elections occurs in modern day as well as in past democracies. The manipulation of governmental elections is not always intentional in the sense of fraud, but often also a problem due to poor regulations as well as primitive voting systems. This unintentional means of manipulation is often overseen, which is a shame



because it is probably the most frequently occurring as well as arguably the easiest to solve conventionally. Poor regulation leads to a misinterpretation of the population's desires. This usually occurs through inconsistent means of recording votes which leads to difficulties in counting them. Despite being one of the main causes of false results from voting, unintentional manipulation is arguably the easiest to solve. This is because it usually does not concern the sovereignty of a state but is usually caused by a lack of or improper use of resources, which lead to poor regulation of voting.

### **Electoral fraud**

The exact definition varies from country to country however the term electoral fraud is primarily defined as illegal interference with a country's electoral process. This can be done through various means ranging from intimidating voters to misinforming voters about a politician or party. Misinformation is a serious issue which is usually caused by misinterpretations of facts or statistics or wither through "fake news" spread by political parties or individuals. Misinformation leads to people voting for a particular party or candidate because of the wrong reasons. In general Electoral Fraud is concerned with direct interference with the results in an election through means such as the alteration or destruction of ballots.

Electoral fraud is the other large contributor however that is a little more difficult to solve. What needs to be understood however is that for a democracy free of corruption both better voting regulations and means to prevent electoral fraud need to be thoroughly addressed on an international and national scale.

### **Disenfranchisement**

Disenfranchisement is a form of electoral fraud where a certain group of people are deprived of their right to vote, this is normally directed towards convicted criminals however in some cases it could also be directed towards illiterate citizens through having specific tests to determine whether they are allowed to vote, these tests can however be made directly to target a specific group rendering them unable to vote. Actions such as these can result in elections being manipulated to suit certain parties. For example by having a literacy test that voters must pass to ensure they are capable of voting would be an advantage for political parties who aim to exploit less able citizens to benefit themselves.

### **Gerrymandering**

Gerrymandering is a means of electoral fraud, which occurs in plurality voting systems where the number of electorates decides the winning candidate rather than the



majority of the votes. In some nations they have a This means that the governments can isolate groups and manipulate the number of electorates they possess, limiting their ability to influence elections and thus manipulate the final outcome. Another means of gerrymandering would be increasing the number of electorates for a certain group, having the same effect.

These circumstances would allow politicians to focus their campaigns on certain groups giving them an unfair advantage and allowing them to win elections without the majority vote. The issue this poses is that politicians are then able to win the elections without having the majority of the population voting for them. An example of this would be the 2016 Election in the United States of America, where the winning candidate won the election without having the overall majority within the country.

## Major Parties Involved

### The United States of America

Having had their last major election not long ago the USA has recently been putting in a lot of effort on re-evaluating their electoral with the president himself calling for investigations into voter fraud in elections and addressing the need to strengthen voting procedures. He specifically mentioned that it was probable that votes were cast twice in some cases in different states by the same people, as well as the possibility of votes being cast using the identity of people long deceased. This results in the results of the vote not being reliable and the results of the elections not being a proper representation of the peoples views. Apart from this recent incident the USA also has a long history of interfering with the elections in other nations by influencing voters in other countries or preventing certain candidates from winning. An example of this would be the 1964 election in Chile where the US prevented Allende from winning the election. Apart from this there are many more instances where the USA has been seen influencing the elections of other countries in order to ensure their preferred candidate wins.

### India

Being the largest democracy in the world India arguably has the most difficult task in combating electoral fraud. With a population of over 1.3 billion voters, the Indian government arguably has the largest task in ensuring electoral fraud does not occur. Despite being the largest democracy India is still considered a developing country in terms of the Human Development Index (HDI). This further complicates their effort as the nation does not always have the proper means to manage elections in all areas of the country. Despite this being



said, India was one of the first countries alongside Canada and Germany to adopt Internet voting for their National elections.

## Nigeria

The Nigerian elections of 1999, 2003 and 2007 were internationally described as fraudulent and many sources have expressed concern about vote rigging. Nigeria itself has a history of vote rigging dating back to its very first election in 1952, which was overseen by their colonisers at the time, the British. The country however has put in many measures to improve their voting systems and it is widely agreed that their election ever since that of 2007 have been much better in terms of preventing voter fraud.

## Russian Federation

Russia has often been accused of conducting fraudulent elections. With many reports of electoral fraud in the last elections, the election of 2011 was widely acclaimed to be the most fraudulent election in the country since the fall of the Soviet Union, with a claimed total of 12 million extra votes in favor of Vladimir Putin. Furthermore Russia's alleged involvement in the 2016 election has been a hot topic ever since the election of President Donald Trump. Despite these allegations Russia has maintained that they are not a nation that condones electoral fraud in any situation and has put in measures to prevent electoral fraud in their own country

## Timeline of Key Events

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of Event</b>
<b>1927</b>	The Liberian elections, arguably the most rigged election in modern history
<b>1933</b>	Fire degree and Enabling act (Germany)
<b>1948</b>	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations.
<b>2003</b>	United Nations Resolution: A/RES/58/189 "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"
<b>2011</b>	United Nations Resolution: A/RES/66/163 "Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization"



<b>2014</b>	Romanian election which saw no candidate get more than 50% of the vote
<b>2016</b>	American Presidential Election
<b>2016</b>	Allegations of Russian involvement in the American Presidential elections

## UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The UN has always been willing to help nations in running their elections with numerous efforts most notably the UN created a sub division within their department of political affairs called; the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD), which has been put in place to aid governments in their elections. Apart from this the UN has created and discussed numerous resolutions on the issue such as but not limited to:

- 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** )
- 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** )

## The Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Despite not being explicitly created for maintaining democracies. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights state dedicated an entire article towards democracy. The article details the importance of the importance of allowing people to have a say in determining the

1. *Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.*
2. *Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.*
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.*

Furthermore, the UN created a sub division within their department of political affairs called; the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD), which has been put in place to aid governments in their elections, their specific tasks are to:



1. *Ensure consistency in the handling of requests of Member States;*
2. *Ensure careful coordination and consideration of requests for electoral assistance and channel such requests to the appropriate office or programme;*
3. *Build on experience gained to develop an institutional memory;*
4. *Develop and maintain a roster of international experts who can provide technical assistance;*
5. *Maintain contact with regional and other intergovernmental organizations to ensure appropriate working arrangements with them.*

The International efforts have been very admirable however those done nationally are often not always brought to public attention. It is very notable that procedures such as electronic voting have been adopted by many nations with many currently piloting it. Efforts such as these although very recent hold promise of improving the electoral processes of all those nations taking part. Systems like this were not always trusted for reasons such as voter anonymity. Attention has however been brought to the need for legitimate and well run elections and this has brought them to see the need for technological advancement in this aspect.

## Possible Solutions

There is no doubt that this is an issue that needs to be addressed thoroughly, however when doing this nation's sovereignty should also be considered. This makes it important to have a neutral mediating body such as the UN to help nations improve their electoral systems and advise them on means to reduce electoral fraud.

One of the most effective ways to reduce electoral fraud would be to increase transparency, this would make it more difficult for mistakes to occur and also more difficult for external or internal parties from disrupting the electoral process or manipulating results.

Furthermore, another way to solve the issue would be to set up regulations or conditions nations would have to abide by before setting up an election. These would of course have to be moderated before elections would take place and be agreed upon internationally. The issue however is that international regulations such as these need to take into account the level of development of all nations, and thus also take into account their limitations.

## Appendices



## Appendix A

### *Report released by UN Secretary general Javier Perez de Cuellar,*

*A primary concern in the provision of electoral assistance is the need for absolute respect of national sovereignty. That concern is highlighted in the fundamental requirement that electoral assistance may only be provided on the basis of a formal request. However, the sensitivity to national sovereignty is maintained throughout the implementation of every assistance programme and contributes to the establishment of an interactive and cooperative working relationship of electoral experts and relevant nationals. In providing electoral assistance in over 50 cases to date, the United Nations has never received a complaint from a Member State regarding interference in its internal affairs. 4. Since its inception, United Nations electoral assistance has been based on the premise that such assistance will eventually no longer be necessary. In recent electoral assistance programs, emphasis has been placed on the importance of electoral assistance in building confidence among the contending parties, the public at large and in the electoral process itself. At the same time, several programs have been oriented towards creating greater national capacity to conduct and observe elections. That emphasis will continue in the design of future assistance programs.* [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/49/675](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/49/675)

## Appendix B

This link below is a useful database with Information of past elections of 240 countries.

<http://www.electionguide.org/countries/>

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