

# Enforcing Credible Elections to Uphold Democracy, Good Governance, And Global Peace and Security

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*Abstract- Credible elections involve transparency, inclusivity, and accountability. The enforcement of credible, free and fair elections in democratic states and entities would strengthen global peace, serving as an effective mechanism to prevent state fragility. This study explores the interconnected relationships between electoral integrity, governance quality, and international security. The study argues that the international community needs to shift from a passive approach to monitoring and observing democracy, grounded in respect for sovereignty, to an active enforcement model. The study highlights that fraudulent elections can threaten the stability of countries, thus leading to regional and global disputes with grave consequences for humanity and global peace. The issues and challenges to credible elections, as well as frameworks for their enforcement, were discussed. These dovetailed to the proposal of a new mechanism, termed ‘Responsibility to Safeguard Elections’ (RSE), to uphold electoral credibility and deepen democratic principles worldwide. RSE mirrors the UN Doctrine of Responsibility to Protect (R2P), and the study recommends that its implementation should be predicated on observed breaches of democratic principles and established redlines for credible elections in democratic countries. The RSE protocol would enhance good governance across nations and provide an active recipe for checkmating unilateralism and promoting global peace.*

*Index Terms- Credible Election, Democratic Principles, Leadership Legitimacy, Enforcement, Global Peace and Security*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, nations need strong and compassionate leadership to wisely manage their resources and enhance the lives of their people. Leadership plays a vital role in fostering good governance and overall development, guiding the creation of effective government structures that offer clear direction (Adekunle, 2023; Lord & Maher,

1991). Therefore, a leader’s main goal is to ensure the smooth functioning of government, and the quality and philosophy behind their leadership are key to successful governance (Anekwe, 2020). Often, responsible leadership naturally promotes good governance, and good governance supports responsible leadership. Countries that excel at managing and utilising resources effectively and efficiently are recognised for their good governance. Such governance is essential for the fair, sustainable, and wise use of scarce resources—both human and material—to foster national development, as outlined in the country’s laws, policies, and regulations. These frameworks give leaders the legitimacy to govern. Legitimacy influences how followers perceive their leaders and the extent of authority they recognise (Calleja et al, 2021).

In democratic societies, leaders come to power through elections, which serve as the formal means of renewing the social contract between the governed and their leaders (Gu, 2024). Today’s world faces numerous challenges that threaten governance and sustainable development, including corruption, internal security, terrorism, climate change, trade disruptions, rapid technological advances, and ‘Trumpism’ (Ugbo, 2025). However, some of these challenges would have been minimised if there were strong governance structures across all countries and their leaders were held accountable (Day & Hunt, 2020). A sure way of holding leaders accountable is through the conduct of credible, free and fair elections. An election in which citizens can freely determine who leads them without any inhibition. Such elections have been found to be lacking in many countries worldwide, and national leaders usually emerge regardless of the wishes and opinions of most citizens. The outcomes of these corrupted and undemocratic processes of leadership emergence are

among the root causes of the challenges we face in our contemporary world. Therefore, the enforcement of credible, free and fair elections in all democratic countries would significantly enhance global peace and security through effective governance.

Proper enforcement of credible elections in any jurisdiction or nation serves as a peaceful means of political competition. When credible elections are not properly enforced and guaranteed, it encourages poor governance and can lead to coups, civil wars, and the rise of authoritarian regimes. Despite the widespread acceptance of democracy as the preferred system of government, the enforcement of its core principle—free, fair, and credible elections—has steadily declined in many countries, including the US, often seen as a democratic stronghold (Gu, 2024). Consequently, numerous nations conduct fraudulent, sham, or rigged elections to seek international legitimacy while systematically suppressing opposition (Adekunle, 2023). This issue is especially common in many developing democracies, where security forces are deployed not to protect voters but to serve the interests of incumbent administrations. Although technological advancements continue to influence many aspects of life, ‘rogue’ leaders have failed to harness technology effectively to improve election credibility. Instead, they often use it to undermine citizens’ ability to make informed and genuine choices (Oyebanji, 2024). It is both inexplicable and contradictory that leaders emerging from these flawed elections receive international recognition and later implement policies and laws that harm their own populations. It is usually at the crisis stage that global attention focuses on the administration in such countries, with remedial strategies and programmes such as humanitarian assistance to oppressed and deprived citizens, sanctions against the leadership/oppressors, and the deployment of peacekeepers to maintain the peace. Moreover, in extreme cases, humanitarian intervention through the UN Doctrine of Responsibility to Protect (R2P). Why must the international community allow situations to deteriorate before intervening? Is it not possible for emerging national crises, especially those relating to leadership selection processes, to be curtailed in their infancy? This study wishes to provide workable answers to these questions.

This study, therefore, aims to explore the effectiveness of global electoral enforcement mechanisms in fostering good governance and security. It is noted that during national elections, many international, regional, and national organisations send observers and monitors to ensure that the electoral processes are free, fair, and credible. The study therefore evaluates key issues and challenges affecting the conduct of credible, free and fair elections in a democratic nation, while discussing ways to promote and enforce democratic tenets and principles. It will also examine challenges such as technological disruptions and political interference, especially from incumbents and ‘rogue’ leaders. Furthermore, the study will examine how flawed elections can impact global security. Based on these insights, the study will propose practical frameworks to strengthen the independence of election management bodies (EMBs) to enhance global capacity to support and enforce the conduct of credible, free and fair elections in democratic nations.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The methodology applied in this study for the analysis and evaluation of the core elements of conducting free, fair, and credible elections in any democracy is a qualitative, multidisciplinary research approach. The approach enables a systematic analysis of secondary sources, including peer-reviewed articles from the academic literature, policy studies, public declarations from governmental and non-governmental organisations, and open-source empirical accounts of both disputed and credible democratic processes. The selection of sources was intended to include a broad cross-section of theoretical perspectives and policy views, with special emphasis on scholarly work on the prevention of electoral malfeasance and the deepening of democratic principles in countries that practice representative and popular democracy.

This approach also provided sufficient grounding for practical recommendations that would enhance the international community's capacity to enforce credible elections in democratic countries worldwide effectively. The value of this study, therefore, lies in theoretical synthesis and interpretive analysis, using

empirical developments to illustrate how classical international dispute prevention and resolution mechanisms function in the contemporary context to enhance free, fair, and credible elections, thereby strengthening democratic tenets and promoting good governance, global peace, and security.

### III. THEORIES

The study is grounded on the Democratic Peace Theory propounded by Kant (1795) and the Great Man Leadership Theory popularised by Carlyle (1841). The Democratic Peace Theory asserts that established democracies rarely, if ever, go to war with one another. While democracies frequently engage in armed conflict with non-democratic regimes, their shared political norms, institutional checks, and economic interdependence create a peaceful relationship among themselves (Kant, 1795; Quackenbush, 2025). The belief that some scholars use the Democratic Peace Theory to justify assertions that democratic nations are, in general, more peaceful than nondemocratic countries has been disputed as controversial. However, the theory emphasises that democratic states do not fight each other because of established checks and balances within them. It is widely accepted that well-structured democracies are generally more economically viable, socially and politically stable and promote peaceful coexistence of citizens and neighbours. The Great Man Theory of leadership asserts that leadership is an innate, heroic quality and that leaders are born, not made (Carlyle, 1841; Cockshut, 2026). One of the key arguments of the theory is that pivotal moments in human history can be attributed to the influence and actions of a small number of individuals born with natural traits that enable them to rise above the masses and display uncommon leadership that preserved humanity. However, modern practices and various leadership development training models, including democratic practices, have made the Great Man leadership assertion largely untrue and obsolete. This notwithstanding, some autocratic leaders still engage in practices that suggest they are the 'great men'

### IV ISSUES AND CHALLENGES TO CREDIBLE ELECTIONS

#### 4.1 Sit-Tight Leadership Syndrome

Death is inevitable, and all mortal beings shall surely succumb to it. History is replete with leaders who believed their nations would not survive without them and thus use every trick in the political playbook to perpetuate their hold on power. The consequences of their unethical practices include bad governance, corruption, weakened state institutions, and systemic decay. Examples of such situations abound in countries worldwide. Countries such as Rwanda, Turkey, Uganda, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Russia, Iran, Syria, Egypt, Belarus, Ukraine, Eritrea, and several others are examples (Eyina & Hom-Manuel, 2025; Miller, 2015; Gu, 2024). Usually, global institutions and world powers remain aloof under the guise of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of independent states, as set out in the UN Charter, while at the same time, rogue leaders carry out systemic attacks on their own people (Ugbo, 2025; Olaopa, 2023; Harms et al, 2018). These leaders usually consider themselves as blessings to their nations and being 'born to rule' as propounded in the Great Man Theory. Because of the international community's inaction, the autocratic, sit-tight leaders' actions gradually affect the socio-political and economic well-being of their countries. Nevertheless, when atrocious acts escalate, the same international system struggles to remedy the devastating effects.

These undesirable occurrences could be minimised if the world set redlines and ensured that leaders were not allowed to perpetuate themselves in office, using unethical means. One way to ensure this is to systematically blacklist such a leader when any of the redlines is crossed. Thereafter, mechanisms could be established to remove the leader from office. While this author frowns at the unilateral actions carried out by the US in removing the Venezuelan president, it is assessed that blacklisting tyrants and autocrats in leadership of democratic nations and eventually ousting them via a global mechanism would enhance good governance and security worldwide. Across the world, populist leaders continually metamorphose into despotic autocrats, cracking down on the

opposition (Harms et al, 2018). Several such leaders have killed and silenced tens of thousands of opposition persons and voices, leading to unacceptable suffering of the citizens. The scale of human suffering in these countries calls for reinventing the way the world treats the sovereignty of independent states. However, a viable way to avoid such a situation is to prevent sham elections and make leaders accountable to their citizens. This would ensure leaders respect citizens' democratic rights as exercised through elections, thus minimising acts of tyranny. Accordingly, mechanisms must be implemented to enforce credibility in all national leadership selection processes to avert catastrophic consequences.

#### 4.2 Constitutional and Legislative Provisions

Legal and constitutional provisions govern democratic elections. These instruments confer legitimacy on the federation's government, as sovereignty belongs to the people in thriving democracies. Indeed, there can be no country without people, just as leaders are useless without popular support and acknowledgement (Arif & Dutta, 2024). One of the first actions of sit-tight leaders in perpetuating their hold on power is to amend the constitutional and other legal provisions (Gu, 2024). These amendments give such leaders the power and authority to undermine established requirements for vying for elective offices in the country, thereby continually remaining in power. Usually, these changes and amendments start gradually to test people's and other world leaders' reactions. If there is no significant resistance, the leader is emboldened to embark on more daring reforms and changes, albeit under the guise of national interests and prosperity (Walton, 2024). Global powers and international institutions, such as the UN, are therefore enjoined to continually monitor and be quick to condemn leaders who undertake unconstitutional and unethical changes to perpetuate themselves in power, rather than waiting for crises in those countries before intervening. This is because, after flawed elections, there are usually crises that may displace citizens and destroy national assets, triggering national and regional crises through internally displaced persons and refugees. This would disrupt international peace and security. The condemnation of undemocratic

practices would reinforce democracy worldwide, thereby aligning with the Democratic Peace Theory to enhance global peace and security.

#### 4.3 Capacity of Election Management Bodies

The EMBs receive various guidelines for conducting elections in several countries. The legal frameworks governing elections must meet international standards to ensure they are credible and widely accepted by all participants, including the citizens. Elections organised in accordance with standardised guidelines and monitored by respected, impartial international, regional, and national organisations to assess their compliance with set standards and prevent violations tend to be more credible and better received. These processes would strengthen EMBs' capacity in democratic nations while reducing the undue influence of autocratic leaders who seek to stay in power by any means necessary. A major way to improve EMB capacity across countries is to appoint individuals of impeccable integrity and credibility as heads of these organisations. Such appointments, supported by appropriate legal instruments, would bolster the independence of national electoral bodies (Olapa, 2023; Calleja et al, 2021; Arif & Dutta, 2024). Once EMBs have the right leadership and legal backing, it is crucial to ensure elections are carried out in accordance with established laws and that mechanisms are in place to enforce them, with offenders appropriately sanctioned. These steps would promote transparency in elections and safeguard their credibility.

Another important issue is the process used to collate election results. The EMB must have sufficient capacity supported by the necessary technological infrastructure to ensure that election results are properly and accurately collated. However, in many cases where election outcomes are disputed, the results collation process has been observed to allow for several forms of manipulation. Consequently, the leaders produced are viewed as not representing the wishes or aspirations of the voters; this scenario has occurred in Kenya, Pakistan, Mali, Belarus, the US, the Ivory Coast, Italy, and many other countries (International IDEA, 2025). Conflict also arises from processes carried out before the elections, especially the internal mechanisms for nominating candidates for elective offices. Oftentimes, the processes are

made extremely difficult, if not impossible, for credible and/or competent opposition candidates to emerge. The guidelines enacted for electoral processes are often unduly influenced by incumbents through compromises/connivance with the legislative arm or EMBs. This calls for proper scrutiny of the composition and operating guidelines of EMBs, as well as the established processes that lead to the conduct of elections. Once EMBs are properly composed, truly independent and financially stable, the credibility and transparency of the electoral process in democratic countries would be significantly enhanced. This would also improve the quality of elected leaders in such countries and, consequently, enhance governance credibility and accountability.

#### 4.4 Credibility and Accountability

An aspect of good governance and leadership legitimacy in popular democracy is the credibility and accountability provided by a vibrant parliament that keeps the executive arm of government in check, and an independent judiciary that dispenses justice without fear or favour. This situation brings peace and stability to the polity, as proponents of the Democratic Peace Theory observe. Indeed, good governance in a democratic setting is promoted by ensuring that checks and balances are in place within a country's government. Hence, popular democracy should have a responsive executive, a vibrant parliament and an independent judiciary (Chiocchetti, 2017). These arms of government are expected to fulfil their functions and uphold the rule of law. It is also a prerequisite for ensuring that people's wishes and aspirations are respected. Popular democracy also entails building institutions that serve the people and ensure the fulfilment of promises made by leaders elected by citizens. Citizens' participation in a democracy ensures representation from all parts of the country, thereby giving the government legitimacy.

The security and welfare of citizens are critical requirements for good governance, which in turn leads to rapid economic growth, improved standards of living, and the restoration of political stability (Eyina & Hom-Manuel, 2025; Large & Sisk, 2007). These democratic tenets remain far-fetched in most countries due to the combined effects of corruption,

weak institutions, autocratic leadership, and ineffective security agencies. Security agencies must be truly professional and people-centric, rather than designed to do the bidding of powerful leaders at the expense of citizens (Eyina & Hom-Manuel, 2025; Adekunle, 2023). Professionalism and commitment of security agencies, especially the police, would ensure that elections are credible, that laws are obeyed, and that internal security issues are addressed, while minimising pervasive and persistent corruption (Eyina & Hom-Manuel, 2025). Adherence to the rule of law promotes good governance and lays the foundation for a country's socioeconomic and political transformation. These requirements and provisions would enhance the accountability and credibility of elections while upholding democratic tenets. These are necessary for states to function well and for the world to be more peaceful and secure.

#### 4.5 Free Press

The fourth estate of the realm, the media, is expected to foster citizens' deliberations, participation, and understanding of issues in a functioning and vibrant democracy. The media holds leaders accountable and informs citizens and the global audience about events in a state. The media's functions, including those of a watchdog, educator, and facilitator of the public square, are critical to preserving democratic principles in any society. Therefore, the proper functioning and promotion of the free press strengthen democracy and serve as a remedy for credible elections (Carroll, 2025). It acts as a safeguard against undemocratic and authoritarian leadership in every country (Arif & Dutta, 2024). Therefore, global powers and institutions must ensure that all states respect press freedom and uphold the fundamental objectives and principles of democracy and humanity. The press is intended to monitor and check the actions of the other estates of the realm, functioning as the eyes and ears of the people by bravely exposing social and political anomalies in governance (Carroll, 2025). The issue of the free press is closely tied to defending the will of the people, which underpins the legitimacy of government authority. Since democratic principles now have worldwide appeal, effective management of state institutions, including the media, would help establish a strong, well-organised, efficient, and transparent bureaucratic system. Indeed, democracy

and good governance form the foundation of leadership legitimacy, social mobilisation, and development. Good governance, therefore, goes beyond providing basic infrastructure, services, and other developmental goals for society's well-being; it encompasses all that makes humanity and is critical to our continuous peaceful coexistence as a race and the preservation of the universe.

## V. FRAMEWORKS FOR ENFORCING CREDIBLE ELECTIONS

### 5.1 Prevention of Autocracy and Unconstitutional Amendments

Adhering to the rule of law strengthens good governance and creates the essential conditions for a country's socioeconomic and political development. Just as compliance with the rule of law also guarantees justice, equity, fairness, genuine progress, and growth, while fostering trust and confidence in the polity (Walton, 2024). This, in turn, drives the effective functioning of the constitution. It is vital that government institutions fulfil their respective duties and responsibilities. Furthermore, the legislature, judiciary, and executive must be genuinely independent, acting as mutual checks and balances as outlined and expected in a democracy. This encapsulates the core of the rule of law in any truly democratic nation. A former Supreme Court Justice in Nigeria, Honourable Justice Oputa J.S.C., accurately summarised thus; 'Rule of Law presupposes: (i) that the state is subject to the Law; (ii) that the Judiciary is a necessary agency of the Rule of Law; (iii) that Government should respect the right of individual citizens under the Rule of Law; (iv) that to the Judiciary is assigned both by the Rule of Law and by our Constitution the determination of all actions and proceedings relating to matters in disputes between persons, governments or authority.' (Adesina, 2020). These requirements are often violated in many democratic countries, resulting in poor governance.

The disrespect for the rule of law fosters despotic leadership and encourages bad governance. This may cause crises resulting from a gradual undermining of the law to benefit the executive and influential figures, thus compromising citizens' security and welfare. The survival of democratic principles and

resilience depends on upholding the rule of law and ensuring the independence of the judiciary and legislature, which facilitates justice and the enactment of enforceable laws. Laws are enforced by security agencies loyal to the state rather than to the ruling elites (Harms et al, 2018). Therefore, the UN, regional, and other international organisations should formalise and embed the neutrality of security agencies as a fundamental requirement and norm for credible elections in their frameworks for defining redlines and upholding democratic principles. Furthermore, leaders of democratic countries and those of their security agencies who have been proven to be partisan must be blacklisted and prosecuted internationally when such misconduct is confirmed. This prevents a determined and corrupt leader from manipulating courts, security agencies, and other institutions through loyalists, or from redrawing electoral districts to secure majorities that threaten national stability and well-being. It would also deter the rise of corrupt and unpatriotic leaders who seek only to enforce policies and laws to preserve their rule. Consequently, global mechanisms should be established to promote and safeguard the credibility of judicial appointments and legislative processes, preventing individuals or groups from hijacking or compromising the state's EMBs. The UN or any designated agency should coordinate worldwide efforts to ensure credible national leadership selection processes and implement mechanisms to guarantee free, fair, and trustworthy elections.

### 5.2 Building Robust Connective Institutions

A viable and functioning democracy is not based solely on state institutions but also depends on connective institutions such as the press and civil society organisations (CSOs). CSOs and the press often serve as viable lines of defence in a democratic society, holding leaders and all public institutions accountable to citizens. In many failed democracies, the decline of independent media (free press), labour unions, and strong CSOs has left the public without a vital link capable of resisting poor governance and undemocratic actions by the ruling elites (Carroll, 2025). Therefore, good governance involves safeguarding the core functions of CSOs and the press. This includes enacting laws that prevent governments from shutting down credible CSOs,

suppressing the free press, or silencing dissenting voices under any pretext (Carroll, 2025; Large & Sisk, 2007). Such legislation would ensure government accountability and enhance citizens' awareness and transparency within public institutions, ultimately fostering national development and well-being. It would also prevent the rise of the 'strongman' (Great Man) syndrome, thus establishing democratic peace. Addressing disinformation that polarises the electorate is fundamental to democracy and involves empowering citizens with real-time feedback tools on public service delivery to bypass state-controlled narratives (Carroll, 2025; Arif & Dutta, 2024). This is a crucial method for ensuring free, fair, and credible elections in any democratic nation.

A vital institution that would enhance the oversight and enforcement of the conduct of national elections is the UN and its agencies, established specifically for such purposes. To ensure that the UN and its agencies perform these crucial tasks effectively, clear boundaries must be established to identify when remedial actions are necessary. The press, CSOs, and the UN system should have reliable and undeniable mechanisms to determine whether these boundaries have been crossed, thereby triggering appropriate enforcement measures. Concerning the enforcement of results leading to the removal of sit-tight leaders who have been corruptly elected, the UN Security Council must approve the enforcement protocols. This is to prevent further escalation and suffering among the people. It is essential to state that the mechanism for ensuring credible, free, and fair elections should be grounded in a doctrine such as the UN Responsibility to Protect (R2P). Such a doctrine could be called the Responsibility to Safeguard Elections (RSE). The development of the RSE doctrine must be comprehensive to prevent abuse by irresponsible global powers that might seek regime change in a sovereign state for imperialist gains.

### 5.3 Neutrality and Monopoly of State Security Apparatus

The composition and operational model of the national security apparatus are essential to safeguarding and upholding democratic principles. Most democracies are often vulnerable to internal unrest and violence before being affected by global

geopolitics. Therefore, the security and policing agencies of any sovereign state must remain neutral, with the state retaining the monopoly on the use of force (Gu, 2024). The retention of the state's monopoly of violence replicates the Weberian notion of the legitimate use of force as an exclusive means of governance. This is crucial in viable democracies that mirror the Westphalian state model, as the use of force is essential to maintaining order, peace, and security. Credible, free, and fair elections are achievable when EMBs and security and policing agencies ensure a level playing field (Adekunle, 2023). Consequently, neutral security institutions must serve as buffers between political factions. The implication is that the government in power must relinquish the right to control and deploy security institutions, particularly in the conduct of elections. A practical solution would be for the EMB to have the authority to control and deploy security institutions during election-related activities. This will prevent any individual or group from oppressing or using repressive tactics to gain an undue advantage over opponents, thereby undermining the democratic legitimacy of the process. Such provisions for the control of the state's security and policing apparatus, ensuring its subservience to the EMB during electoral processes, must be included in relevant enactments.

The necessity for the state to retain the monopoly on violence is because when NSAs or criminal gangs can deploy lethal force, citizens become traumatised, and socioeconomic activities collapse. Therefore, the state and democratic principles cannot endure. The national security structure must, therefore, be strengthened to ensure it maintains the monopoly of violence and effectively combats NSAs with violent tendencies. This is necessary for any meaningful electoral activity to be conducted by the EMB, and for relevant international, regional and national organisations to effectively monitor/observe the conduct of elections and their processes. In this context, the UN and international organisations should apply the doctrine of RSE to intervene and support the deepening of democracy, allowing for troubled states to restore their legitimacy within their borders. To avoid issues linked to UN Security Council veto deadlocks, regional powers might need to develop internal mechanisms that focus on technical electoral support for democratic states and

their EMBs. This approach would enable regional powers to determine their own destinies regardless of the positions of the UN and veto power members. Such an arrangement aligns well with the desires of most regional organisations to address regional problems while preserving their uniqueness and strengthening their capacity. Indeed, the UN also seeks to promote regional autonomy by empowering and encouraging them through capacity building and technical support (Almakky, 2024).

#### 5.4 Economic Viability as a Democratic Foundation

Every country depends on a healthy economy to thrive. Prosperity in the economy also plays a vital role in keeping democracy alive and well, and this is facilitated by good governance. Good governance in any country, including democratic ones, encourages citizens to pay their taxes and attracts local and international investments. As the global community continues to promote democratic principles, it would be essential for these countries to be supported through deliberate, focused and comprehensive assistance to develop policies and strategies that boost their economies. Accordingly, the international community, especially the UN and its agencies, must promote fair trade practices, ensure security, embrace technological progress, and support socioeconomic activities that help nations grow (Chiocchetti, 2017; Ugbo, 2025). To make these efforts successful, establishing an independent judiciary and legislature, as well as other functional institutions of government, including CSOs and the press, would ensure the protection of private property and the enforcement of contracts. These safeguards against unfair practices and excessive pressure are critical to protecting developing countries and the Global South from the dominant activities of powerful countries and the hegemonic actions of the US, as seen under President Trump's America First approach.

Ideally, all human relations are conditional; therefore, the international community's support for promoting good governance and democracy in any country must be tied to verifiable benchmarks. Such conditional international support for countries should be based on clear standards for anti-corruption prosecutions and for the protection of media freedoms and human rights. These conditional supports, grounded in

mutual respect and trust, would help prevent dilemmas witnessed in countries like Venezuela, the Ivory Coast, Brazil, Uganda, Cameroon, and others, where election outcomes are judged to be manipulated and rigged in favour of incumbents. To bolster the credibility of elections in democratic countries, the UN, in coordination with international financial organisations, could establish a global electoral integrity fund to give EMBs financial independence from their national governments. This is important to prevent situations in which EMBs are deprived of funding or pressured to favour the incumbent government. While some critics might view international funding of EMBs as a loss of national sovereignty, it is important to recognise that a country's inability to fund its EMB undermines its independence and damages the credibility of electoral results.

#### 5.5 Application of Technology

Technology plays a vital role in minimising human errors and enhancing efficiency in conducting various affairs in today's world (Ugbo, 2025). It is also vital in enhancing the credibility of a nation's political elections. The deployment of technology would breed trust and confidence in the process implemented by the EMBs. Nations should therefore be encouraged to embrace and adapt emerging technologies, such as blockchain and other computer-based algorithms, to conduct elections, thereby reducing human interference to the barest minimum (Ugbo, 2025). Technology can be applied to voter registration, verification before voting, voting, collation of election results, display of results, and other stages of the election process (Adekunle, 2023; Gu, 2024). The use of blockchain and other cryptographic algorithms enhances the tracing of unauthorised, manipulative, and unethical adjustments and amendments within encrypted processes, as any such interference breaks the digital chain. In addition, AI detection tools can help ensure rapid detection of unlawful and malicious activities, as AI monitoring bots scan feeds in real time to detect voter suppression and other forms of interference (Gu, 2024). These technological enhancements also enhance security agencies' capacity to curb electoral crimes and facilitate the objectivity of human observers' monitoring duties.

It is assessed that some countries in the Global South lack the technological backbone to fully embrace and digitalise their electoral processes. The capabilities of technology have been demonstrated in several countries, as it provides layers of protection against tampering by autocratic, corrupt, and sycophantic leaders and their cronies who manipulate election outcomes. Technology-enabled tabulation has enabled the use of decentralised ledgers across various electoral hubs, as seen in South Korea, Ghana, India, and Bangladesh (Adekunle, 2023; Calleja et al, 2021). This means every vote cast is recorded as an immutable transaction. Once a precinct result is uploaded, it cannot be altered by a central server without breaking the cryptographic chain (Calleja et al, 2021). Again, the use of biometrics has improved credibility in several countries, reducing the incidence of multiple voting, 'ghost' voting, underage voting, and ballot-stuffing (International, 2024; Gu, 2024). These technological improvements would ensure that persons rightfully elected by citizens are empowered to govern, enhance the credibility of electoral processes, and reduce the need for enforcement through the application of the RSE doctrine. Therefore, global and regional powers would need to support these nations with the required technology. As the world deepens its reliance on technology, technology companies need to harmonise the algorithms and tools (blockchain/AI) used in elections to prevent monopolies and unethical marketing practices in procurement processes. These tools are also capable of assisting CSOs, the press and other citizens in holding the incumbents and the opposition accountable for the integrity of the process. Ultimately, technology will enhance the credibility of electoral processes by bypassing undue influence imposed on the EMBs, other institutions and interested individuals. Technology plays a vital role in minimising human errors and enhancing efficiency in conducting various affairs in today's world (Ugbo, 2025). It is also vital in enhancing the credibility of a nation's political elections. The deployment of technology would breed trust and confidence in the process implemented by the EMBs. Nations should therefore be encouraged to embrace and adapt emerging technologies, such as blockchain and other computer-based algorithms, to conduct elections, thereby reducing human interference to the barest

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## VI. THE PROPOSED DOCTRINE OF RESPONSIBILITY TO SAFEGUARD ELECTIONS

The application of humanitarian intervention, akin to R2P, termed RSE, to ensure electoral enforcement is being proposed as a proactive shift aimed at preventing mass atrocities and enhancing international efforts to promote democratic principles and good governance worldwide. Incidents of violence and dissatisfactions in outcomes, occasioned by disputed elections and its processes, have been documented in Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Belgium, Finland, India, the Ivory Coast, Georgia, the Gambia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Nigeria, South Korea, Ukraine, Turkey, the US and other nations across the world (International IDEA, 2025; Transparency International, 2024). These events could have been prevented if the international community had responded promptly by enforcing the will of the electorate through visibly free, fair, and credible elections. This underscores the importance of applying the doctrine of RSE as an electoral protection mechanism that could ultimately foster a peaceful and progressive world. Just as the circumstances that prompted the adoption of R2P at the 2005 UN World Summit mandate, it is important to note that several democratic nations, including the US (in the 2016 and 2020 elections), have experienced disputed elections. The adoption of the RSE Doctrine could help prevent the negative effects of unethical elections and avert disruptive aftermaths through early, justified interventions. It is important to note that systematic harassment and disenfranchisement of opposition members and the general populace are often evident long before elections (International, 2024; Adekunle, 2023). Consequently, RSE could be invoked early once established redlines for election integrity are

breached. For instance, incitements of hatred, ethnic and social discrimination, and other atrocity crimes, as well as neglect of citizens' security and welfare, serve as redlines that could trigger RSE before conflicts escalate.

The use of RSE as a credible elections enforcement mechanism by global powers might be seen as restricting the independence of sovereign states to manage their internal affairs; nevertheless, global peace and security concern everyone. Autocratic and despotic leaders in any country can diminish human dignity and undermine the security and welfare of their citizens; therefore, safeguarding human dignity is a shared responsibility for all humanity. Once RSE is implemented, responses could escalate from non-military measures to military interventions, depending on the resilience of the ruling elites. The non-military approach of RSE begins with observation to detect violations of redlines. It progresses with targeted sanctions against ruling elites, electoral officials, heads of security agencies, and other state actors complicit in compromising the electoral process. The UN and the International Criminal Court (ICC) could also issue global arrest warrants for these officials and elites, followed by prosecution at the ICC, such as the actions taken for war crimes. Although the use of force to enforce election outcomes may be controversial, it is suggested that when there is convincing evidence that the will of the citizens is about to be subverted, the UN Security Council should, as part of the RSE resolution, authorise the deployment of troops to facilitate the inauguration of legitimate leaders. This could prevent mass killings of citizens, as seen in Kenya, and deter other election riggers from violating the voters' will. It is noteworthy that the regional bloc in West Africa, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), has set a precedent by deploying troops to enforce the 'will of the people' in the Gambia in 2017.

A key feature of the proposed RSE is the composition of international mediators to arbitrate in contested polls impartially before any inauguration. These mediators would be skilled individuals with the expertise and technical know-how to review all election-related concerns. Once again, the UN will have the sole responsibility for establishing this body

of international arbitrators and mediators, carefully considering the country's context and peculiarities. Another aspect of non-military enforcement under the proposed RSE involves deploying UN-backed 'cyber-guarantors' to protect a nation's digital voting infrastructure, as a safeguarded humanitarian asset for electoral integrity. The cyber-guarantors are to work alongside the country's EMB to ensure that technological infrastructure and architecture adhere to international standards for conducting credible, free, and fair elections and are protected from interference by hackers and cybercriminals. Architectural and infrastructural deficiencies beyond the domestic EMB's capabilities will be borne by the UN as part of its contributions or mandate in executing the resolution authorising the RSE for the country. These elements of the RSE are vital for ensuring credible elections worldwide and would naturally promote good governance, socioeconomic development, and global peace and security.

The application of RSE could transform many emerging democracies and developing countries with limited economic and military might. However, several nations may oppose implementing RSE, citing sovereignty concerns. Such opposition could cause a significant rift in global geopolitical relations. Major powers might try to impose their ideologies on countries within their 'sphere of influence' by inciting RSE at the UN Security Council. Examples such as Russia in Eurasia, China in Southeast Asia and the US in the Americas illustrate the tendency of major powers to undermine the sovereignty of smaller nations. RSE might also divide supporters of the Westphalian system from Liberal democrats. At the same time, autocratic leaders and regimes could view it as a strategic move to expand imperialism and pursue regime change. However, this proposal is not intended as a tool for imperialists, but rather to uphold democratic integrity (as in Democratic Peace Theory) and enhance national development through good governance and the promotion of global peace and security, as stated in the UN Charter. Another envisaged concern about the implementation and application of the proposed RSE is whether the UN and other global powers can enforce it in nuclear-armed, autocratically governed nations. This could pose a moral dilemma for the UN, as RSE might be used to influence election outcomes in small,

resource-poor countries, as ECOWAS did in the Gambia, without enforcing the same in the Ivory Coast. Nevertheless, its adoption would be vital to increasing the UN's relevance in international geopolitics. It could help curb the excesses of veto-holding nations in embarking on unilateral actions, as seen in Iran, Venezuela and Ukraine.

The concerns identified as capable of undermining the applicability of the proposed RSE to uphold electoral credibility in democratic countries are relevant. Therefore, the enforcement and implementation of proven, carefully defined redlines are vital to applying RSE to allay fears about some of these concerns. While geopolitical shifts and technological advancements continue to influence critical priorities, it remains essential that established variables, such as the professionalism and patriotism of security forces, the independence of the EMB, the integrity and effectiveness of the judiciary, and the freedom of the press and CSOs, are maintained and respected. Any breach of these core variables or state-sponsored violence against voters must be grounds for applying and implementing the proposed doctrine of RSE in a country. These measures would help ensure that the proposed doctrine of RSE circumvents the pitfalls of the R2P and promotes good governance, human rights, and global peace and security.

## VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The enforcement of credible elections is a key pathway to genuine peace and security in democratic countries globally. The lack of credible electoral outcomes in many nations across Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and other continents is linked to poor governance, leading to failed democratic processes. Such failures and poor governance contribute to internal conflicts, corruption, and inadequate welfare services, prompting citizens in these regions, especially in affected countries, to migrate, thereby creating large numbers of refugees. Therefore, strengthening democratic principles is a worthwhile investment that the UN, other international organisations, and well-intentioned individuals should continually support. This would

improve the functioning of state institutions and reinforce democratic values, leading to better, more accountable governance.

Issues and challenges to credible elections include sit-tight leadership syndrome, abuse of constitutional provisions and their unethical amendments, lack of EMB independence, and issues related to press freedom, accountability, and governance credibility. The establishment of viable frameworks to prevent autocratic leadership and associated abuses is considered, with the need to build robust institutions to deepen democratic tenets and thereby promote the credibility of election outcomes. Again, the neutrality of EMBs, the judiciary, the legislative, and other government institutions, especially security agencies, is vital. The application of advanced technology is crucial to electoral integrity and the ease of enforcing electoral outcomes, but a state's economic viability promotes the adoption of technological solutions. Given the issues, challenges, and requirements for conducting credible, free, and fair elections, the study recommends that the UN adopt the proposed RSE doctrine as a mechanism to enforce such elections worldwide. The implementation and application of the proposed RSE should be governed by the following:

- a. Approval by the UN Security Council after clearly defined redlines are breached.
- b. Cascaded implementation via non-military and military approaches.
- c. Appointment of arbitrators/mediators to resolve electoral issues.
- d. Establishment of the Global Electoral Integrity Fund to ensure EMBs are well funded and truly independent.
- e. Deployment of UN-backed 'cyber-guarantors' to protect a nation's digital voting infrastructure.
- f. Promote the harmonisation of technological standards and algorithms used in electoral processes.
- g. Deployment of UN-constituted security forces to enforce the inauguration of rightfully elected leaders.

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