



TLVMUN 2021

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Globalization: Climate

Change to Terrorism

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Topic A: Ensuring Reliable and Sustainable Internet
Access

Topic B: Safeguarding the Integrity of Democratic
Election Procedure

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Letter of Welcome

Dear Delegates,

It is a great honor to welcome you to the 6th edition of the Tel Aviv Model United Nations Conference, and particularly, to the United Nations Development Programme.

Throughout these days, you will have the duty to represent many countries around the world, their opinions, beliefs and cultures. You will defend their positions on very controversial current topics like Internet access and electoral fraud. However, we trust that you will assume the position of your given countries with maturity, seriousness and responsibility to ensure a rewarding debate. At the end of the weekend, we hope to see our efforts reflected in resolutions that will give the world an alternative in the topic discussed and also an extremely gratifying experience for all of us.

As your chairs, we want to expressly remind you that any doubt you may have is always warmly welcomed and, of course, going to be answered. To ensure that you are comfortable preparing and engaging in the debate, we welcome you to approach us with confidence as many times you need. Additionally, the frequent communication between delegates (and the chairs) is strongly suggested, the key to strong solutions, great conclusions and lots of teamwork lies in communication. When our committee ends, our goal is for each one of you to leave with more abilities, experiences, learnings and preparation for the next challenges you are going to face.

Sincerely,

Kyriakos, Hendrik & Egan

About Us

“Hey everyone! My name is Hendrik and I’m a 24 years old bachelor student in International Affairs at the University of St. Gallen. I’m half German and half Swiss but was born, raised and socialized in Basel, Switzerland. Additionally I was living in Zimbabwe for three years and I still consider it my second home. With my field of study I was predestined to join the St. Gallen Model United Nations society in September 2018. There, I experienced a lot of support in developing my diplomatic skills and my knowledge of International politics. I already attended several international conferences in St. Gallen, Hamburg or Rome and already participated as a delegate in TLVMUN 2019. Coming back as a chair and being able to support the conference as well as the new delegate fills me with excitement and I cannot wait to get to know you all.”



“Shalom! I am Egan, 21 years old and a bachelor student in Business Administration at the University of St. Gallen, same as Hendrik just above. I was born in Belgium but migrated very early on to Luxembourg, so I consider myself more European than anything else. A member of the St. Gallen Model United Nations since 2019, my MUN experience goes back to high school MUNs back in 2017. I had the privilege of being SGMUN 2020’s USG of Academics and am currently SGMUN 2021’s Secretary-General, so go apply to that one! For my first time in Tel-Aviv physically, I am really excited to deliver on great academics within the





committee as well as a welcoming atmosphere in and out of it. See you all under the palmtrees!”

“Hello delegates! I am Kyriakos and I am a 19 year old first-year Business Administration student at the Athens University of Economics and Business. I started MUNing when I was in the first grade of high school in 2018 and since then I haven’t stopped taking part in conferences all around the world as MUN became a huge passion and an integral part of my life. To provide a small glimpse of its impact, MUN helped me mitigate my fear of speaking in public and pushed me into becoming a more active citizen and a better person in general. When not studying or in an MUN, you will find me either on a plane travelling to another country or watching e-learning courses on literally anything you can imagine. I am more than excited to meet you all in Tel Aviv for this amazing conference. Until then stay positive but test negative!”





The Committee

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the global development network of the United Nations. It has a mission of promoting technical and investment cooperation among nations so as to build a sustainable future for everyone and foster economic development. This mission is achieved by the committee providing training, expert advice and financial support on developing countries as well as finding solutions for global and national challenges in regards to development¹. In regards to its funding², the UNDP is funded by voluntary contributions from Member States and is operating in 177 countries.

Some of the most notable issues that the UNDP is addressing as a means to fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are:

- The reduction of poverty through:
 - The inclusion of all citizens in a nation on development projects
 - Providing access to financial and investment opportunities in developing countries
- Preventing disaster or armed-conflict crises as well as creating recovery programmes for events that have already taken place
- Access to sustainable energy sources and clean water for everyone
- The detection, prevention and mitigation of the impact of HIV and as a consequence AIDS

A last notable aspect about UNDP is that its Administrator is the third highest-ranking official after the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General.

¹ *About us*. United Nations Development Programme. (n.d.). <https://www.undp.org/about-us>.

² *Funding*. United Nations Development Programme. (n.d.). <https://www.undp.org/funding>.



Topic A: Ensuring reliable and sustainable internet access

INTRODUCTION

The internet has fascinated billions of people since its inception and its utility and purpose varies among its users, ranging from professional work to entertainment and discovery. More than merely “not something you dump something on. [...] a series of tubes” according to the late U.S. Senator Ted Stevens³, the internet is a broad term to describe an electronic communications network that connects computer networks and organizational computer facilities around the world⁴.

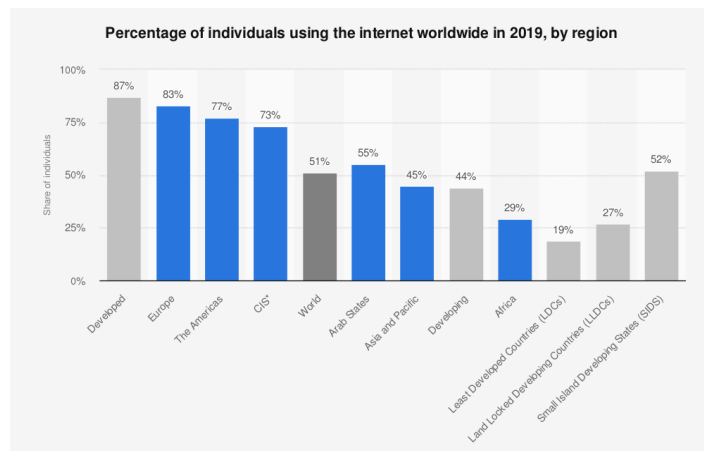
With the most recent pandemic to date, Covid-19, one has probably been able to witness just how important a stable and reliable internet connection could be. It could make all the difference between communication and no communication between individuals. Especially in the education sector, even before the pandemic hit, the use of the internet proved to enable fast communication, redundancy of information and ubiquity. The advantages became clear: courses for distant-learners were seen as highly affordable particularly for resource-starved populations of developing countries⁵.

But a lot is yet to be done. Although almost 4 billion people in the world have access to the internet, roughly the other half of the world is deprived of it.

³ bluefalcon561, 2006

⁴ Merriam-Webster, 2021

⁵ Vadnere, 2018, p. 57



Can policies be found that improve sustainable access and solutions to develop the internet?

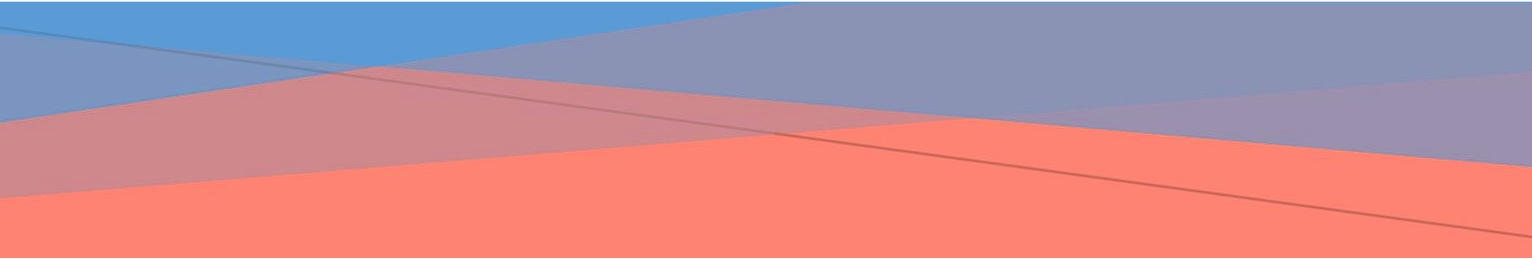
THE IMPACT OF THE INTERNET ON THE GDP

It is without doubt that the Internet has radically changed the way that we work, socialize with peers, create and share information. By most of the business world, the way the Internet is transforming our everyday life has been named as the digital or the fourth revolution.

Over the past 5 years, Internet access is responsible for 21% of the GDP growth in mature economies. In order to provide a more intuitive view of this number, imagine that if it was a sector alone the impact of it in the economy would place it higher than the sectors of agriculture or utilities⁶. The World Economic Forum has labelled our current time as the Fourth Industrial Revolution, as artificial intelligence and the democratisation of online services bring digitalisation in a new age⁷.

⁶ Manyika & Roxburgh, 2019

⁷ Klaus Schwab, 2016



Below are some of examples of how Internet-derived technologies/sectors have actually fostered and sustained future economic growth⁸:

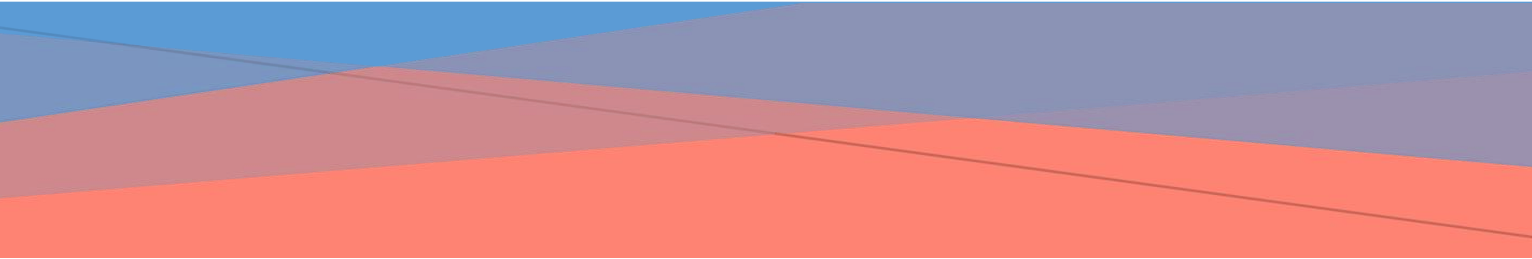
- The use of social media by more than 800 million users has made possible the communication between peers and between consumers and businesses within seconds and exponentially lower costs than that of regular communication means.
- Internet of Things (IoT) has enabled the creation of internet-connected sensors and devices of a convenient size that can be placed almost anywhere. The use of IoT devices and sensors has made the collection and processing of information as well as the decision making process for business and governments in different sectors faster and cheaper than ever before⁹.
- Blockchain technology has introduced the idea of decentralized and transparent financial transactions which have completely eliminated paperwork and transaction costs while not sacrificing security¹⁰.
- The widespread creation of e-commerce sites around the globe along with globalization have vastly increased competition and consumer choice as well as enhanced the effectiveness of marketing and pricing in spectacularly low costs.

It is important to mention that when measuring the impact of the Internet on the GDP we should not take only into account the savings in terms of monetary cost that the

⁸ Rivlin & Litan, 2016

⁹ Brous, Janssen & Herder, 2019

¹⁰ Koksai, 2019



Internet has provided but also the savings in time and human resources that can be allocated elsewhere.

A recent example of the above-mentioned savings can be observed by the digital transformations that occurred in governments during the COVID-19 pandemic¹¹:

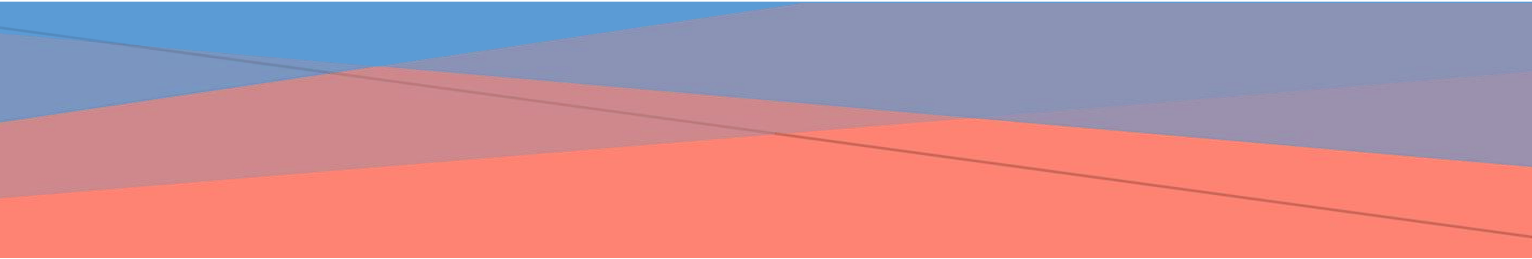
- Citizens were able to get most of their essential day-to-day documents without having to wait in a long line in a governmental facility.
- Many governments created COVID-tracking apps that informed almost instantly possibly affected citizens about being near to an infected person and made a COVID-19 test scheduling as seamless as possible.
- Governments created an IoT-backed system of sensors to ensure the safe and reliable transportation of vaccines from the pharmaceutical companies to the vaccination centers. Citizens were given the chance to book an appointment within seconds through a website and a mobile app and arrive at a designated time in a vaccination center to get vaccinated without health workers having to file any paperwork.

All of the above information should have given you enough food for thought on how internet access can help economic growth by increasing human productivity, lowering costs and maximizing transparency and speed.

THE EXPANSION OF INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURES

The implementation of a network and thus internet access to a certain region or entire country must be explained in order to understand the challenges to the expansion of

¹¹ U.N.D. for P.I. and D.G., 2020



the internet. The implementation of infrastructure known to support a network of physical objects such as sensors, networks and other technologies to connect and exchange data between networks is regrouped under the name Internet of Things (IoT)¹². Including human beings as actors of the internet, the term Internet of Everything (IoE) is used when referring to people, things and places providing internet services¹³.

PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The backbone for IoT infrastructure is the hardware and physical devices necessary to establish a connection to the network: disk and memory storage, network bandwidth and central processing units (CPUs)¹⁴. This means that no access can be ensured if those basic facilities are not present. The basics can be supplemented by cloud computing capabilities, enabling cloud storage where instead of data being stored on hard devices, data is secured on servers and can be transmitted between servers situated in different locations. A major advantage of cloud computing is the minimisation of the risk of degradation or destruction of the data present in the servers due to its decentralised nature. Data centers and cloud servers can cost up to \$100 million for smaller ones and easily several billion dollars for big centers when built from scratch¹⁵. The operating of those centers often fall into hands of private enterprises, resulting in market efficiencies for firms, but only localised successes, as for example Google only plans to cover 10% of the U.S. population with a fiber network¹⁶.

¹² Rouse, 2019

¹³ Kodadadi et al., 2016, p. 5

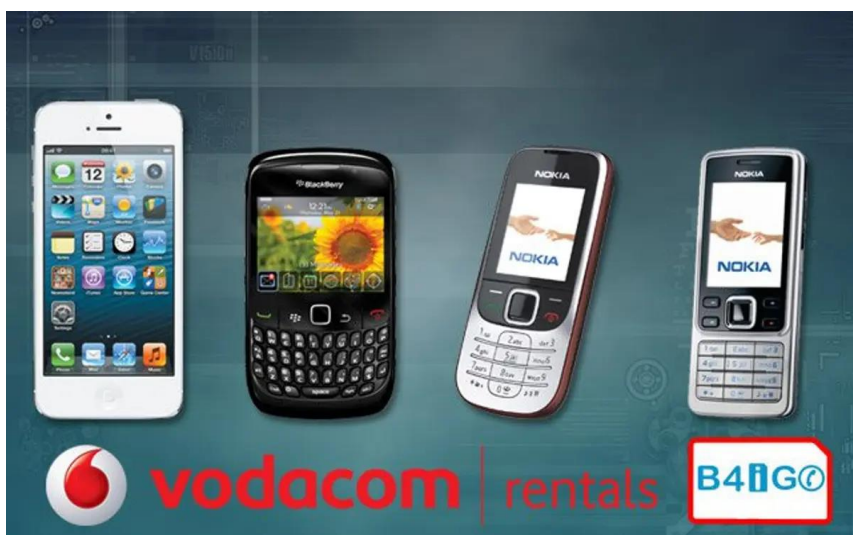
¹⁴ Ilyas et al., 2020, p. 15

¹⁵ Greenstein, 2020, p. 200

¹⁶ Greenstein, 2020, p. 202

USER DEVICES

Beyond the mere scope of the infrastructure necessary for the very functioning of connectivity, the receiving end must also be considered: what are the devices that people can access the internet with? The most intuitive access point to a network of a certain generation (3G, 4G, etc.) is the smartphone. It has many varied capabilities and offers additional content or services. However, such a device is, just like a computer, much more expensive than its cheaper alternative, the wireless cellular phone. Unlike a computer or a smartphone, it has seen development beyond OECD countries, being implemented in developing countries such as the Philippines and Namibia¹⁷.



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Promotional material for rents of cellphones in South Africa

Another way to democratise the access is the marketing of less expensive devices, such as terminals, computers commonly used by a large number of users. The increase in competition for mobile operators and internet providers also helps with the democratisation of internet access¹⁹.

¹⁷ OECD, 2009, pp. 54-55

¹⁸ Guide to Using a Cell Phone while Overseas in South Africa: Best iPhone Mobile Phones, Prepaid SIM Card, Data, Rental & Roaming in SA

¹⁹ OECD, 2009, pp. 56-57



EDUCATION

More than just developing infrastructure capable of hosting networks and the devices that enable users to navigate on those networks, the very content on those networks must also be empowering development efforts. Educational platforms as well as instructions on best practices for internet use is key to unleash the full potential of the development to access²⁰. The Covid-19 pandemic has revealed the potential of the massive online open courses (MOOCs) offering online learning curriculums. Not only do MOOCs improve the access to higher education, they also provide an inexpensive alternative to traditional education and help developing countries to get closer to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)²¹. SDG 9.c is of particular interest, as it stipulates to “significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020.”²² Meanwhile, a bid to make the internet accessible to every school in the world by 2030 has been launched by UNICEF and the ITU, named “Giga”²³.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

LOGISTICS

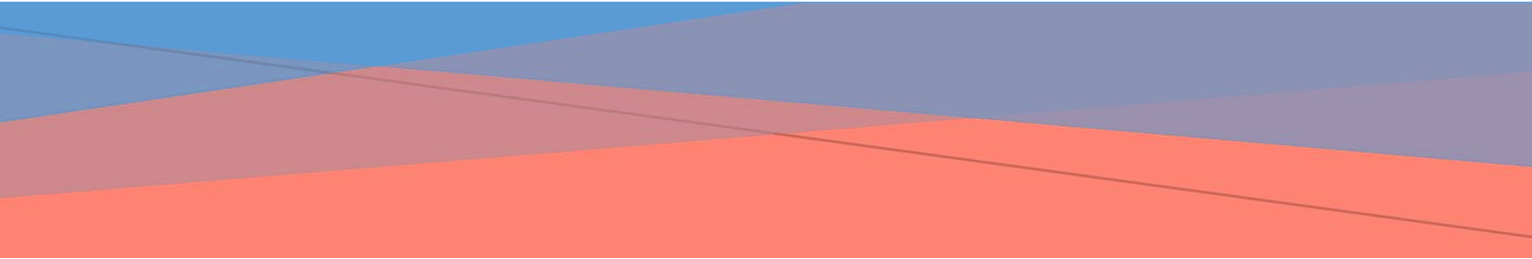
The most direct challenge to the increase in access to the internet is the demanding logistical requirements necessary to build up networks and maintain them regularly in technologically underdeveloped regions. Further, despite installed infrastructure,

²⁰ OECD, 2009, pp. 57-58

²¹ Vadrone, 2018, pp. 68-69

²² UN, n.d. a

²³



download speed might drastically vary and therefore do not represent a guarantee for increased access²⁴.

From an analytical point of view, a clear picture is still not to be expected everywhere. In order to have an accurate picture of the situation of broadband in rural areas, reports and statistics must testify to quality, which is for example not the case in some OECD countries where crucial statistical information is missing. Data on how the expansion of the IoT is affecting the GDP, productivity and growth is needed and a methodology for calculation must be designed²⁵.

RURAL/URBAN DIVIDE

The potential neglect of rural and other low-density areas within a country could be problematic, as the development of internet infrastructure, if unequally spread, could lead to further inequalities between urban centers and rural regions, even in developed countries. Subventions as well as agreements designed to steer the competition to benefit certain regions are said to have a tremendous effect²⁶.

CYBERSECURITY

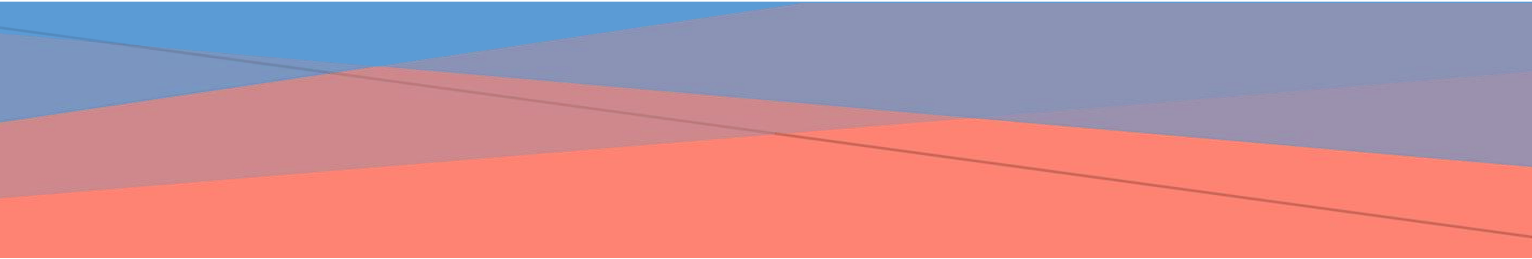
A main challenge is the potential danger that cyberattacks pose to newly established systems left without surveillance and security mechanisms. With rather pricey cyber security services relative to developing countries, protection against malwares and bots is not guaranteed on an individual level and newcomers often fall prey to such attacks because of their rather low propensity to pay for cyber protection softwares²⁷. At a company and state level, the solidity of servers to attacks is also crucial when

²⁴ OECD, 2019, p. 111

²⁵ OECD, 2019, p. 108

²⁶ Greenstein, 2020, pp. 209-211

²⁷ OECD, 2009, p. 60



considering the exchange of sensitive information²⁸. As the markets in developing countries tend to focus on end-user devices instead of servers, hackers have less difficulty causing major trouble. There are more devices than servers, users have sensitive information on their devices and the physical acquisition of these devices is possible²⁹. An improvement of these security conditions could not only mean a better yield for economic and social well-being but also could have positive repercussions on developed countries, which would no longer fear cyberthreats from outside as much³⁰. It is a matter of building trust through comprehensive information and communication technologies (ICTs) policies. The ability of governments to ensure digital transformation will be put to the test when they must build up security protocols and respond to attacks against their networks. Further ICT policies must have in mind the integrity, authenticity, availability and confidentiality of data and systems in order to protect against the consequences of breaches, namely loss of time and compromised private information³¹.



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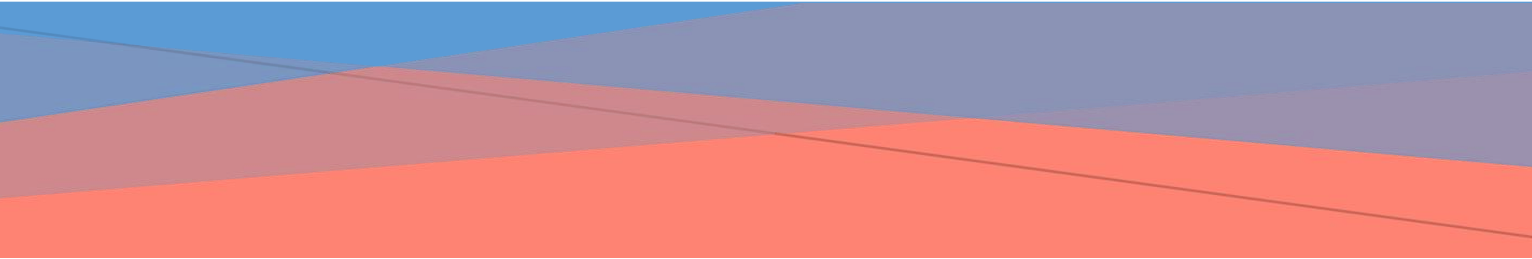
²⁸ OECD, 2019, p. 104

²⁹ Kodadadi et al., 2016, p. 19

³⁰ OECD, 2009, p. 61

³¹ OECD, 2019, p. 208

³² WHAT DOES GDPR GOVERN, 2020



The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is an ensemble of ICT policies valid for the entire EU.

TRADE BARRIERS

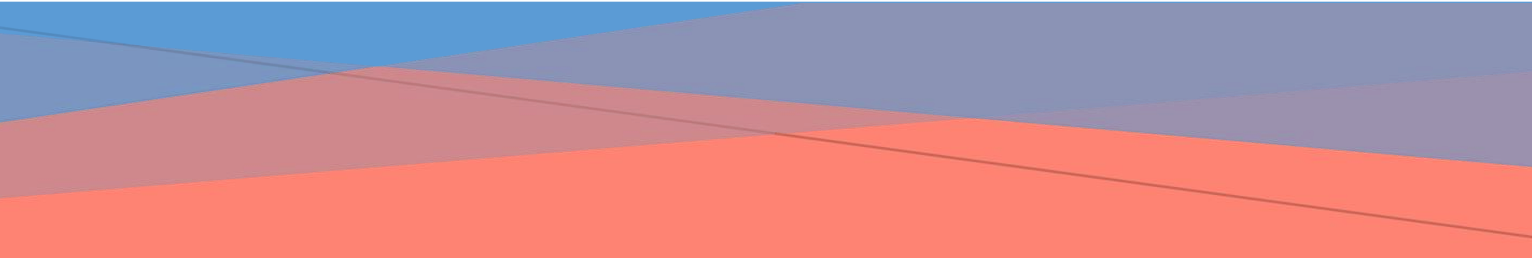
The existence of barriers against the development of internet solutions puts brakes on the expansion of internet access in some countries. Trade restrictions usually take the form of restriction of foreign ownership, government takeover and nationalisation, regulations concerning nationality of managers and many other barriers. These barriers might be of advantage for national monopolies, a reliable source of employment and potentially ensure price reduction, however they increase transaction costs and prohibit competition in a clear fashion³³. Many countries currently regulate their number and size of internet providers individually, but perhaps it is time to consider the reduction and normalisation of trade for certain product areas, especially hardware, internet access devices, softwares and other intangible goods.

USER PRIVACY

Another concern which is first and foremost at the centre of political discourse about the internet in developed countries is the issue of privacy. What are technology companies doing with user data and what do regulations say about the handling of personal data? Although certain developing countries may not have encountered this problem too often due to the lack of infrastructure, it is only a matter of time before development of access brings questions on data management and privacy. With the threat of data breach on new networks, it is only a matter of time before privacy violations are observed if user data protection regulations are not put in place³⁴.

³³ OECD, 2019, p. 98

³⁴ OECD, 2019, p. 210



Systems of “distributed privacy” and data decentralisation through new technologies such as blockchain are seen as a viable solution to this problem³⁵. Furthermore, the formation in digital security and privacy skills is becoming more and more important. Training increases awareness towards the issues and helps adapt to the ever changing nature of technological transformations³⁶. These preventive steps, however, must be thought of and implemented in the internet development roadmap from the very beginning, at risk of becoming a burden once the networks are fully operational.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Although it is not within the mandate of the UNDP, a further problem with internet access is the abuse of power that governments could take from controlling the national network. Censorship and repression of dissidents for their actions on the internet are grave concerns that must be addressed more in depth, especially by the Human Rights Council and in the optic that internet access is now liberalised even in authoritarian states.

³⁵ Kodadadi et al., 2016, pp. 21-22

³⁶ OECD, 2019, p. 212



PREVIOUS UN INVOLVEMENT

In 2010, the ITU and the United Nations Education, Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) established the Broadband Commission, tasked with the promotion of global connectivity.³⁷

In cooperation with various other UN institutions, the ITU has been able to work on several projects during the previous year and was especially challenged during the pandemic, as can be seen under the “Collaboration and Partnerships” heading.³⁸

Among other things, access to 4G has doubled between 2015 and 2020, although the expansion of broadband networks has slowed down during 2020. At the end of 2020, 85% of the world population was covered by a 4G network. Despite this, the annual growth of internet access has slowed down, being only 1.3 percent higher in 2020 than in 2019.³⁹

When all implementation of infrastructure projects fails, the connection between two network grids can be made physically in order to establish bridges over gaps. Just as the “Pony Express” linked telegram lines in the 19th century, special transports now deliver email with cache to entire regions of India, Cambodia and Rwanda among many⁴⁰. However, it is questionable whether this solution is sustainable for the foreseeable future. Events such as Covid-19 have shown that a disruption postal supply chains was inevitable and that it caused an increase in costs and considerable losses because of delays⁴¹.

Even the office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations has seized the matter with the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation. “Based on recommendations from the

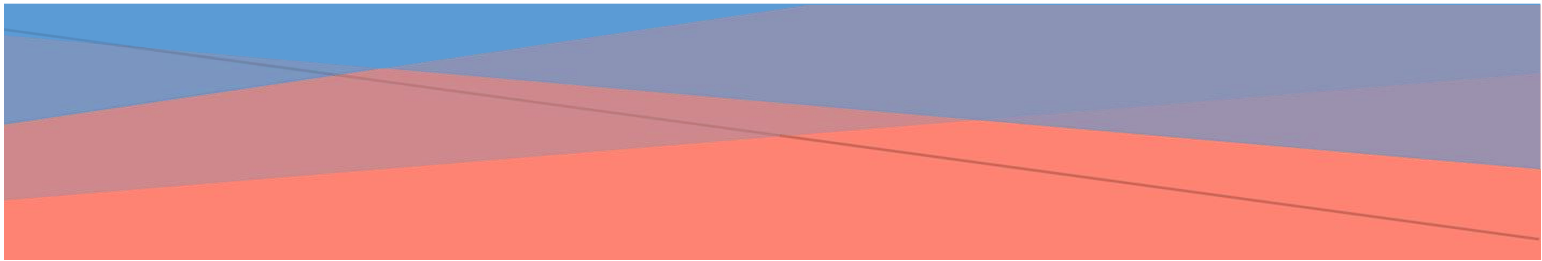
³⁷ Broadband Commission, 2021

³⁸ UN, n.d. b

³⁹ UN, n.d. a

⁴⁰ OECD, p. 56

⁴¹ Universal Postal Union, 2020



Secretary-General's High-level Panel for Digital Cooperation convened from 2018-2019, and further informed by a series of roundtable discussions with key stakeholders from governments, the private sector, civil society, international organizations, academic institutions, the technical community, and other relevant stakeholders, the following set of actions are envisaged"⁴²:

1. Achieving Universal Connectivity by 2030

"Half of the world's population currently does not have access to the Internet. By 2030, every person should have safe and affordable access to the Internet, including meaningful use of digitally enabled services in line with the Sustainable Development Goals."

2. Promoting Digital Public Goods to Create a More Equitable World

"We must undertake a concerted global effort to encourage and invest in the creation of digital public goods: open source software, open data, open AI models, open standards and open content. These digital public goods should adhere to privacy and other applicable laws and best practices, do no harm, and help attain the SDGs."

3. Ensuring Digital Inclusion for all, Including the Most Vulnerable

"Digital divides reflect and amplify existing social, cultural and economic inequalities. The gender gap in global Internet use is a stark example – in two out of every three countries, more men use the Internet than women. Similar challenges affect migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons, older persons, young people, children, persons with disabilities, rural populations, and indigenous peoples. We must close these gaps through better metrics, data collection, and coordination of initiatives."

⁴² UN, n.d. c



4. Strengthening Digital Capacity-Building

“Many countries and citizens are deprived of capacities and skills crucial to the digital era and to attaining the SDGs. Digital capacity building must be more needs-driven and tailored to individual and national circumstances, and better coordinated globally.”

5. Ensuring the Protection of Human Rights in the Digital Era

“Digital technologies provide new means to exercise human rights, but they are too often used to violate human rights. Regulatory frameworks and legislation on the development and use of digital technologies should have human rights at their centre. Data protection, digital ID, the use of surveillance technologies, online harassment and content governance are of particular concern.”

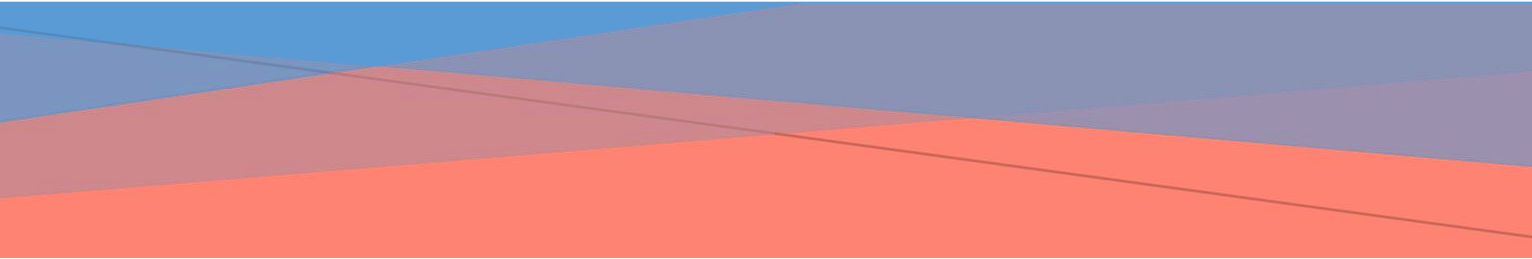
6. Supporting Global Cooperation on Artificial Intelligence

“AI brings enormous benefits to the digital era, but it can also significantly compromise the safety and agency of users worldwide. Enhanced multi-stakeholder efforts on global AI cooperation are needed to help build global capacity for the development and use of AI in a manner that is trustworthy, human rights-based, safe and sustainable, and promotes peace.”

7. Promoting Trust and Security in the Digital Environment

“The digital technologies that underpin core societal functions and infrastructure, including supporting access to food, water, housing, energy, health care and transportation, need to be safeguarded. A broad and overarching statement outlining common elements of an understanding on digital trust and security, endorsed by all Member States, could help to shape a shared vision for digital cooperation based on global values.”

8. Building a More Effective Architecture for Digital Cooperation



“There are significant gaps in global digital cooperation, and digital technology issues are too often low on political agendas. Even where there has been cooperation, it is frequently fragmented and lacks tangible outcomes or sound follow-up processes. As a starting point, the Internet Governance Forum must be strengthened, in order to make it more responsive and relevant to current digital issues.”

Furthermore, the Seoul Declaration for the Future of the Internet Economy, signed in 2008 by 40 members, many of whom are members in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), gave an idea for the road ahead. The omnipresence of ICT networks was deemed the primary goal and was to be achieved through Member States pledging to encourage policies and pass legislation that would enhance its agenda⁴³. A report made in 2013 evaluated the evolution since the declaration and indicated the feasibility of the different measures set in the agreement⁴⁴.

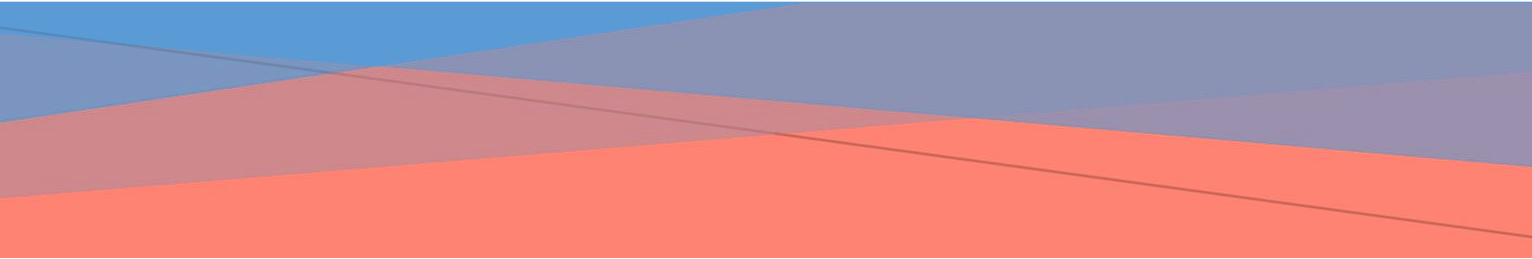
On the UN stage, a couple of measures have been addressed. In 2011, a report by the Special Rapporteur to the Secretary-General brought attention to several threats to internet access, namely cyber-attacks, but also censorship and breach of privacy⁴⁵. The voluntary disruption of internet access to certain parts of the population has been called unlawful by a non-binding resolution (A/HRC/32/L.20) of the Human Rights Council in 2016⁴⁶.

⁴³ OECD Publishing, 2008

⁴⁴ OECD Publishing, 2013

⁴⁵ HRC & La Rue, 2011

⁴⁶ HRC, 2016



The legislation on internet development, despite major progress even in the year 2020, is still not as fleshed out as other topics, which is why caution is advised.



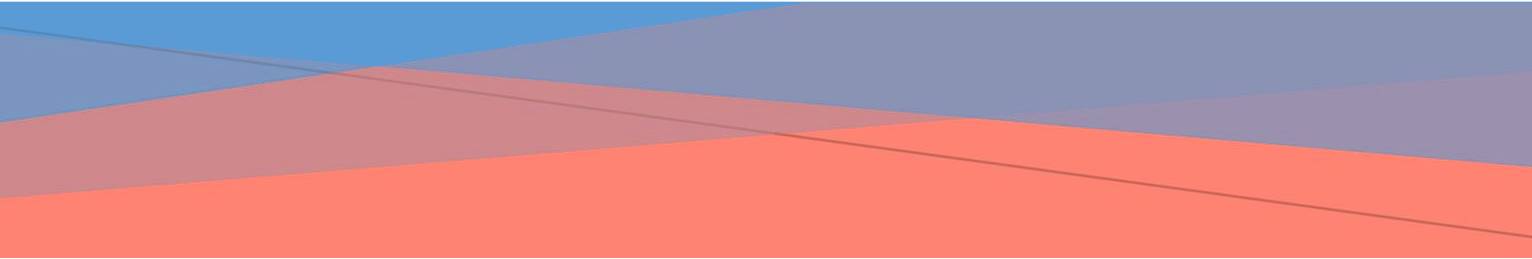
GUIDING QUESTIONS

- **Should the right to internet access be recognised?**
- **In relation to SDG 8 and SDG 9.c, what engagements are Member States willing to make?**
- **What does UNDP define as the geographic scope for the development of access? (developing countries, rural regions of developed countries, etc.)**
- **Should there be more emphasis on physical infrastructure development or on improvement of content and use on internet networks?**
- **How far should cybersecurity efforts go in the developing world?**
- **What can be done with regards to the privacy of new users?**
- **Should the idea of a global internet infrastructure and regulatory framework be discussed and developed?**
- **Are state monopolies on Internet Service Providers (ISPs) or a multi-competitor market the way to go to make subscription prices affordable?**
- **With certain goals having been reached (broadband coverage, etc.), what new priorities should internet development have?**



FURTHER READINGS

- “Computer Basics: Connecting to the Internet”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93-3zmVvCGU>
A highly informative and condensed video explaining the basic terms of internet connectivity (3:59)
- Agenda for Report Action
<https://broadbandcommission.org/publication/covid19-crisis-agenda-for-action/>
The latest report by the UNESCO-founded Broadband Commission, with lessons taken from the Covid-19 pandemic (10 pages)
- Broadband Commission Manifesto
<https://broadbandcommission.org/manifesto/>
Stipulates the foundational nature of digital connectivity for the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (8 pages)
- “The village that built its own wi-fi network - BBC Africa”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9u-hfxAeBo>
Case study on a South African village which built and now administers its own network due to affordability and accessibility concerns (7:28)
- International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
<https://sdgs.un.org/un-system-sdg-implementation/international-telecommunication-union-itu-24522>
More than just a source in this study guide, the official information page on the ITU is full of links towards projects and past actions on internet access and development.
- Report of the Secretary-General Roadmap for Digital Cooperation
<https://www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap/>
Report of the Secretary-General on goals to achieve with regards to internet access (20 pages)
- “Why the government should provide internet access”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOHCJtrQWTU>
Opinion piece realised by progressive media outlet Vox on the nationalisation of ISPs (13:34)
- Seoul Declaration
<https://www.oecd.org/sti/40839436.pdf>



Declaration on promotion and development of the Internet Economy (10 pages)

- Achieving universal and affordable Internet in the least developed countries
<http://unohrrls.org/custom-content/uploads/2018/01/D-LDC-ICTLDC-2018-PDF-E.pdf>

Report on progress of internet access in least developed countries (LDCs) (128 pages)

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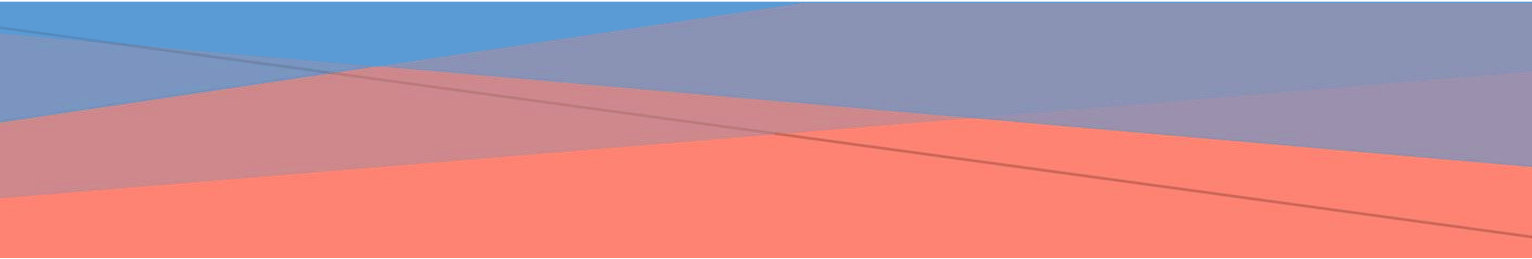
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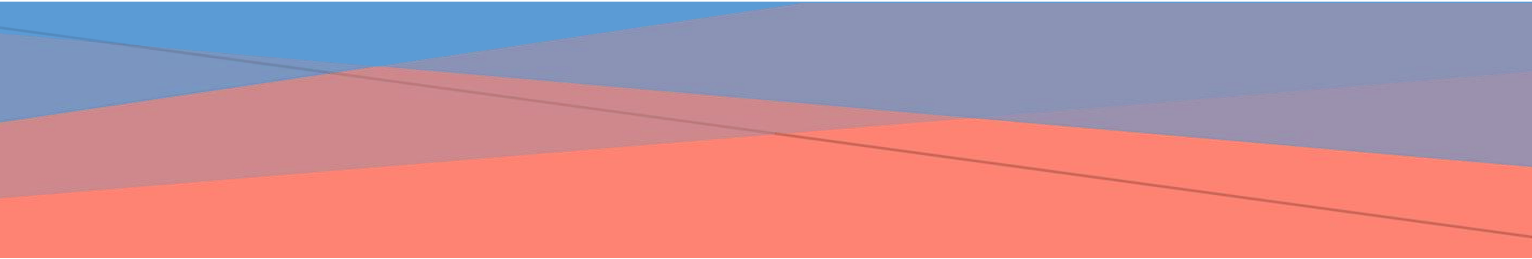
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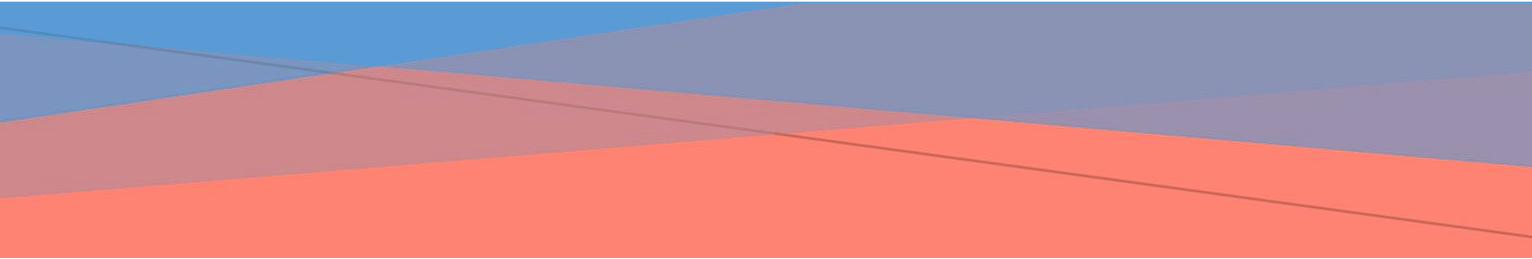
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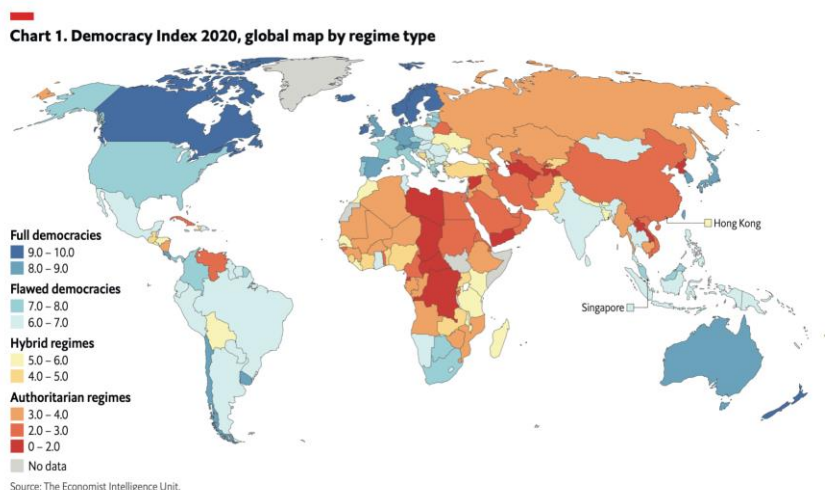
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Topic B: Safeguarding the integrity of democratic election procedures

INTRODUCTION

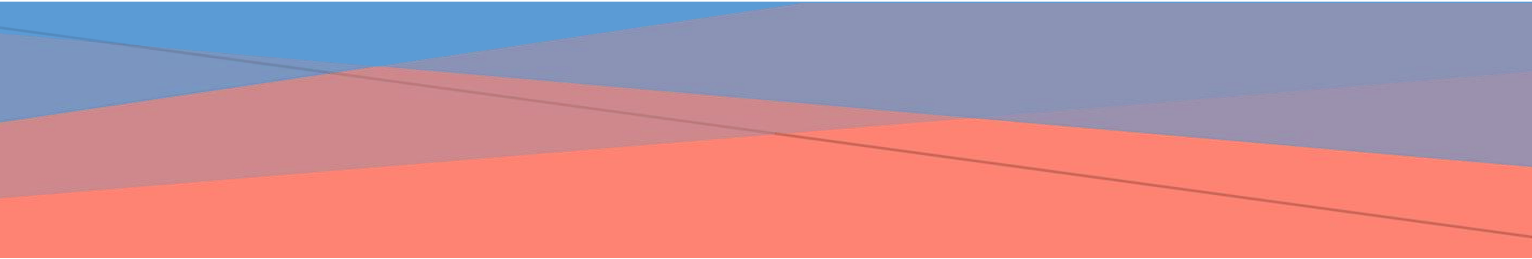
“The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government”⁴⁷ This statement in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reflects the will of the United Nation to hold up to democratic values which includes the guarantee of free and fair elections worldwide. For a long time and especially after the cold war, democratisation processes have developed in a positive way. But since the year 2015, the Global Democracy Index shows falling scores.⁴⁸ In the year 2020, the Economist Democracy Index shows the lowest value since its invention in 2006. Unfortunately, it worsened in every single region in the world. The massive decline in 2020 is apparently correlated with public health measures against the Covid-19 pandemic that suspended several public liberties worldwide.⁴⁹ However, democratic integrity had already



⁴⁷ Art. 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

⁴⁸ The Economist, 2021

⁴⁹ The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021, p. 4ff.



lost significance before the pandemic. The integrity of democratic elections and the prevention of election fraud play a major role in order to achieve well functioning democracies worldwide. This second topic of the study guide focuses on current problems in democratic systems and puts a focus on electoral procedures. Elections form the heart of a functioning democracy and are therefore a matter of deep concern and investigation. Several measures and strategies to ensure free elections and to prevent election frauds have been already implemented by the international community but there are still ways found to bypass them. Since the 16th of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) formulated by the United Nations wants to achieve peace, justice, and strong institutions⁵⁰ corporate measures need to be found in order to achieve this objective.

⁵⁰ United Nations Sustainable Development Goals No. 16



HISTORY OF THE TOPIC

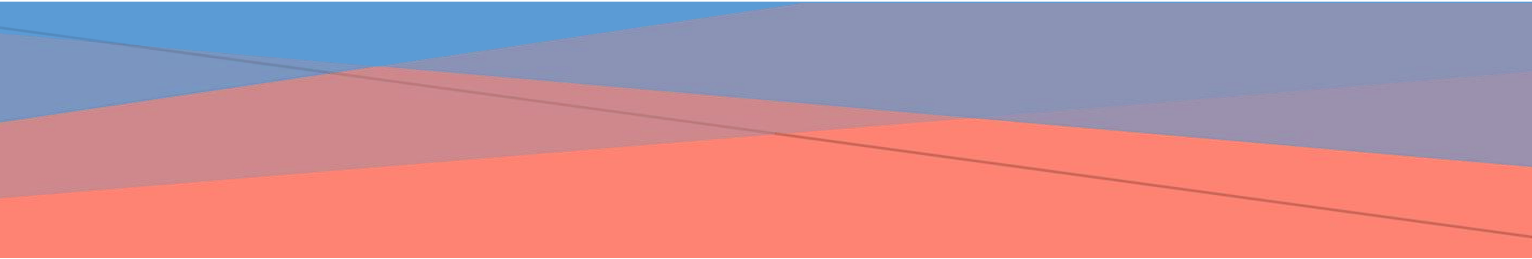
Even though popular opinion suggests the root of democracy in ancient Greece, primitive forms of democratic elections can be traced even further back to approximately 2500 BC. where the first city-states in the earliest days of Mesopotamian civilisations documented the public election of their kings. Nonetheless, the Greeks made significant achievements with forms of direct democracies, allowing all male citizens to meet and vote at a general assembly.⁵¹ Further progress was made in the 7th century AD. by the Arab world who already granted their citizens democratic rights like equality and freedom of expression.⁵² However, the modern form of democracy emerged in the 19th century. In the light of the French revolution, several Central European countries such as Italy, Switzerland or the Netherlands adopted democratic principles and with the establishment of the American constitution in 1787, democracy has definitely found its way onto the world stage.⁵³ From this period until 1990, Samuel Huntington has described three waves of democratisation in the world. The first and longest wave began in 1820 with a wave of suffrage extensions within democracies and ended in 1926 arriving at its first peak of 29 democracies worldwide. After a huge reverse wave especially before and during the Second World War, the second wave of democratisation started 1945 and ended 1962 with a new record of 36 countries fulfilling the definition of a democracy. After another short reverse wave, the third wave of democratisation led to an increase of another 30 new democracies between 19776 and 1990.⁵⁴ Since the article was published in 1991, the investigation stops there. But looking at the previously discussed Democracy Index, one can suggest that

⁵¹ Isakhan, 2011, p. 13

⁵² Abdulla & Rane, 2011, p. 81

⁵³ Innes, 2019

⁵⁴ Huntington, 1991, p. 12f.



democracy emerged even further afterwards until hitting a peak in 2015. Since then, the world seems to have fallen back into a third reverse wave.⁵⁵

While election fraud is probably as old as elections themselves, little measures have been made for a long time to fight it properly. Until the 19th century, election fraud was quite common in the newer European and American democracies. Swaying voters by promising policy benefits, offering money or food or performing intimidation or harassment towards political enemies have been widespread methods to influence voting results. Only in the final decades of the 19th century, reforms against electoral fraud started to emerge within European democracies. Focus was mainly put on the technology of voting. Big improvements were made to introduce ballot envelopes and standardise the design of electoral urns in order to guarantee the secrecy of the vote. This newly invented anonymous voting improved the security and the motivation to vote as it protected voters from possible harassment.⁵⁶ However, international measures to address the problem of voter fraud have only started after the Second World War with the establishment of the United Nations.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ The Economist, 2021

⁵⁶ Mares, 2015, p. 14f.

⁵⁷ United Nations, 1999



DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM: EXISTING PROBLEMS

There are multiple problems causing electoral fraud with mostly different motivations. Electoral fraud may happen before the election, during the election or even after the election. It can be executed by central authorities or by decentralised groups.⁵⁸ This chapter tries to summarize the existing problems that may occur during elections and tries to illustrate prominent examples.

STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS

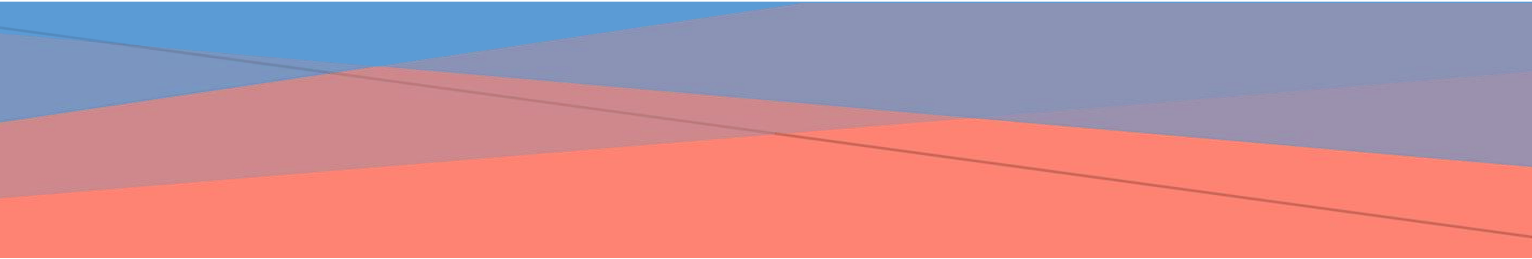
Structural constraints within a country put several challenges on a democracy to be working properly. Especially poor and illiterate societies with a predominantly rural population face the issue of lacking access to modern communication and transportation. These characteristics might be even tightened if the state has a history of conflicts and a long legacy of authoritarian rule and therefore little experience of democratic practices.⁵⁹ Even if there is an existing equal voting right backed by the constitution, these population groups might face major difficulties to participate in elections since it requires long travels for reaching the next election office⁶⁰. Furthermore, modern literature found evidence that there is a significant correlation between wealth and the quality of elections. Countries with a gross domestic product (GDP) of more than USD 15,000 per capita tend to meet international election standards more likely whereas in countries below that mark, malpractice happens more often.⁶¹ Even though structural constraints may not seem to fully fit the definition

⁵⁸ Leeman & Bochsler, 2013, p. 3

⁵⁹ Norris, 2015, p. 63

⁶⁰ Meyer, 2009, p. 114

⁶¹ Norris, 2015, p. 84



of election fraud, it can still occur as such when vulnerable populations are purposefully or systematically prevented from exercising their political rights with the result that certain minority groups are affected more by such constraints than others⁶².

ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT

More obvious examples of election fraud can be seen in the actual execution and management of elections. There it has to be distinguished between material and psychological fraud. Material fraud applies to any physical aspect of the election. This includes tampering with voter lists, ballot paper or computer equipment. Furthermore, material fraud includes any tampering of employment, payments to commissions or the commitment on future governmental contracts.⁶³ Prominent examples include dead people listed as voters or poorly checked identification. These incidents can either happen accidentally by human errors, technical malfunctions or logistical failure, or they can happen purposely by protagonists who actively try to manipulate the results.⁶⁴ The problem behind these incidents are often inaccurate registers that include all eligible voters and exclude dead people. Also control mechanisms of voter identification and the prevention of double voting might be quite weak.⁶⁵ Psychological fraud affects any kind of personal threat towards individual voters or a whole community⁶⁶. Prominent examples are violations of the rule of law by intimidation during registration or even complete exclusion of certain groups.

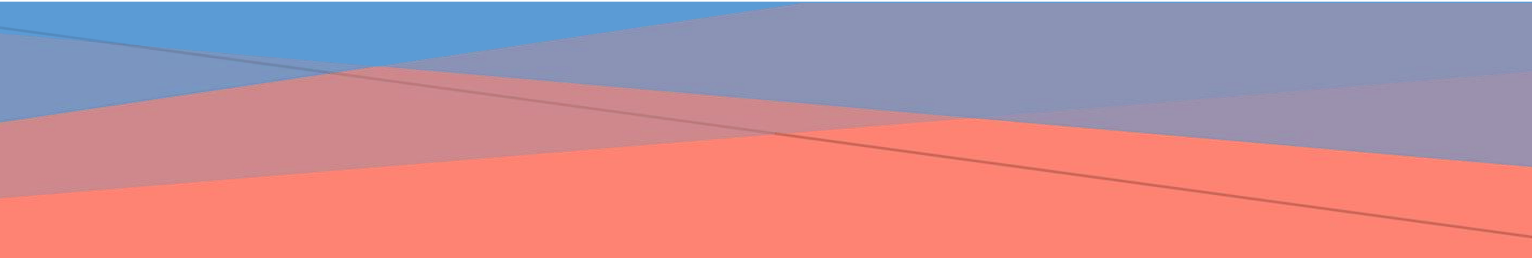
⁶² Lopez-Pintor, 2010, p. 11

⁶³ Lopez-Pintor, 2010, p.11

⁶⁴ Norris, 2015, p.133

⁶⁵ Ace project, 2021

⁶⁶ Lopez-Pintor, 2010, p. 11



Furthermore, a missing anonymity of votes or the hindrance of democratic rights such as the freedom of assembly, or the freedom of opinion can fuel psychological fraud.⁶⁷ In Summary, malpractice by the electoral management can be put into three categories: Manipulation of the law concerning legislation, manipulation of vote choice concerning voters rights and manipulation of the voting act concerning equality during the voting process.⁶⁸ Potential vote counting fraud is another problem that is discussed on a regular basis. The most prominent example can be found at the US Presidential Elections of 2020, where the incumbent President Donald Trump made accusations of irregularities of vote counting in several US states.⁶⁹ An additional factor of such discussions is the fact that electoral observers in the United States are composed of party members. Other countries such as Canada prohibit party affiliation for observers and require neutrality. After this policy has been implemented, discussions about vote counting fraud have almost disappeared.⁷⁰

MISINFORMATION

Misinformation is a rather indirect method of electoral fraud since it does not merely affect the voting procedure but the whole process of opinion formation within society. Therefore, this part affects the fairness of elections rather than the freedom of it. One of the major problems is the interference of political parties into public communication systems. Publishing political propaganda in a disproportionate amount is often due to existing monopolies of media agencies⁷¹. This occurrence is highly correlated with the

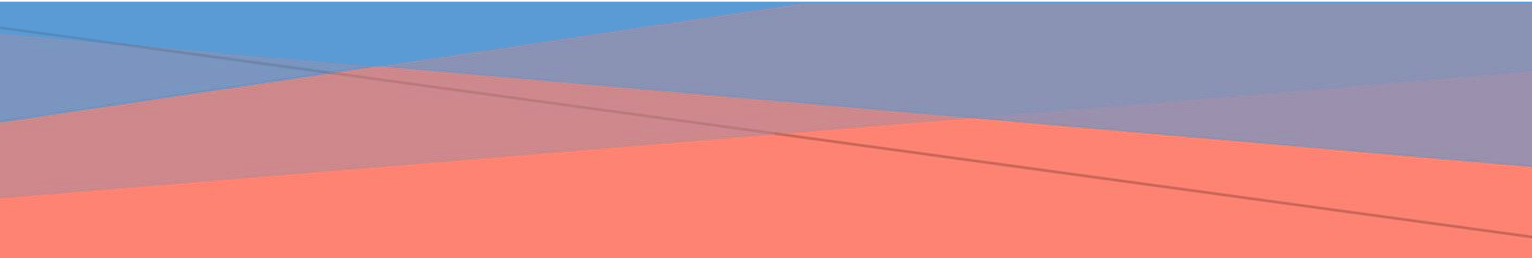
⁶⁷ Meyer, 2009, p. 114f.

⁶⁸ Szymanski et al., 2020, p. 35f.

⁶⁹ BBC, 2020

⁷⁰ Emmert et al., 2007, p. 8f.

⁷¹ Meyer, 2009, p. 220



freedom of press. Authoritarian regimes often try to delimitate media agencies within their country. In the year 2021, the global indicator of free press is 12% worse off in comparison to 2013. In 73 countries, the free press is blocked completely while it is seriously constrained in 53 others.⁷² Another form of misinformation is not executed by the state itself but by private actors. This form of misinformation is also known as ‘fake news’. This kind of information often spreads through social media and is characterised by its falseness and its goal to deceive people by trying to look like real news. The main intention of fake news is to spread misinformation that promotes a certain political actor. Nonetheless, it differs from political propaganda which advertises on real information in such a way that it favours a certain politician or party.

⁷³

DIFFERENT FRAUD METHODS

A most prominent example of electoral fraud would be the intentional use of misleading or confusing ballot papers which has two effects: it is discouraging illiterate citizens from voting (thus lowering voting attendance) and it is making the voting process more complex for the voters which can in turn result in voting incorrectly. Prominent examples of confusing ballot papers had been past elections in Brazil, in which by the time the government switched to Electronic Voting Machines (EVM), voting attendance instantly rose and people thought that their voting had been

⁷² Reporters without borders, 2021

⁷³ Tandoc Jr, 2019, p. 2



easier than ever before⁷⁴. This, to some extent, applied also to the United States past - and in some states recent - elections⁷⁵.

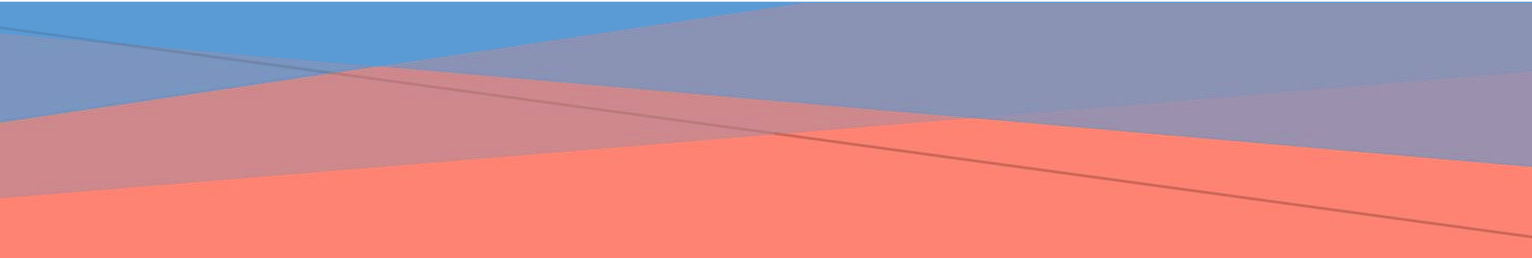
While electronic voting systems are known to increase transparency, there have been known cases of tampering with them. An example of how vulnerable sometimes electronic voting systems can be was illustrated in October 2018, where computer scientist J. Alex Halderman placed an actual US electronic voting system on the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and organized a mock election⁷⁶. In the election three volunteers had to choose between George Washington and Benedict Arnold with all of the three selecting George Washington. What the volunteers didn't know was that the professor managed to install malicious software into the machine's memory card which resulted in Benedict Arnold winning the election by two votes.

Last but not least, there have been a number of countries which have maintained the method of postal ballots as a way to increase voting attendance and to help people who are unable to wait in line at a voting center to exercise their right to vote. Apart from the fact that the voters are immediately susceptible to pressure from their family members which is not within the scope of the topic, there have been many instances where the vote did not eventually reach the counting center.

⁷⁴ Power, T., & Roberts, J. (1995). *Compulsory Voting, Invalid Ballots, and Abstention in Brazil*. *Political Research Quarterly*, 48(4), 795-826. doi:10.2307/448975

⁷⁵ Mestel, S. (2019, November 19). *How bad ballot design can sway the result of an election*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/nov/19/bad-ballot-design-2020-democracy-america>.

⁷⁶ Schwartz, J. (2018, November 1). *The Vulnerabilities of Our Voting Machines*. Scientific American. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-vulnerabilities-of-our-voting-machines/>.



But even if the votes finally reach the counting centre, there have been many incidents where the votes were not actually legitimately made from the same person or where legitimate votes were not counted. While signature-matching has been proposed and used as a solution to mitigate illegitimate votes, due to shortages on equipment and to the time constraints for the results to be announced this method still needs a lot of improvement⁷⁷.

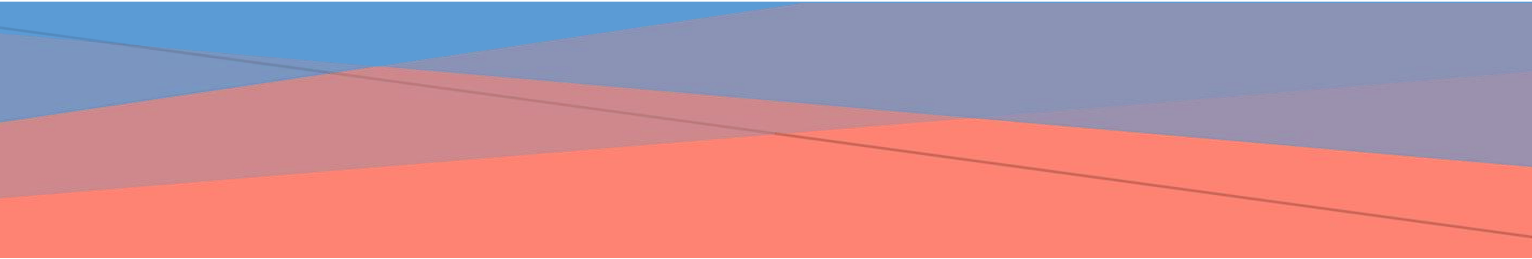
BLOC POSITIONS

The list of controversial elections with reported or assumed election fraud is so extensive that it can not be covered by this Study Guide. Therefore, it is important for you to get further knowledge on examples of election fraud that have affected your country. This chapter will focus on some recent examples of election irregularities and also elaborates on the bloc positions within the international community. Such examples are important to understand the different positions in the International Community as almost all countries signed the major Civil Rights resolutions (see more information in the next chapter) and claim for themselves to uphold common democratic values. Furthermore, this chapter provides you with some insights of empirical examples, current problems, and possible consequences regarding electoral fraud.

BELARUS PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2020

On the 9th of August 2020, the national election administration of the presidential election in Belarus confirmed the incumbent president Alexander Lukaschenko to win

⁷⁷ Pickles, S. E. (2018, May 1). *Securing the ballot | Report of Sir Eric Pickles' review into electoral fraud*. UK Government.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/545416/eric_pickles_report_electoral_fraud.pdf.



again by a 80% margin. Heavy doubt about the reliability of this result was raised by the opposition as well as by international institutions.⁷⁸ While the opposition reported administrative misconduct, international organisations like the OSCE were not permitted to perform any kind of observation and had therefore no access to review the electoral process.⁷⁹ These doubts led to massive protests especially in the capital Minsk. Belarussian security forces struck back immediately which led to 3,000 arrests only in the first night of protests.⁸⁰ The opinion of the international community divides into a western and an eastern bloc. While the European Union and the US do not recognise the election result and show solidarity to the protesters, countries like Russia and China as well as several former Soviet nations back the current president and condemn any attempt of interference by other nations.⁸¹

SYRIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 2021

On May 26th, the official Syrian presidential election took place in the government-controlled regions of the war-torn country. The incumbent President Baschar al Assad won the election by a landslide of 95% according to the Syrian administration. Interestingly, the electoral administration did not even try to hide any fraud and the regime made no attempt to present the election as free and fair. International monitoring did not take place and regime loyalists even documented themselves voting multiple times.⁸² The main reason why such an election was held is to signal dominance and to encourage loyalists but also to show the world that Syria has a

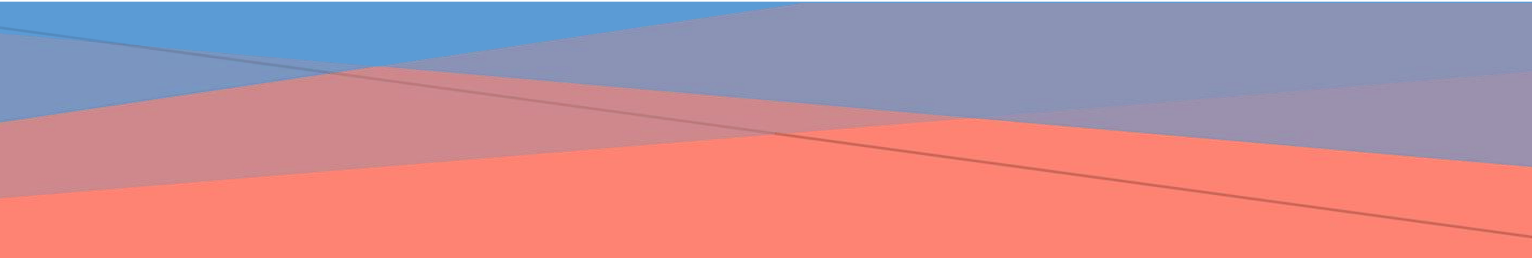
⁷⁸ BBC, 2020

⁷⁹ OSCE, 2020

⁸⁰ BBC, 2020

⁸¹ The Guardian, 2020; BBC, 2020

⁸² The Washington Post, 2021



functioning administration.⁸³ The main international response to this election came from a joint statement of the USA together with the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy who stated the election as neither free nor fair.⁸⁴

CHADIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2021

The Chadian Presidential Election took place on April, 11th 2021. The already 30 years ruling President Idriss Deby officially won the race by 79.32% of the ballots. However, most of the opposition parties boycotted the election calling it rigged.⁸⁵ In fact, Deby took a lot of action to stay in power. He modified the constitution in order to stay in power for more terms than intended and systematically suppressed opposition candidates. Independent observers called the election turnout low and unenthusiastic.⁸⁶ On April 20th, less than 10 days after the election, Deby was killed by rebels while visiting soldiers.⁸⁷ Even though a lot of evidence proved the incredibility of the election, international critique was low. Especially the United States and Western European countries withheld to condemn the voting process. This might be correlated with the fact that President Deby used to be allied with these countries in order to fight terrorism in the Sahel region. Furthermore, Chad hosts a large French military base on its territory.⁸⁸

This last example shows that bloc positions may differ from case to case. Even though the United States and the European Union mostly try to uphold democratic values and

⁸³ Deutsche Welle, 2021

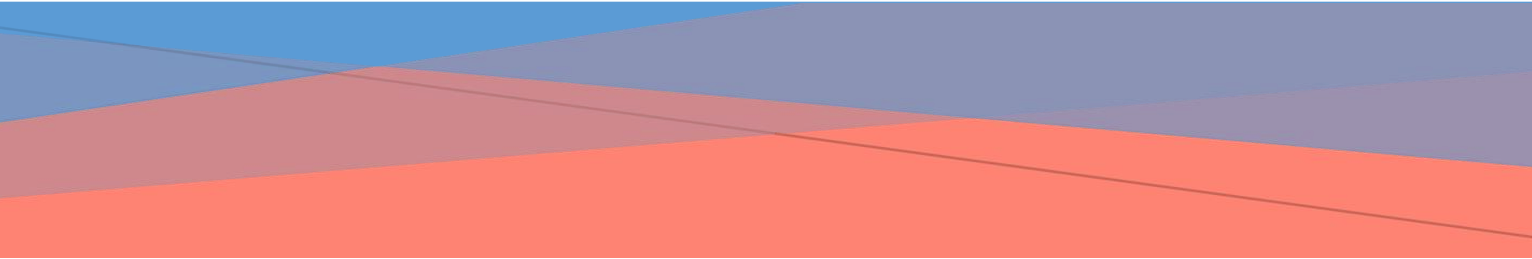
⁸⁴ Al Jazeera, 2021

⁸⁵ DW, 2021

⁸⁶ Campbell, 2021

⁸⁷ BBC, 2021

⁸⁸ Campbell, 2021



want to promote them worldwide, they still accept election fraud if it interferes with their interest. Additionally, these given examples have been of rather extreme and obvious nature even though electoral fraud or at least irregularities happen in all countries. Problems have been reported in most European and American countries within the past 20 years. In the US Presidential Election 2000, broken voting machines caused major problems. Vote losses have occurred in other well established democracies like Australia or Switzerland and the United Kingdom even had a police investigation in the year 2014 due to reported ghost voters.⁸⁹ Even if you are representing a well functioning democracy, you are still not liberated from mistakes or election fraud.

⁸⁹ Norris, 2015, p. 134



PREVIOUS UN INVOLVEMENT

Besides the already mentioned Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, further international agreements have been reached which form the current base of international action. This chapter summarises the main international agreements as well as past actions by the international community to secure the integrity of democratic elections.

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

After the adoption of the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, two more important agreements were reached that protect and strengthen the importance and the right for free and fair democratic elections. In 1976, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was passed by the UN General Assembly. Article 25 of this resolution awards every citizen with the right of voting and therefore taking part in matters of public affairs. Furthermore it stipulates the right of equal access to public service.⁹⁰

Another resolution concerning democracy was passed in 1999 by the Commission on Human Rights. The goal of this resolution was to promote democracy within the international community by presenting democracy to be a major factor of the realisation of human rights. Several factors were defined which should constitute a full democracy such as freedom of opinion, rule of law, fairness of administration or the right of political participation.⁹¹

⁹⁰ OHCHR, 1976

⁹¹ United Nations, 1999



PAST ACTIONS

Actions by international organisations and other global actors are limited to observations and electoral support. First observations have already been conducted in the 1960s by the Organisation of American States. A remarkable growth of such observations took place in the 1990s. Since then, more than 50% of elections in unconsolidated democracies have been observed by international organisations.⁹² The dominant observing organisations have been the United Nations, the European Commission and the OSCE, but also US sponsored organisations such as USAID have sent election observers to other countries.⁹³

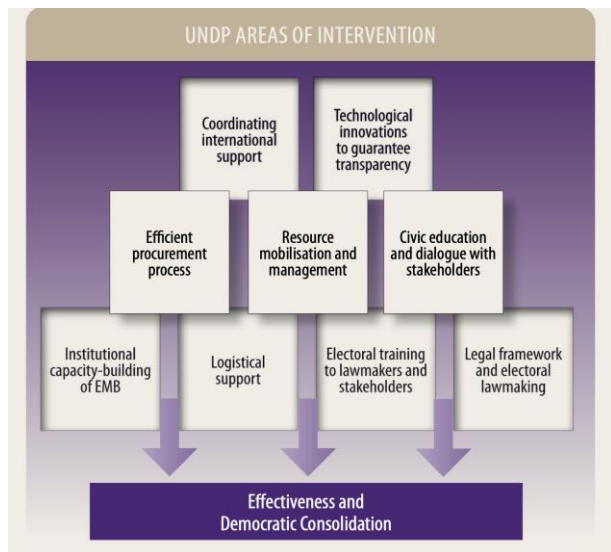
The leading UN agency to supply electoral support is the UNDP as this topic applies to its mandate. The UNDP has already assisted more than 50 countries in 342 electoral projects in the past 25 years. The main role of the UNDP focused on the promotion of democratic practices based on competitive, credible and genuine elections.⁹⁴ To fulfill this role the main goal is to provide assistance in Institutional capacity building, enhancing civic responsibility, providing strategic planning and coordinating international support within the affected countries. Concrete measures may be the drafting of legislation, the training of election staff, strengthening of media, election result management or civic education. Especially in a lot of African countries with limited logistical resources, such assistance could help to perform democratic elections while fulfilling the international standards made by the UN.⁹⁵

⁹² Daxecker, 2012, p. 504

⁹³ Norad Report, 2010, p.37

⁹⁴ UNDP, 2013, p. 5

⁹⁵ UNDP, 2013, p. 13

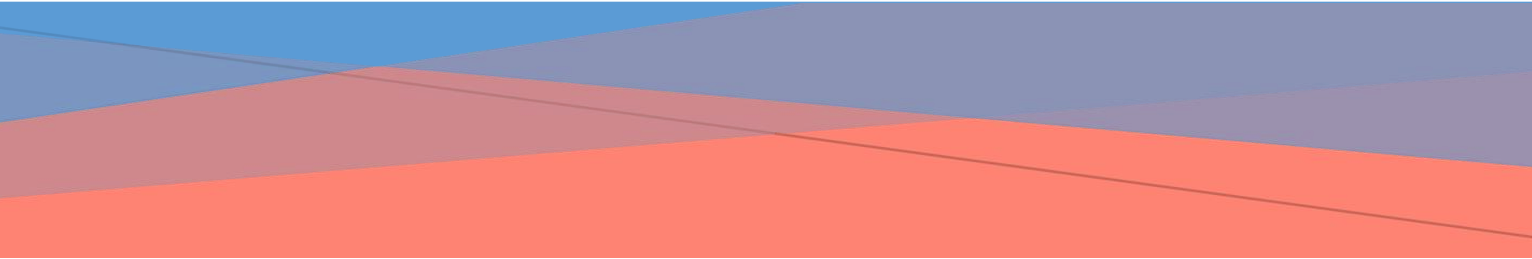


POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

During the discussion about the integrity of democratic election processes, you need to draw a distinction between the two previously discussed causes of electoral fraud:

1. Deliberate election fraud

A deliberate manipulation of election may happen directly by influencing the voting procedure or indirectly by the repression of democratic freedoms. Either an election gets manipulated by the government itself or by external actors. The main action to reduce this problem are international and independent election observers who report any irregularity of an electoral process. Nonetheless, these observer institutions are not always successful since they lack acceptance in certain countries and have little influence on the outcome. In order to find measures against deliberate election fraud you may focus on the creation of new observing methods or regulations that are internationally more accepted. Another possibility is to create new observer institutions within the UNDP framework that hold on certain values. Another option is to find ways to make initiators of election fraud more accountable within the



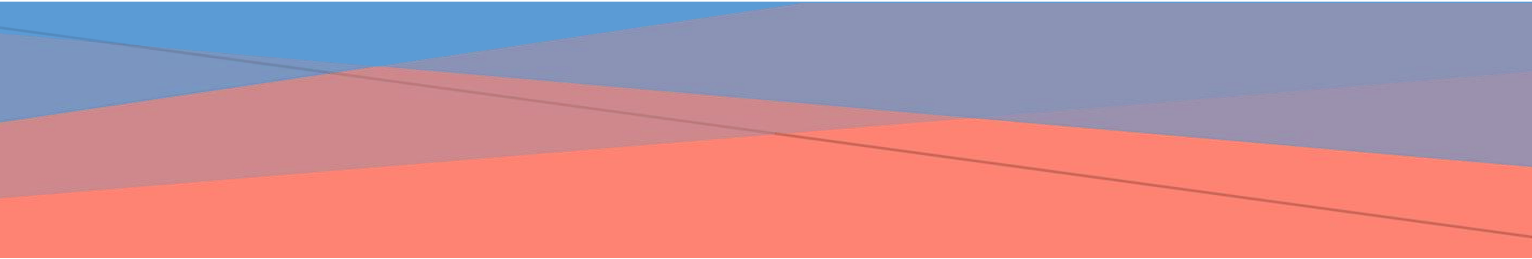
international community. Even though the UNDP cannot impose direct sanctions on member states, it can still put pressure on member states by shifts of their spendings.

2. Unintended election fraud

Unintended election fraud, or in this case election irregularities, is mostly caused by human error or technological problems. Therefore, every country can be affected by this kind of election fault and can adopt measures to improve its own situation. Even though the UNDP already supports states in avoiding such irregularities, no resolution has passed so far, which defines common technological and educational standards. Such standards would include but are not limited to levels of education of election staff, standardisation of voting procedures or common definitions of voter registers. As such measures might be less controversial on the international stage, the chances are high to pass a resolution on these points. If you are struggling to keep an overview on possible solutions, try to ask yourselves if a specific measure can achieve a certain goal. Try to orientate on the 26th Sustainable Development Goal while asking these questions.

3. Advice for a potential Resolution

For the Resolution writing process, you have to consider which problems can realistically be tackled in an international setting. The distinction within this chapter should provide you with possible paths you can take when writing a resolution. This does not mean that you have to limit yourself to one of these problem sets. Even though heated and polarised debates might be joyful, on one point you have to think of possible coalitions and a certain degree of consensus in order to be successful in the



end. Hence, try to avoid overloading the resolution with controversial aspects but rather focus on specific measures, of which at least a majority of the committee can live with. On one hand, you can create certain principles the international community wants to hold on but on the other hand, it is also important to implement some concrete measures. Maybe you want to invest into further staff education or create a new framework for election observing. You can get pretty creative but you always have to keep in mind that everything must be within the framework of the UNDP competence.



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Is the current practice of election monitoring sufficient enough or does it need further reform?
- Should countries themselves interfere in election processes or should measures only be taken in an international setting?
- Is your country affected by electoral fraud and which cause does it have?
- What technological improvements can be made to strengthen the integrity of electoral processes?
- What possible international consequences should a person or a state performing election fraud face
- Which parts of SDG 16 can be addressed by a potential resolution?
- How can the UNDP framework intensify support in weak or emerging democracies?



FURTHER READINGS

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>
- Press Release on the UN Resolution on Promotion of Democracy Adopted by the Human Rights Commission:
<https://www.un.org/press/en/1999/19990428.HRCN937.html>
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- Information Video about different electoral systems.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaxVCsnox_4
- Talk of Nic Cheeseman about his finding in the book 'How to Rig an Election':
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4KmflXnM8Y>
- Wrap up of Democratic history:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8opqrE2jSmA>
- The Role of UNDP in supporting democratic elections in Africa:
<https://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/library/reports/democratic-governance/democratic-elections.html>



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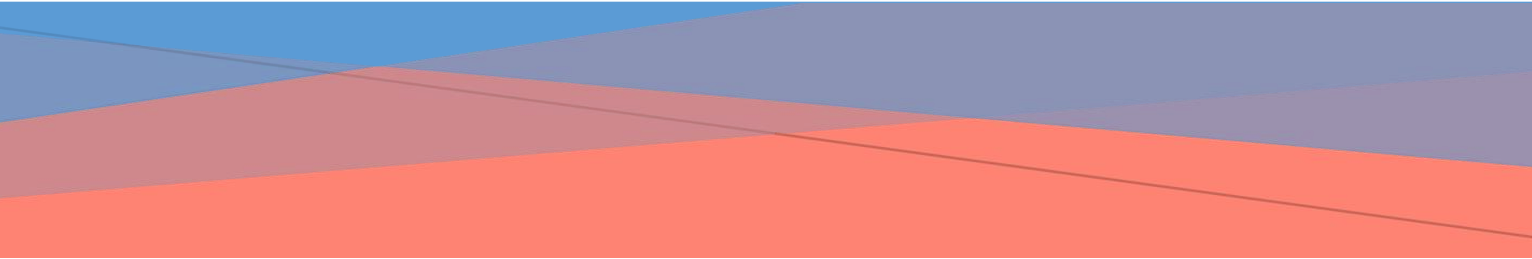
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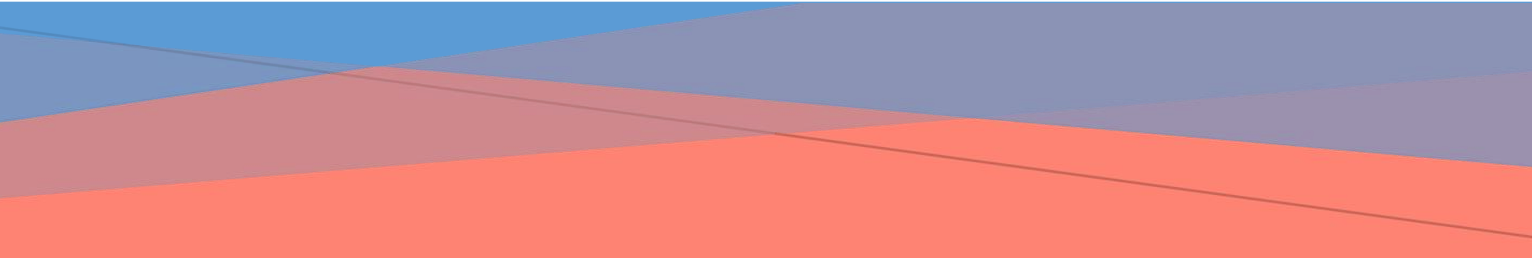
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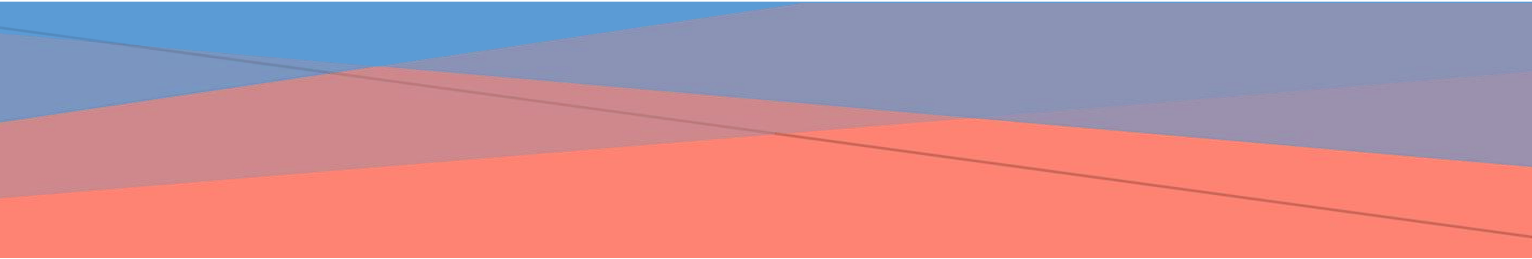
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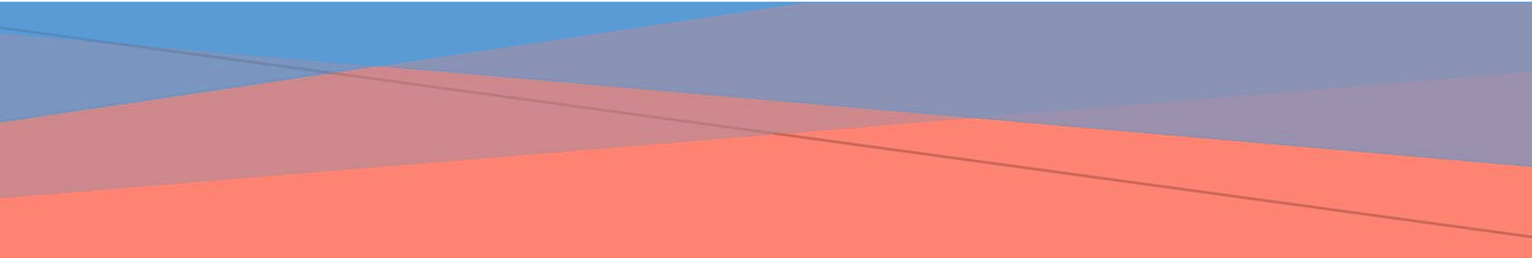
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