

Forum: General Assembly Second Committee

Issue: Combatting non-governmental lobbying to uphold transparency and democratic values

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Introduction

The Second Committee of the General Assembly in IELMUN'26 will handle many issues regarding various global circumstances. This chair report aims to examine the current conjuncture in regard to the second agenda item of the committee; 'combatting non-governmental lobbying to uphold transparency and democratic values'. In this report, delegates may expect to see various key terms, and their definitions-regarding the issue as well as the roles of several states, non-governmental organisations and the roles of supranational organisations; emphasizing the inadequacy of the current global political conjuncture in terms of transparency and the upholding of democratic values. Timeline of past events, previous attempts made in regard to an aspiration for effective solutions and possible solution ideas for the issue will be also shared with the delegates.

Definition of Key Terms

Policy Capture

Defined as the process by which groups with the most commodity and power exert a disproportionate influence over public policies, leading to public statements being diverted away from public interest toward narrow, vested interests. This exacerbates inequalities and undermines democratic values and trusteeship in governmental situations.



Undue Influence

Defined as the abuse of lobbying practices through clandestine or deceptive evidence, or the manipulation of public opinion, which can result in suboptimal policies and outcomes alongside undesired health ramifications, inaction on climate policies, excessive regulation to protect incumbents, or insufficient regulation to correct market failures.

Convert Lobbying/Shadow Lobbying

Lobbying conducted through front groups, think tanks, or third-party consultants that obscures the true identity or interests of the ultimate client, allowing actors to influence policy inspection.

Cooling-Off Period

A regulatory provision requiring former public officials to wait a specified period of time before taking up roles in industries and areas of expertise that they previously regulated, intended to reduce conflicts arising from revolving-door practices.

Lobbyist Register / Transparency Register

A formal registry of lobbyists maintained by the public authorities, intended to be easily accessible and user-friendly, providing disclosure of who is lobbying, on behalf of whom, and for what purpose.

Commercial Determinants of Health (CDoH)

A framework, expanded by the World Health Organisation since 2021, that examines how commercial actors and their practices- including lobbying in sectors such as alcoholic beverage, gambling, tobacco, ultra-processed foods, and fossil fuels, shape health and policy outcomes.



Disinformation Lobbying

A strategy involving the creation of uncertainty about scientific or factual evidence undermines regulation, often by attacking the credibility of scientists and science-based information NGOs.

Background Information

The Qatargate Scandal

The Qatargate Scandal was a corruption scandal that broke out in the European Union on 9 December, 2022. The police raided several properties in Brussels and confiscated over a million Euros in cash while arresting a substantial quantity of suspects, including a former Greek member of the European Parliament and the Vice-President of the European Parliament, Eva Kaili. Leaders of several



non-governmental organisations and other members of the European Parliament, including well-recognised names like Antonio Panzeri, were also detained as a result of the police raids. While Eva Kaili denied any charges, her partner -also detained- admitted his role in the suspected crimes. Antonio Panzeri, alongside other members of the European Parliament, agreed to a plea deal while several other members of the European Parliament denied any wrong-doing.

Fig. 1: Eva Kaili, the former Vice-President of the European Parliament. She is known as the main actor of the Qatargate scandal of 2022.



The scandal's process of building up was narrated by Francesco Giorgi, partner of Eva Kaili and a parliamentary assistant. According to Giorgi, Qatar has continuously funneled cash to Antonio Panzeri and Eva Kaili tried to influence voting processes in favour of Qatar. The bribes related to Qatar, and somehow the Mauritanian Government, were -according to Giorgi- funneled through a non-governmental organisation named "Fight Impunity", which was co-founded by Panzeri himself.

The scandal also turned out to involve the Mauritanian Government, as the 8th president of Mauritania bribed Panzeri with 200.000 Euros to lobby for Mauritanian interests in the European Parliament. The Moroccan Government was also included in the scandal as Panzeri received a governmental honour from the King Mohammed VI of Morocco. The Moroccan ambassador to Poland, Abderrahim Atmoun, brokered a deal in 2019 with the Moroccan general intelligence agency, ultimately agreeing that Giorgi and Panzeri would receive 50.000 Euros a year as long as they lobby for Moroccan interests in the European Parliament. After the scandal, the European Parliament revised its code of conduct in September 2023, enforcing transparency among members of the parliament as a precaution for other possible cases like Qatargate or the occurrence of potential third-world laundromats. Possible backdoor agreements and the existence of unresolved conflicts of interest have been partially prevented by these revisions, though it is not entirely possible for one to argue that corruption and lobbying efforts are completely exterminated from the European Union. Necessary precautions to ensure transparency and respect for democratic values still hold key importance as the European political structurality shifts to anti-democratic tendencies.

Azerbaijani Laundromat

The Azerbaijani Laundromat is a money-laundering scheme led by the government of Azerbaijan between 2012 and 2014. The scheme involved the transfer of funds across shell companies based in the UK to a Danish bank in Estonia. A sum of 2.9 billion USD was laundered throughout the process, and saw their use in



Laundromat Ownership Step-by-Step

A Realistic Guide to Operating
and Growing Laundromats



silencing international organisations', including the European Union's, criticism on the human rights violations in Azerbaijan perpetrated by the Aliyev administration.

Fig. 2: A guide to money-laundering published under the guise of a regular laundromat ownership manual.

The funds originated as halves from the International Bank of Azerbaijan and several holdings of governmental agencies. These funds were secured in shell companies (i.e. an established company without significant purpose besides existing as a legal entity, and only holding limited assets unlike regular companies), which all had banking accounts in a Danish bank (Danske Bank) branch in Estonia. This shared access to the bank enabled seamless transaction of funds without alerting an audit.

These recovered funds were later used in lobbying efforts, both in the United States and European Union, to generate a wave of appraisal by them towards the Azerbaijani government, covering-up the shady affairs of the country in human rights breaches, and other grave crimes against the people.

The Azerbaijani Laundromat should not be confused with its intertwined Russian counterpart that cleared 80 billion United States Dollars between the years 2010–2014, the Russian Laundromat.

Major Countries and Organisations Involved

United States of America

The United States hosts one of the world's largest lobbying industries. Lobbying in the USA is protected under the First Amendment as a democratic tool that allows



citizens and organizations to influence policy, though concerns remain regarding its misuse by wealthy interest groups. The disproportionate financial resources of lobbying groups can lead to unequal influence in decision-making, undermining transparency and equal representation within democratic institutions.

State of Israel

Israel possesses one of the most active lobbying environments, with NGOs, religious organizations, business associations, and advocacy groups playing a significant role in policymaking. Concerns are that certain well-funded interest groups may enjoy disproportionate access to decision-makers, resulting in unequal influence over public policy and raising questions regarding transparency, accountability, and equal democratic representation. Furthermore, pro-Israel lobbying organizations, especially those operating in the United States or other foreign states, such as American Israel Public Affairs Committee, have been suspected to steer the foreign policies of sovereign nations towards more pro-Israel political stances.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

The most outstanding international standard-setter in lobbying transparency. In 2010, the OECD adopted the Recommendation on Principles for Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying, the first actual international instrument that has been addressing the undue influence and inequities regarding the power of influence in lobbying.

Transparency International

The key global civil society watchdog regarding transparency and the safeguarding of democratic values. Transparency International has called on governments at UN anti-corruption conventions to approve strong resolutions regarding political finance. Transparency International has also been arguing that unknown interests are able to use their wealth and influence the necessary governmental and non-governmental entities to buy access to power and shape



political decisions in unforeseen circumstances from unforeseeable windows, ultimately ravaging global balances of power.

Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO)

An EU lobbying watchdog that has documented covert influence by repressive regimes, fossil fuel companies, and corporate interests for nearly a decade. Must be taken into consideration as one of the most promising providers of globally-ensured transparency in regard to protecting basic human rights and democratic values alongside the rule of law.

UNCAC Coalition

A global network monitoring the necessary implementation of the UN Convention Against Corruption in a well-adjusted manner.

Open Government Partnership (OGP)

Multi-stakeholder initiative that promotes governmental transparency and accountability to the public and non-governmental entities..

WHO

Launched a new program of work in regard to the commercial determinants of health in 2021, which drew attention on how harmful industry lobbying can shape global policy-making strategies regarding matters of health.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee is an American pro-Israel lobbying group that advocates its policies to the executive branches of the United States. As one of several pro-Israel lobbying organizations in the US, the organization was called the American Zionist Committee for Public Affairs. AIPAC's stated purpose is to lobby the Congress of the United States on issues and legislation related to Israel, which they achieve through regular meetings with members of



Congress events. It also strongly supports US aid to Israel, particularly regarding military needs.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
Entirety of 2012	The Azerbaijani Laundromat gets implemented.
Late 2014	The Azerbaijani Laundromat completes its function with over 16.000 bank transactions.
September 2017	The Azerbaijani Laundromat is deciphered after many investigations have been concluded regarding the matter.
Spring of 2022	The Qatargate investigation takes place after Antonio Panzeri is placed under surveillance by Belgian Authorities regarding suspicions of corruption.
July 2022	Information regarding the bribery from the Moroccan government was passed to the federal prosecutor's office, eventually leading to a formal police investigation.
9 December 2022	In regard to the ongoing police investigation, the Belgian police conducted 20 raids simultaneously; successfully raiding 19 addresses across Brussels and gathering



	valuable information regarding the investigation.
September 2023	The European Parliament revises its rules of procedure and code of conduct, aiming to prevent more cases like Qatargate while promoting transparency and democratic values among member states.

Relevant UN Resolutions and Other Documents

- **UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC, 2003):** Formed by UN Resolution 55/61 (2000), UNCAC stands as the single most comprehensive legal instrument to date in the battle against corruption. It requires states and parties to actively implement effective and well-coordinated anti-corruption policies that promote and effectively supervise the participation of non-state actors and the principles of democratic values, the rule of law, transparency and accountability.
- **UNCAC Articles 10 & 13: Articles 10 and 13 of UNCAC:** empower the public with the right to seek, receive, and disseminate information about corruption, and they emphasize public participation in decision-making processes.
- **UNCAC CoSP Resolution 10/1 (Atlanta, 2023):** Resolution 10/1 reinforces UNCAC Articles 10 and 13, urging states to actively involve civil society to enhance transparency and accountability.
- **UN General Assembly Special Session Against Corruption (2021):** The General Assembly declared that member states are ultimately responsible for ensuring transparent, free and fair elections; including but not limited to transparency in the funding of candidates for elected public office, political parties, and electoral campaigns with a view regarding the prevention of corruption whilst ensuring accountability of governmental and



non-governmental entities, actively promoting sufficient, transparent and democratic governance and reinforcing popular trust in public institutions.

- **OECD Recommendation on Principles for Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying (2010):** Based on the evidence and lessons learned from comparative reviews, country case studies, and an analytical framework endorsed by governments, the OECD Council adopted in 2010 the Recommendation on Principles for Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying, covering 10 core principles including the supervision of lobbyist registers, requirements regarding disclosure, the structurality of cooling-off periods and the prevention of the exploitation and loophole generation regarding revolving door policies.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

New rules are usually made after an incident of great discomfort happens, like a scandal, instead of being planned ahead proactively to prevent possible problems. This means there are often many loopholes alongside parties with bad faith and a severe lack of transparency..

A review by the OECD found that even though lobbying is getting more attention and some countries are making rules about it, these efforts are mostly just making people more aware of the risks and a little more open. But often, it's only because of big scandals that anything gets done.

For years, civic groups and NGOs pushed hard for change in Hamburg, and finally, in 2012, the city passed a transparency law. This law requires public authorities to actively share a lot of documents with the public. It's often seen as a great example of open government and transparency in Europe. Democracy-international has been a key player in this effort, showing that with persistence and pressure, real progress can be made towards more accountable and transparent governance.

Many countries have measures in place to keep an eye on lobbying, like rules to stop public officials from aiding their future employers. But when it comes to actually seeing what's going on, it's often hard to get a clear picture. This is because the lists



of lobbyists and the information they have to share about what they're doing and who they're talking to are often not very detailed. As a result, it's tough for the public to really understand what's happening and hold people accountable.

When the UNCAC came into effect in 2005, it included a promise to be transparent about how candidates and political parties get their money. But over the past twenty years, putting this into practice has been inconsistent, and as a result, there are still some major weaknesses that threaten the honesty of political systems.

Possible Solutions

- Implementing practical and drastic measurements like creating monetary supervision mechanisms to prevent government lobbying
- Issuing diplomatic sanctions and economic reparations like embargoes for states incompliant with United Nations legislature
- Ensuring economic transparency among members of supranational/international organisations by promoting active dialogue
- Proactively encouraging active collaboration between non-governmental organisations and international entities by introducing new platforms for mutual agreements
- Safeguarding democratic values by promoting trust and transparency among member states of the United Nations via campaigns and supranational summits
- Establishing bodies consisting of member states that aim to ensure the necessary steps are being taken and strongly followed through by necessary parties
- Resolving conflicts of interest among member states by appealing to necessary structures
- Preventing bribery by implementing stricter controls on both government budgets and individual financial transactions of individuals taking part in legislative environments
- Working in cohesion with non-governmental organisations that work for transparency and democratic values to ensure global harmony regarding the matter of transparency



-Recognising the influence of non-European states and collaborating with their governments to eliminate any further possibilities of bribery or lobbying with bad faith.

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