

Establishing procedures to stabilize post-election crisis situations

by *Pauline Thomeer*

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Introduction

Post-election crisis have been a problem in several countries for many years. In recent years, this problem has surfaced not only because in some countries, like Belgium, no government has been issued since the elections, but also because in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, one refuses to relinquish power to the legitimate president of the country. Today, the world is facing many post-election crises. The following countries; Belgium, Côte d'Ivoire and Egypt, are perfect examples of this new phenomenon. These crises have led to an entire new issue: establishing procedures to stabilize post-election crisis situations. These three political catastrophes have different origins, however they all have had a serious impact on the global community. They all currently face a period of political instability, which will or has lead to economic and social issues.

Key Terms

Emergency law: Under this law, constitutional rights are suspended, police powers are extended and censorship is permitted. An example of the use of this policy can be found in Egypt. It has been in effect since 1967, except for a 18-month break in 1980.

Federal Elections: These are elections only concerning the senate and parliament. In Belgium, this kind of election is used above the six different forms of elections.

General Overview

It is often the case that elections in a nation can reveal their political weaknesses or instability. To better understand the issue at hand and its wider implications it is important to take an in-depth look into a number of nations where elections have sent the country into an instable situation.

Egypt

The first round of parliamentary elections in Egypt in 2010 occurred on November 28th 2010 at the People's Assembly. The results did not reflect the will of the people and thus lead to violence. The National Democratic Party (NDP) was the source of the trouble, since it was the dominant party at the People's Assembly. The head of the party was Hosni Mubarak, the president of Egypt from 1981 until 2011. The NDP was clearly the most powerful party at the People's Assembly, since it held 90 percent of the seats. Based on the results of the first round of voting, the Egyptians citizens would have an NDP controlled People's Assembly for the next five years. Despite the opposition against this party, the NDP still pushed its way through the Assembly, and began to establish an absolute majority in the Parliament. However, its political program did not satisfy the Egyptian citizens. The NDP had been in control of the

country since 1981, and Egypt was facing a social and economic instability when the NDP was elected for the sixth time.

The second round of parliamentary elections in Egypt were held on December 5th 2010. Unsurprisingly, the NDP took over the Assembly, and was again elected.

A month later, on January 25th, a non-violent civil resistance occurred, known as the Egyptian Revolution of 2011. The Egyptian citizens were mainly complaining about the lack of free election, freedom of speech, corruption among the government and police brutality. The protests demanded the end of Hosni Mubarak's regime, the end of the emergency law, freedom and justice.

In reaction to this revolution, the government established ground rules such as a curfew, which was not respected, nor by the citizens or the security forces. The protests, which were peaceful protests at first, became violent. Approximately 850 people were killed, plus another 6000 injured. The capital city, Cairo, witnessed several clashes, and was considered a war zone.

Hosni Mubarak refused the protester's demands. However, forced by the revolution, he had to dissolve the government, and appointed Ahmed Shafik, minister and former chief of Egypt's air force, to establish a new government. On February 11th, however, the 18-day revolt forced him from power. He resigned as head of the country. The effective head of state that replaced Mubarak during the period of crisis announced that up until new elections could take place, the military would take control.

Recent Events

In May, the nation's prosecutor ordered Hosni Mubarak to stand trial in connection with the killing of unarmed protesters during the 18-day revolt. Politically and economically, the country remains fragile. The protestors also focused on high unemployment, food price inflation and minimum wages. The prospect of new elections later in the year have led to various debates concerning the economy of the country. Many proposals were made to radically change the economic system of the country, and asking the state to be more involved. Politically, the citizens still witness various clashes between the police and protesters.

Belgium

Belgium has recently become the country that has gone longest without forming a government, even lasting longer than Iraq. The federal elections in June 2010 handed a plurality to a Flemish separatist party. All parties in Belgium are either Flemish or Francophone. This encourages all voters to vote in favour of their own language community. Tensions between Wallonia and Flanders have been noted, and have become very pronounced over the last few years. It can be explained by economic and ideological differences: Flanders is more of a right wing, whereas Wallonia is more left wing.

Tensions have become even clearer with the 2010 elections, where the biggest party winner was the radical Flemish-nationalist and separatist New Flemish Alliance (N-VA). Its leader, Bart de Wever, along with the N-VA, found it difficult to make compromises with the Francophone parties, as they claimed that the Belgian political system no longer worked. What prevents Belgium from forming a new government is

that agreement on the government itself and reforms have not yet been reached. The main issue concerning the agreement on a new government is that the N-VA would like to make a step forward concerning the Flemish's autonomy. This is where a clash occurred between the N-VA and the Francophone parties. The political crisis in Belgium is based on the fact that some parties would consider splitting up the country. In reaction to that, many other parties have raised their voices against this consideration. Splitting up the country is not part of the current negotiations: it would be extremely difficult to come to a shared consensus.

Recent Events

On October 9th 2011, after 480 days of negotiations, it was finally agreed that reform was needed in the Belgian government. The five reforms that the next government will have to work out are the following:

- A political reform, where the elections will take place every five years instead of four, where the senate will be reduced in power and number of mandates.
- A new Finance Law, which should enforce the economic base for revenues for the regions, and where fiscal autonomy will be put into effect.
- A better coordination in the Brussels region, concerning the mobility and the security of Brussels.
- The separation of Brussels-Halle-Vivorde, which was in fact, the main problem of this 2010 post-election crisis in Belgium. Flemish and Francophones will therefore be separated into communes.

Côte d'Ivoire

On November 28 2010, a presidential election runoff vote was held in Côte d'Ivoire. This was held between Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Ouattara. These two candidates had won the most votes during the first round polls held in October of the same year. Both candidates had claimed the win. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) declared that Alassane Ouattara was the actual winner, for that he won the elections with 54.1% of the votes, against Laurent Gbagbo, who had 45.9% of the votes. The international community, including the United States, therefore asked Gbagbo to cede the presidency to Ouattara. Gbagbo refused and instead appealed the IEC decision to the Ivorian Constitutional Court, which, on December 3rd, pronounced Laurent Gbagbo to be the actual winner of the presidentials. Mr. Gbagbo therefore claimed to have been fairly elected, and decided to remain as President of Côte d'Ivoire. Ouattara, backed by the U.N., the United States, France, the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) asserted that he was the legitimate President of Côte d'Ivoire. The electoral standoff created a political crisis: the country now had two presidents and two governments. It also produced tensions and violence among the citizens, resulting in many deaths and human rights abuses. The UN peacekeepers had to intervene: the events seemed to be reigniting the events of the civil war that took place in 2002 in the country. 10 000 blue helmets were sent on mission in the country. The UN Security Council later adopted a resolution recognizing Alassane Ouattara as the legitimate President of Côte d'Ivoire. The international community was also supportive, being unanimous in their condemnation of Gbagbo's refusal to relinquish power to Ouattara.

On December 16th 2010, Ouattara and his supporters marched to Abidjan, the capital city of Côte d'Ivoire, in order to seize the government's buildings. Several clashes ensued. On April 11th, Laurent Gbagbo was arrested, and Ouattara was finally able to settle as President of Côte d'Ivoire. Overall, the crisis caused a displacement of 800,000 to 1.1 million people.

Major Parties Involved

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)

This commission is an election management body, in charge of overseeing the implementation of election procedures worldwide.

Possible Solutions

It is very difficult for the UN to know when to intervene in a situation of post election instability, as it involves a certain infringement of sovereignty. For post elections such as Belgium, a country who suffered from not having a government for over a year, it is rather important to make sure that some temporary reforms are put into place, in order to keep the country stable. These could be implemented by the UN themselves, or a specialist body who would evaluate the country's needs before deciding what form of help is most necessary. Post-election crisis can also become violent, and the military forces become required, which has been the case in Egypt.