

Houston Area Model United Nations Standard Committee

LEGAL



Chair | Jordan Zheng
Topic B: Foreign election interference laws
concerning the use of financial influence or fraud
Houston Area Model United Nations 51
February 5 & 6, 2026

Note to Delegates

Welcome to HAMUN 51!

My name is Arya and I'm so excited to meet all of y'all! A little about me: I'm double majoring in Electrical and Computer Engineering and Math at UT Austin, and some of my hobbies are rock climbing and guitar. I've been doing MUN for 6 years, 4 of which have been at HAMUN! I also compete on the collegiate circuit as a part of TexMun. If you want to talk about any of these, feel free to come up whenever.

I chose to chair Legal because I value definition-based debate. I feel this is one of the more precise committees, where the verbiage y'all use matters. I can't wait to see what y'all talk about!

Y'all's primary objective for the 2 days should be having fun. From my past competing and chairing experience, MUN can be stressful, but it doesn't necessarily have to be. Get to know the people around you, and remember that these 2 days are just 2 days. You've got this! If you have any questions or concerns about anything, come up or send us an email.

I also understand this is a competition, so I want to be transparent in how I evaluate awards. The 3 primary skills I take note of are 1) public speaking ability, 2) collaboration, 3) logical flow, and 4) correctness when using definitions. The best piece of advice I can give is feel confident in your ability to be here. You're here for a reason, so own it :) I'll be giving feedback after the end of each day.

See y'all soon!

Sincerely,

Arya Chakrabarti

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Vice Chair Letter

Delegates,

Welcome to HAMUN 51 and the LEGAL Committee!

My name is Jordan Zheng, and I'm a freshman at the University of Texas at Arlington studying Political Science through the CAP program. I'm incredibly excited to serve as your Vice Chair this year.

I joined Model UN as a freshman in high school, and it quickly became one of the most influential parts of my academic life. MUN pushed me to grow—both as a person and a speaker. After four years in MUN, three HAMUN conferences, and the awards I've received, I've learned that the most rewarding part of this experience isn't success, it's the process. It's the research, the moments when debate finally clicks, the unexpected collaborations, and the challenge of stepping outside your comfort zone.

LEGAL is one of my favorite committees because of the committee's role in shaping and interpreting the frameworks that guide international order. As you prepare, I encourage you to look closely at your country's policies, relevant conventions, and court rulings. Understanding the “why” behind your positions will make committee far more impactful and enjoyable.

Most importantly, have fun enjoy the experience. Dive into the topics, take risks, collaborate boldly, and let yourself grow from the process. I can't wait to meet all of you at conference and watch the debate unfold.

Good Luck and See you in February!

Jordan Zheng

Vice Chair of LEGAL

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Topic Relevance

Foreign election interference through financial influence is gaining attention as one of the most urgent governance challenges facing the international community. As political systems become more interconnected, external actors increasingly exploit weak campaign-finance laws, digital payment systems, and loopholes in party-funding regulations to influence election outcomes. This issue directly affects state sovereignty, a foundational principle of the UN system, as well as the political independence protected under Article 2 of the UN Charter.

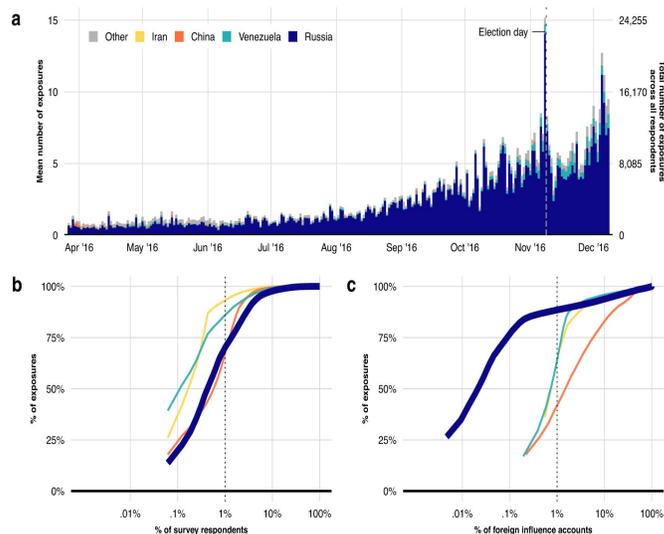
Covert external funding can deepen social divides, empower extremist groups, or shift national policies in ways that do not reflect the will of the electorate. International institutions warn that these tactics erode democratic legitimacy. In developing states and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), where elections can be highly sensitive to external money, the consequences are even more dramatic.

For LEGAL, this topic sits at the intersection of international law, political rights, and transnational financial regulation. Addressing it requires balancing sovereignty, freedom of political expression, and the need for international cooperation. As Member States increasingly call for stronger norms, transparency standards, and information-sharing, this issue is becoming a central part of global discussions on safeguarding democracy. Delegates will need to consider not only national frameworks, but also multilateral solutions that enable countries to defend their political processes against hidden, foreign-backed financial influence.



Background Information

Foreign election interference via financial influence refers to external entities covertly or indirectly funneling money into a country's political processes to sway election outcomes. This can take the form of illicit donations to candidates or parties, funding of third-party groups, bribery of voters or officials, or other fraudulent financing schemes. Such interference exploits the increasing globalization of finance and technology, enabling foreign actors to influence domestic politics from afar.¹



¹Nature Communications "Fig. 1: Exposure to tweets from state-sponsored accounts over time" 9 Jan 2023

In addition, anti-corruption experts emphasize that illicit political financing is closely tied to broader patterns of corruption. Foreign-funded vote-buying, bribery, and covert financial influence can undermine the rule of law, weaken public trust, and compromise the integrity of democratic institutions

In fact, a recent study found that over **70 countries** still do not prohibit foreign donations to political campaigns, allowing outside funds to flow in largely unchecked and enabling external actors to exploit significant gaps in national oversight systems, disclosure requirements, and enforcement mechanisms. These vulnerabilities make it easier for malign foreign interests to embed themselves in domestic political structures, often influencing policy outcomes long after elections conclude.³

In short, money has become a favored weapon of malign foreign actors, and without strong safeguards, electoral sovereignty can be bought or bent by outside interests, threatening both national stability and democratic resilience.

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FIGURE 3. INDICATORS OF CLEAN ELECTIONS DECLINING, 2000–2023

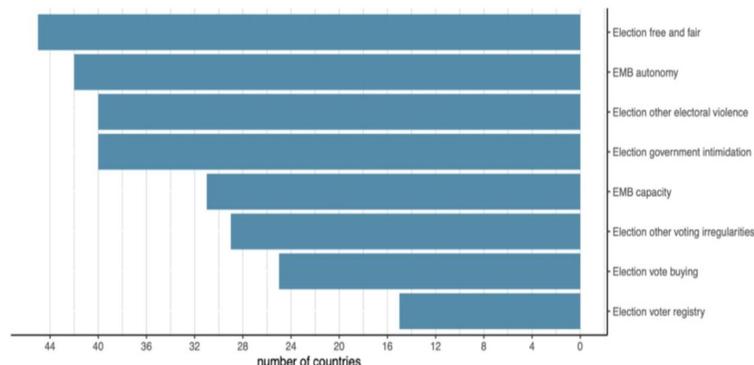


Figure 3 plots the number of countries declining statistically significantly on the indicators of the Clean Elections Index. An indicator is declining statistically significantly if its 2023 values is smaller than its maximum value between 2000 and 2022, and the confidence intervals do not overlap.

¹ See Nord, M. et al. 2024. [Democracy Report 2024: Democracy Winning and Losing at the Ballot](#), V-Dem Institute.

Threats to integrity.

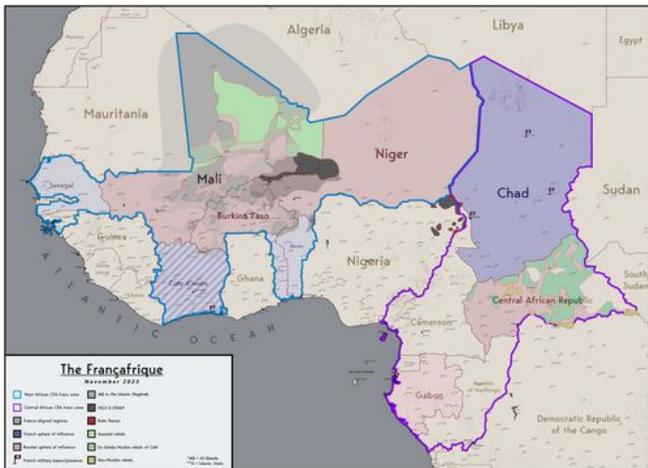
Image: V-Dem Institute

⁴ Marina Nord, Juraj Medzihorsky & Staffan I. Lindberg, *Clean Elections Across the World and World Regions, 2000–2023* (V-Dem Institute, University of Gothenburg, March 2024),



Topic History

Interference in elections is not a new phenomenon – great powers and rival states have long sought to influence each other’s political outcomes, including through financial means. During the *Cold War*, for instance, the Soviet Union covertly bankrolled sympathetic parties and propaganda (“active measures”) in Western democracies, while the United States (via the CIA and other channels) funded political campaigns or groups abroad to counter communist influence. Very Notably, France’s notorious “*Françafrique*” policy in its former African colonies involved funneling money and favors to preferred leaders, entrenching foreign influence in those elections.⁵



⁵French sphere of influence in West Africa in November of 2023”
by Abdurrahman AbdulMoneim 22 June 2022

However, the **modern landscape** of foreign election interference began to attract major attention after the Cold War, as globalization and deregulation of finance made moving money across borders easier. In the 1990s and in the 2000s, many countries started enacting laws to curb foreign funding in politics – for example, the United States banned foreign campaign contributions in federal elections, and the *Council of Europe* in 2003 recommended outlawing donations from abroad to parties in its member states.⁷

International agreements also acknowledged the issue: the **United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC)** (2003) urges countries to enhance transparency in election and party financing and to cooperate across borders against bribery and illicit funding. Notably, UNCAC Article 7.3 calls on states to **consider regulating the funding of candidates and political parties**, as a measure to prevent corruption. In a 2021 special session, the U.N. General Assembly declared that **transparent, fair elections and transparency in political funding are crucial to “preventing corruption, ensuring accountability... and reinforcing trust in public institutions.”**⁸

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Despite these steps, enforcement and consistency have lagged. By the 2010s, only **about half** of all countries had **full bans on foreign political donations**, and even those often contained loopholes.

In the European Union, concerns over election interference led to a 2023 “*Defence of Democracy*” package aimed at harmonizing rules and closing legal loopholes that previously allowed foreign funds to infiltrate European Parliament elections.

Similarly, other international forums (G7, OECD, etc.) have started developing standards to counter **transnational illicit financial flows** in politics. Still, **gaps remain**: enforcement is uneven, and definitions of what constitutes “foreign influence” vary. Some democratic governments with strong institutions have successfully prosecuted covert foreign donors, while weaker states struggle to even detect sophisticated funding networks

The history of this issue shows a constant **tug-of-war** between ever-evolving tactics of interference and the legal/diplomatic efforts to combat them.

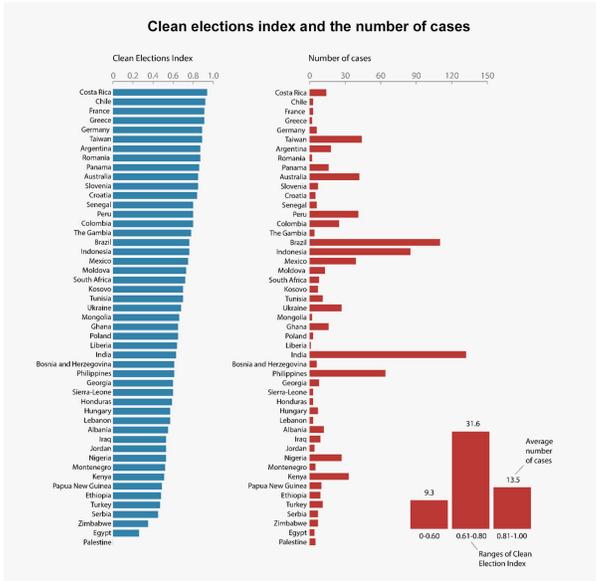


Figure 5 International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, “The Information Environment Around Elections,” International IDEA,

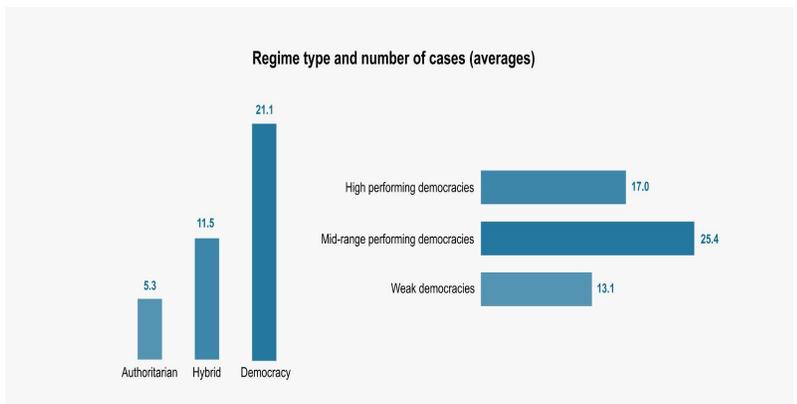


Figure 3 International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, “The Information Environment Around Elections,” International IDEA,



Case Examples

Concrete cases of foreign financial interference span **every region**.

European security agencies have uncovered clandestine funding routes: money funneled via shell companies, offshore accounts, or intermediaries to support certain parties or referendum campaigns. In Eastern Europe, **Russian financial interference** has been especially blatant. In **Moldova**, authorities recently **seized nearly \$1 million in cash** carried by individuals arriving from Moscow – money allegedly intended to illicitly fund a political party ahead of elections.³ In addition, reports indicate that Russia has spent hundreds of millions of dollars since 2014 to influence elections **worldwide**, including direct payments to politicians and parties – often routing funds through murky channels and even using **cryptocurrency** to evade detection.⁹

Western European democracies have not been immune either: the 2022 “**Qatargate**” scandal in the EU exposed how foreign governments (Qatar, Morocco) bribed Members of the European Parliament to sway decisions, revealing the ease with which external money could **purchase political influence** at the heart of Europe.⁴

In regions of **Africa, Asia, and Latin America**, foreign financial influence often intersects with development aid, investments, or business interests. External state actors and wealthy foreign-linked businesses have at times leveraged economic clout to “*buy*” favorable election outcomes. **A dramatic example** occurred in **South Asia**: in Sri Lanka’s 2015 election, a Chinese state-linked company building a major port was found to have **channeled large payments** into the campaign of the incumbent president. The recipient, President Mahinda Rajapaksa, had in return agreed to extensive Chinese investment terms – illustrating a quid pro quo of **foreign money for policy influence**.¹⁰



TOPIC B: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- **How can nations strengthen their legal frameworks to definitively prevent and punish foreign financial interference?** For example, should all countries ban foreign donations outright, and if so, how can loopholes (like use of shell companies or third-party donors) be closed effectively? Would international model laws or agreements help standardize protections?
- **What mechanisms are needed to improve detection and enforcement?** Consider the role of independent electoral commissions, financial intelligence units, and international law enforcement (e.g. Interpol/Europol) in monitoring election financing. How can resource-constrained states build capacity to audit campaign finances, trace suspicious funds, and prosecute violations that may involve overseas actors?
- **In the age of cryptocurrency and online fundraising, what new tools or regulations can address the challenge of anonymous or cross-border digital donations?** Should there be a global effort to track and regulate political payments made via cryptocurrencies, and how can countries cooperate to identify illicit digital transactions without stifling legitimate political fundraising?
- **How can the international community cooperate more effectively to stop illicit political funding?** Since foreign election interference by its nature transcends borders. For instance, how can the U.N., OECD, or other multilateral bodies facilitate the sharing of information about foreign interference networks, impose sanctions on proven violators, or assist countries in protecting their electoral integrity? What diplomatic steps might be taken against states that consistently engage in funding political influence abroad?
- **Finally, how should countries balance the protection of their sovereignty with the need for external support in elections?** (For example, distinguishing malicious interference from beneficial support like international election monitors or legitimate democracy assistance funding). In crafting solutions, how do we ensure measures against foreign influence do not inadvertently restrict genuine civil society cooperation or political activism across borders?



TOPIC A APPENDIX & SOURCES

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