

BSAMUN 2024

G20

Promoting Transparency and Accountability in Governance

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Introduction

Corruption within governments has major impacts on the perceived legitimacy of bureaucracies and the members associated. Increased levels of transparency can boost democracy and strengthen the efficiency of governments. Finding innovative solutions can significantly help reinforce civilians' confidence in their bureaucracies and mark a step closer to a desirable governing body. Promoting transparency and accountability within governments is no easy task and will demand a collaborative effort from all member states to formulate a realistic and effective resolution. A solution could be clearly explaining government finance to help foster trust in the government and the way that they operate. Whilst such a solution holds promise for the accountability and transparency of governments, the majority of solutions come with unintended repercussions and these should be acknowledged and carefully evaluated before being implemented.

Key Terms

Governance: Governance is the process of making and enforcing decisions within an organisation or society. It encompasses decision-making, rule-setting, and enforcement mechanisms to guide the functioning of an organisation or society.

Transparency: Transparency means that decisions taken and their enforcement are done in a manner that follows rules and regulations. It also means that information is freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement.

Accountability: An assurance that an individual or organisation is evaluated on its performance or behaviour related to something for which it is responsible.

Economic prosperity: Economic prosperity refers to a country's economic growth, security, and competitiveness.

Regulatory frameworks: Encompass the set of rules, guidelines, and standards established by governmental bodies or regulatory authorities to oversee and control the

operations of governments. Effective regulatory frameworks are integral to ensuring the transparency and accountability of bureaucratic systems.

Corruption: Corruption is a form of dishonesty or a criminal offence which is undertaken by a person or an organisation which is entrusted in a position of authority, in order to acquire illicit benefits or abuse power for one's personal gain.

Proactive strategies: Involve anticipatory and preventative actions taken by government institutions and regulatory bodies to address potential risks before they escalate. These strategies are forward-looking and aim to enhance the institutions' ability to remain transparent and accountable in the way that they operate.


Rule of law: The rule of law signifies a legal framework in which all individuals, including government officials, are subject to and accountable under the law. It ensures equal treatment, protection of rights, and enforcement of contracts, thereby fostering trust and confidence in institutions and promoting economic development.

General Overview

The core issue with a lack of transparency and accountability in governance is the potential abuse of power to exploit the resources of a country leading to the personal benefit of those in power while leaving the citizens of that country at a disadvantage with the chance of human rights (such as freedom of speech) being violated.

The Watergate Scandal in the United States from 1972-1974 involved a politically motivated burglary led by the president at the time, Richard Nixon. The abuse of power revealed a widespread obstruction of justice and the lack of accountability of the republican party to the American citizens. More recently, the 2008 financial crisis exposed the irresponsible regulation of governing bodies on financial institutions (risky lending and bundled mortgage securities for mortgages in America) which led to a domino effect impacting the lives of many all around the world. Increased transparency through reforms in the KYC regulations could have stopped this crisis from occurring.

In examining the broader implications of a lack of government transparency and accountability, a connection emerges with global displacements and the provision of international humanitarian aid. As an example, if a government were to spend large amounts of tax revenues in mining industries that were harmful to the environment and



affected many communities, then citizens would be forced to migrate to a different location to avoid the pollution, what's more is that these spending would not be publicly announced, therefore the public image of the government would not be negatively affected thus the no repercussions would follow.


Government corruption can lead to an economic crisis and a lack of financial stability to invest into the economy which can be detrimental to the growth and development of a country. The ability for a government to avoid the temptation of corrupting political parties or bribes relies heavily on their ability to remain transparent as the civilians are aware of where exactly their tax revenue is being spent. A more stable and honest government can significantly reduce the negative impacts civilians could experience, addressing the socio-economic consequences of large-scale displacements.

Several concerns and obstacles stand in the way of implementing effective measures to promote transparency and accountability within governments. Corruption within governments can make it very hard for political leaders to be incentivised to act in the best interest of their citizens. In LEDc's, other problems emerge such as resource constraints as governments lack the funding or expertise to implement the policies to improve transparency and accountability. Furthermore, cultural and societal norms towards transparency can also pose challenges and therefore those differences between countries should be acknowledged and then addressed.

This general overview sets the stage for a more in-depth exploration of the complexities surrounding the enforcement of transparency and accountability within governments. The historical backdrop, coupled with the intersecting realms of global displacements and humanitarian aid, offers a nuanced perspective on the multifaceted challenges and considerations inherent in this critical discourse.

Major Parties/Countries Involved

United States: The freedom information Act (FOIA) plays a critical role in promoting accountability and transparency within the country. The Act proactively discloses certain types of information including national security information and military spending for example. Later in 1935 the Social Security Act was passed by the U.S. congress, the legislation requires regular reports over what the government has spent their tax revenue on providing transparency to their citizens. On the other hand, there have been



many cases where there has been a lack of police accountability that has struck many protests and debates with there being no actual change in the system as of May 2023. This lack of accountability can also be seen in its Military actions that have led to civilian casualties outside of conflict zones along with questions about the transparency of investigations into incidents such as air raids and drone strikes.

China: Campaigns led by the Communist party's Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) investigate and prosecute thousands of officials if convicted of abusing power and corruption. Another example of Chinese communist party adhering to transparency is their later responses and supply of information on the COVID-19 genetic sequences along with collaboration with international organisations on research. However, China has restricted certain activities from political opposition and keeps a tight control of what media the population are exposed to, causing issues with censorship and repression. Moreover, even though the CCP is transparent in some aspects, it has faced persistent criticism for its human rights practices, including concerns about the treatment of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang. The government has been accused of human rights abuses, mass detentions, and forced labour. China has limited access to the region for independent investigations, raising questions about transparency and accountability.

The United Kingdom: The UK bribery Act and the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) both serve as enforcers that promote accountability and transparency within the UK government. The IPSA oversees MP's expenses to help maintain public trust and confidence in the parliamentary system. Yet, like any country, has faced instances where concerns about accountability and transparency in government actions have been raised. The decision to join the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 was highly controversial. The UK government, led by Prime Minister Tony Blair, justified its involvement based on intelligence indicating the presence of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in Iraq. However, after the invasion, no such weapons were found. This led to widespread criticism, and inquiries were conducted to examine the decision-making process. The Chilcot Inquiry, published in 2016, concluded that the intelligence had been presented with a certainty that was not justified and highlighted failures in the planning and execution of the Iraq War.

International partnerships: The Open Government Partnership (OGP) includes over 70 countries. This partnership has five main objectives which are to promote transparency,

enhance accountability, empower citizen participation, improve service delivery and combat corruption.

North Korea: Known for its secretive regime, North Korea lacks transparency in its governance and is often criticised for human rights abuses. On top of this, their secret from international scrutiny by limiting the numbers of foreign observers and the locations they visit combined with the lack of information that both the citizens and other countries have on the Economic and political status of North Korea should a lack of transparency with many allegations of Human rights abuses without any confirmation and accountability taking place.

Syria: Ongoing conflict and political instability in Syria have led to challenges in transparency and accountability. One significant example began in 2011. Throughout the conflict, there have been numerous reports of human rights violations, including the use of chemical weapons, torture, and indiscriminate attacks on civilians. One notable incident occurred in 2013 when a chemical weapons attack took place in the Ghouta region near Damascus. The Syrian government was accused of being responsible for the attack, which resulted in hundreds of civilian casualties. The government initially denied involvement and blamed rebel forces, but there was substantial evidence implicating the government. In response to international pressure and the threat of military intervention, Syria eventually agreed to join the Chemical Weapons Convention and pledged to dismantle its chemical weapons stockpile. However, there have been ongoing allegations of the use of chemical weapons in subsequent years, with the government often denying responsibility and hindering international investigations.

Belarus: The government of Belarus has faced criticism for its handling of elections and suppression of opposition, raising concerns about accountability. Notably in its 2020 elections, the announcement of President Lukashenko's overwhelming majority of votes led to many protests within Belarus that claim the elections as being fraudulent and demand accountability. The response to this was harsh crackdowns on the protesters and even reports of abuse of human rights. All the while the government has refused to give any dialogue with opposition groups of international organisations and they continued to refuse concerns about human right violations along with the electoral integrity of the country.

The International Monetary Fund: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) encourages countries to enhance fiscal transparency and strengthen governance frameworks to combat corruption and promote integrity.

The World Bank: The World Bank supports developing countries in strengthening countries policies to promote transparency, providing expertise and financial assistance to introduce measures that are effective in their intended function. Some regions that have been positively affected by their assistance is Indonesia where public financial management reforms have taken place, along with financial inclusion, strengthening of anti-corruption efforts and more. However, it still faces challenges in assisting more countries due to political resistance and many complex socioeconomic factors.

G20 Countries: Collectively, the G20 nations, including major economies like Japan, Germany, and the United Kingdom, are involved in shaping international policies and standards for promoting transparency and accountability in governments through collaborative efforts and regulatory initiatives.

UN Involvement & Relevant Resolutions

The Open Government Partnership (as stated before), was established in 2011 through the United Nations. It mandates that the participating countries commit to a set of principles with the aim to improve transparency, accountability and citizen participation in governance. These principles include: Open Data Initiatives, commitments to release government data in machine-readable formats, making information more accessible to the public; Anti-Corruption Measures, Steps to enhance transparency in public finances, procurement processes, and other areas to prevent and combat corruption; Citizen Engagement, Initiatives to involve citizens in decision-making processes, such as participatory budgeting, public consultations, and citizen feedback mechanisms; Access to Information, Measures to strengthen laws and policies that ensure the public's right to access government information; E-Government, Commitments to use technology for improving government services, increasing efficiency, and enhancing citizen-government interactions; Natural Resource Transparency, Efforts to promote transparency in the management of natural resources, particularly in extractive industries. These principles aim to achieve a sense of collaboration between the state and it's citizens to achieve the best standards of living with the country.

Another notable initiative is the Open Data Charter. The Open Data Charter aims to promote the adoption of principles and best practices for open data. These include: Open by default, where governments commit to make data open by default and information should be public unless there is a valid reason to keep it close; Accessible and Usable, meaning the general public (citizens) should be able to consume the data of government expenditures easily; Timely and comprehensive, releasing data in a timely manner while maintaining its accuracy and detail to provide a complete picture of the present state of governance in a state; and more. Countries such as the UK (one of its founding members), Canada, Mexico and others have already incorporated these principles and the citizens now benefit e.g. by having the necessary knowledge to judge a governments expenditure accurately and then placing their votes. However the main problem yet again arises that not all governments are willing to accept these initiatives due to their inability and willingness to exercise these principles.

Possible Solutions:


Addressing root causes: This range includes political interference, limited access to information, lack of oversight, corruption, culture of secrecy and weak governance structures. By resolving these roots (or the majority), the transparency of governments and their ability to take accountability starts to improve.

International cooperation: The key to international cooperation would be to find common interests between all governments. This could be Economic benefits, general standard of living or other incentives to improve the trust that can be placed within the government. Global platforms for anti-corruption and information sharing platforms, etc, combined with Multilateral agreements and treaties may boost international cooperation.

Integration and support: Organisations such as the IMF and World Bank have already provided support to countries that are aiming to improve their transparency and accountability, however their policies and instructions cannot be completely followed through unless international cooperation is reached.

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