

# **Transatlantic Capital, Elite Cultivation, and the Geopolitics of Advocacy: An Exhaustive Analysis of the European Leadership Network (ELNET)**

## **Introduction: The Genesis of a Transatlantic Lobbying Architecture**

The architecture of foreign policy advocacy within the European Union and the United Kingdom has undergone a profound structural transformation over the past two decades, characterized by the increasing sophistication of non-governmental entities operating at the nexus of diplomacy, military procurement, and corporate intelligence. Central to this evolution is the European Leadership Network (ELNET), an organization established on October 22, 2007, with the explicit mandate of strengthening political, strategic, and diplomatic relations between Europe and the State of Israel. Functioning ostensibly on the basis of shared democratic values and mutual strategic interests, ELNET has systematically cultivated a highly influential, insulated network of European political, military, and corporate elites. By its own leaders' admission and self-description, ELNET operates as the "AIPAC for Europe," seeking to replicate the formidable, uncompromising influence of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) within the distinct political ecosystems of Europe.

While AIPAC's hegemony in the United States relies heavily on the mobilization of vast campaign contributions and aggressive public media campaigns to make support for Israel politically rewarding and opposition electorally fatal, the European political landscape presents unique structural barriers to this model. European states generally possess a much smaller Jewish demographic base, enforce significantly stricter political campaign finance regulations, and maintain a deeply entrenched culture of skepticism toward overt, highly publicized corporate lobbying. Consequently, ELNET was engineered not as a grassroots mobilization entity, but as a highly sophisticated elite curation mechanism. Through the strategic deployment of United States billionaire capital, ELNET has bypassed traditional European political finance constraints, establishing an internationally cross-linked system of associations focused exclusively on high-level decision-makers.

Operating with an annual budget approaching \$20 million, ELNET maintains a robust permanent infrastructure comprising a head office in Tel Aviv, a primary United States fundraising arm in New York and Illinois (Friends of ELNET, or FELNET), and highly active, deeply embedded European bureaus in London, Paris, Berlin, Brussels, Rome, and Warsaw. Through the orchestration of exclusive intelligence briefings, the funding of elaborate, emotionally engineered delegations to Israel, the covert funding of parliamentary events, and the facilitation of multi-billion-euro military procurements, ELNET has integrated itself into the core of European foreign policy and defense planning.

This report provides an exhaustive investigation into ELNET's structural methodologies, its reliance on transatlantic capital flows, its regional operational mapping across six European

capitals, its ideological shift toward civilizational narratives, and its broader geopolitical implications for the sovereignty of European defense and foreign policy.

## **The Architectural Translation: Replicating the AIPAC Model in the European Ecosystem**

The exportation of the AIPAC model to Europe required a fundamental translation of political mechanics to accommodate the distinct regulatory and cultural environments of European parliaments. AIPAC operates in a system where the direct injection of capital into political action committees (PACs) directly dictates electoral outcomes. For instance, AIPAC and its affiliated super PAC, the United Democracy Project, recently expended millions of dollars subsidized by American billionaires to defeat congressional candidates critical of hardline Israeli policies, such as Andy Levin and Donna Edwards. Because European politicians are significantly less reliant on external campaign financing to secure their mandates, ELNET developed an alternative methodology centered on the cultivation of affluent sympathizers, the monopolization of high-level information flows, and the establishment of psychological bonds with decision-makers.

The organization's strategy is predicated on three foundational pillars: the targeted cultivation of wealthy European and American elites, the establishment of closed-door strategic dialogues, and the execution of all-expenses-paid immersive delegations to Israel. ELNET explicitly works to overcome traditional bilateral "friendship groups," which often operate as symbolic, culturally focused entities, by designing a system specifically built to involve top-tier national security and economic decision-makers. This methodology operates almost entirely behind the scenes, far removed from public scrutiny or democratic debate.

A critical element of this adaptation is the transition from broad public advocacy to highly specialized elite networking. By targeting members of parliament, military generals, intelligence directors, and defense industry executives, ELNET ensures that the pro-Israel narrative is embedded within the institutional bedrock of European states rather than relying on the fluctuating sentiments of the European electorate. The organization's leadership brings decades of institutional memory from Washington directly to Europe. Key figures include Larry Hochberg, an internationally renowned philanthropist and former AIPAC national officer, and David Siegel, the President of FELNET and a former AIPAC legislative writer. These individuals implemented AIPAC's uncompromising advocacy tactics while meticulously tailoring them to European diplomatic sensibilities.

To fully understand this model, one must examine how ELNET mirrors other highly exclusive Jewish and pro-Israel leadership societies cultivated in the United States, which serve as the intellectual and financial incubators for such advocacy. For example, the Shabtai society at Yale University—founded in 1996 by figures such as Rabbi Shmully Hecht, Ben Karp, and Senator Cory Booker, and heavily subsidized by billionaire Benny Shabtai—operates as a premier intellectual salon bringing together secular and sectarian elites, billionaires, and politicians behind closed doors. Shabtai's model of elite insularity, which recently sparked controversy by hosting Israel's extremist National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, exemplifies the precise demographic and ideological curation strategy that ELNET has industrialized on a transcontinental scale. ELNET utilizes these exact networks of affluent American intellectual and corporate elites to project power into European legislatures.

# The Financial Engine: U.S. Philanthropic Capital as a European Strategic Asset

The most critical operational dynamic of ELNET is its structural reliance on United States philanthropic and billionaire capital to subsidize its European footprint. While ELNET presents itself publicly as a European entity fostering bilateral relations with Israel, forensic financial analysis reveals that its operational capacity is predominantly sustained by right-wing American donors, corporate executives, and donor-advised funds. This financial architecture allows US actors to exert disproportionate influence over European domestic and foreign policy, effectively utilizing ELNET as a transatlantic geopolitical proxy.

The primary financial conduit for this operation is "Friends of ELNET" (FELNET), a US-registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization headquartered in Skokie, Illinois, with sophisticated fundraising operations spanning California, Florida, New York, New Jersey, and several other major states. FELNET acts as the financial engine for ELNET's European chapters, transferring the vast majority of its raised revenue directly across the Atlantic to fund European operations.

## Financial Trajectory and Capital Inflows

The financial trajectory of FELNET demonstrates aggressive growth, particularly in recent years as regional tensions in the Middle East have escalated. Revenue has more than doubled since 2018, jumping from \$7 million in 2022 to \$9.1 million in 2023, and continuing to sustain near the \$9 million mark into 2024. Since 2022 alone, ELNET has received a minimum of \$11 million from US foundations, trusts, and donor-advised funds, representing an unprecedented influx of foreign capital into the European lobbying ecosystem.

Financial Metric	FYE 2022	FYE 2023	FYE 2024
<b>FELNET Total Revenue</b>	\$7,000,000	\$9,100,000	\$8,955,347
<b>Total Expenses</b>	Data Unavailable	Data Unavailable	\$8,237,354
<b>Total Assets</b>	Data Unavailable	Data Unavailable	\$7,141,540
<b>Grants &amp; Contributions</b>	Data Unavailable	\$8,999,855	\$8,679,742

*Data sourced from digitized IRS Form 990 filings and investigative financial reports detailing FELNET's operations.*

## Profiling the Transatlantic Donor Base

The capital flowing into ELNET is not politically neutral; it represents a highly specific demographic of American philanthropy closely associated with conservative politics, the defense industry, and orthodox pro-Israel advocacy. Investigative analyses by *The Intercept* and *OpenDemocracy* have characterized ELNET's European finances as a "mystery," noting that the organization has repeatedly refused to disclose its major European donors to the public. However, mandatory US tax filings reveal the identities of the critical American benefactors sustaining the network.

Major institutional donors to FELNET include the William Davidson Foundation (which provided \$450,000 in 2024), the Newton and Rochelle Becker Charitable Trust, the Ocean State Job Lot

Charitable Foundation, and the Foxman Family Foundation, which directed \$305,000 to the organization. Donor-advised funds, which allow wealthy individuals to anonymize their philanthropic giving, have also heavily subsidized the organization. The National Philanthropic Trust, for instance, provided successive grants of \$205,000 in 2023 and \$290,000 in 2024. The ideological leanings of these benefactors underscore ELNET's role as an exporter of aggressive advocacy. The philanthropic foundation of Bernard Marcus—the billionaire co-founder of Home Depot and a prominent financier for Donald Trump and AIPAC—provided approximately \$300,000 to FELNET between 2020 and 2022. Similarly, a family foundation chaired by billionaire homebuilder Larry Mizel, who served as Trump's finance chairman in Colorado, donated at least \$30,000 to FELNET. The Newton and Rochelle Becker Charitable Trust is particularly notable, as investigative reports have historically linked it to the funding of Western Islamophobic think tanks and the broader "counterjihad" movement in Europe, highlighting a convergence between pro-Israel lobbying and anti-Islamic civilizational narratives.

## **Disclosures and Financial Irregularities**

The opacity of ELNET's financial network has led to documented irregularities regarding foreign funding regulations and political transparency laws in Europe. Cross-border investigations led by *Investigative Journalism for Europe (IJ4EU)* have revealed severe deficiencies in ELNET's public disclosures. In France, ELNET's national branch committed significant irregularities by failing to register as an organization receiving foreign funding, operating in violation of fundamental transparency norms.

A critical investigative report by *Mediapart* further uncovered that the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) clandestinely provided ELNET France with €72,000 to fund an event hosted inside the French Senate. The event cost a total of €189,000 and was framed publicly as the launch of the "Global Women's Coalition Against the Use of Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War," championing international justice for victims. However, internal Israeli MFA documents explicitly described the true objectives as promoting "legislative changes at the national level" and "strengthening Israel's political and image status abroad". This illicit funding directly contravened the French Senate's strict code of conduct, which explicitly prohibits the organization of symposiums involving financial remuneration for speakers or organizers by foreign state entities. Similarly, in Germany, investigations revealed that multiple parliamentarians routinely neglected to declare ELNET-sponsored trips to Israel as potential political contributions, circumventing Bundestag regulations designed to prevent hidden lobbying and foreign influence over elected officials.

## **The Mechanism of Influence: Emotional Engineering and the Delegation Strategy**

ELNET's core operational mechanism relies on controlling the flow of information and actively shaping the psychological disposition of European policymakers. This is primarily achieved through the execution of immersive, highly choreographed delegations to Israel, an area where ELNET remains unrivaled in volume and scope.

## **The Architecture of the "Junket"**

ELNET operates the most extensive travel program for European parliamentarians of any

foreign advocacy group. The organization takes hundreds of decision-makers—including members of parliament, military experts, and prominent journalists—on all-inclusive trips to Israel annually. These trips, which can incur costs of up to €5,000 per participant, are specifically designed to circumvent rational, detached policy debate in favor of what internal sources describe as strategic "emotionalization".

The itineraries of these delegations are highly standardized and rigorously curated by ELNET's Tel Aviv office to ensure maximum ideological impact. Participants are exposed to tightly controlled, one-sided narratives that exclude government-critical civil society organizations, human rights groups, or anti-occupation factions entirely. Instead, delegations routinely meet with right-wing Israeli figures, such as settler leaders like Itamar Marcus, and controversial fellows from the US-based Islamophobic Gatestone Institute, thereby normalizing far-right perspectives within mainstream European political discourse.

The psychological engineering of these trips adapts dynamically to geopolitical realities. Prior to the war in Gaza, these trips frequently included military-accompanied helicopter flights to the Lebanese border and tours of Hamas or Hezbollah tunnel systems, showcasing Israel as a state under perpetual existential threat. Following the October 7, 2023 attacks, ELNET pivoted the itineraries to maximize the emotional trauma of the tragedy. European delegations were taken to the sites of the massacres in the Kibbutzim, arranged to meet intimately with the families of hostages, and, according to multiple participants, granted unprecedented access to military bases to view the bodies of unidentified victims.

The explicit goal of this psychological architecture, as articulated by an ELNET staff member in a promotional video, is to foster a "special atmosphere" that creates a deep, emotional long-term bond between the European politician and the State of Israel. Politicians routinely return from these trips deeply shaken, reliably translating this emotional trauma into hardline political support, advocacy for deeper bilateral economic ties, and aggressive opposition to pro-Palestinian protests in their home countries.

## Evading Transparency Thresholds

The material cost of these emotionalized trips has generated intense scrutiny regarding political ethics. In Germany, Bundestag members have been required since 2021 to publish political benefits exceeding €3,000. While transparency groups like *Abgeordnetenwatch* reported nearly a quarter of a million euros in ELNET-funded travel expenses during the previous legislative term, investigations by *taz* indicate the real sum is substantially higher. Many MPs actively evaded transparency requirements by claiming their individual travel costs conveniently stayed just under the €3,000 threshold, while others failed to provide logical explanations for missing disclosures entirely. The result is a shadow economy of political influence where European lawmakers are effectively subsidized by foreign capital without democratic oversight.

## The Forum of Strategic Dialogue and NATO Enmeshment

Beyond emotional conditioning, ELNET cultivates an aura of elite exclusivity through its Forum of Strategic Dialogue (FSD). The FSD acts as a shadow diplomatic channel, integrating European policymakers with the highest echelons of Israel's military and intelligence apparatus. Chaired by prominent figures such as Major General (Ret.) Amos Yadlin (former Head of Israel's Military Intelligence) and Zohar Palti (former Head of the Political-Military Bureau at the Israeli

Ministry of Defense), the FSD hosts private, closed-door intelligence briefings in major European capitals.

These briefings deliberately bypass traditional diplomatic protocols, allowing ELNET to frame regional conflicts precisely to their advantage. By facilitating direct contact between European defense planners, intelligence officers, and Israeli operatives, ELNET establishes Israel not merely as an ally, but as an indispensable intelligence asset to Europe. This strategic enmeshment was particularly evident at the ELNET International Policy Conference (EIPC), which featured speakers like David Cattler, NATO's Assistant Secretary-General for Intelligence and Security, and Dr. Benedetta Berti, Head of Policy Planning in the Office of the Secretary-General of NATO. Cattler praised the collaboration facilitated by ELNET, explicitly calling Israel a leader in defense that can make significant contributions to NATO states. This institutional enmeshment ensures that European security policy is perpetually formulated with Israeli strategic objectives factored in as fundamental premises.

## **The Military-Industrial Brokerage: Securing European Defense Procurement**

One of the most consequential dimensions of ELNET's operations is its evolution into a highly effective, albeit unofficial, lobbying apparatus for the Israeli military-industrial complex. While ostensibly an organization dedicated to shared democratic values, ELNET leverages its curated political network to secure massive, multi-billion-euro arms contracts for Israeli defense contractors. ELNET systematically mobilizes its network of elected officials, military experts, and NATO commanders to bring European states closer to Israeli industrialists, facilitating transactions that fundamentally alter Europe's security architecture.

### **The German Remilitarization and the Arrow 3 Procurement**

The most profound example of ELNET's military-industrial brokerage occurred in Germany. Following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, Germany sought to drastically upgrade its missile defense capabilities under Chancellor Olaf Scholz's *Zeitenwende* policy. ELNET capitalized on this geopolitical window by organizing a highly strategic delegation in March 2022 for ten members of the German Bundestag's Defense Committee, including its influential chair, Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann.

During this curated trip, the German delegation was hosted by Emmanuel Navon, the CEO of ELNET Israel, and taken to the Palmachim Airbase to inspect the Arrow 3 rocket defense system, manufactured by Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI). Scarcely a week after returning to Berlin, the Defense Committee initiated the formal legislative steps to procure the Arrow 3 system—an acquisition valued at over €3 billion (\$3.5 billion), marking the largest defense contract in Israel's history.

ELNET subsequently cited this historic agreement in its annual report as a core organizational success, openly claiming credit for advancing the necessary dialogue to seal the agreement. The relationship, however, raised acute ethical questions. Investigative reports revealed that ELNET received a direct financial donation from IAI in the same year. Although ELNET claimed the donation was for an unrelated event sponsorship, transparency advocates like *Lobbycontrol* asserted that this dynamic severely undermined ELNET's non-profit status, exposing it as an unregistered agent for foreign defense contractors.

## The "Combat Proven" Marketing Strategy

In the wake of the Gaza war, ELNET has actively utilized the conflict as a marketing asset to promote Israeli arms. High-level defense delegations, often comprising retired NATO generals and European defense ministry officials, are flown to Israel to receive security briefings overlooking Gaza and tour active air bases. During these visits, the devastation in Gaza is presented to European buyers as definitive evidence of the efficacy of Israeli technology. Boaz Levy, the CEO of IAI, explicitly noted to the media that the war in Gaza provided proof to the Germans of the Arrow system's effectiveness because it had "proven itself on the battlefield in Israel".

Through ELNET's orchestration, Israeli firms have secured rapid, highly lucrative contracts across the continent, institutionalizing the ELNET Security & Defense Initiative (ESDI) launched in July 2025. Notable achievements include Elbit Systems selling PULS (precise and universal launching) technology to Germany's KNDS and Diehl Defence for €55 million in February 2025, and Rafael signing a €1.9 billion contract for Spike anti-tank missiles in October 2025.

Procuring Nation	Defense System	Israeli Contractor	Contract Value	ELNET Strategic Involvement
<b>Germany</b>	Arrow 3 Missile Defense	IAI	€3.0 Billion (\$3.5B)	Hosted Bundestag Defense Committee at Palmachim Airbase prior to procurement.
<b>Germany</b>	Spike Anti-Tank Missiles	Rafael	€1.9 Billion (\$2.3B)	Direct lobbying via ESDI and former IAF Chief Amikam Norkin.
<b>Germany</b>	PULS Launching Tech	Elbit Systems	€55 Million	Brokered industry partnerships between Elbit, KNDS, and Diehl Defence.
<b>Romania</b>	Anti-Aircraft Missiles	Rafael	> €2.0 Billion	Organized 1st Romania-Israel Strategic Forum involving Romanian defense officials.

*Data sourced from cross-border investigations detailing ELNET's defense lobbying and European procurement.*

## Regional Operational Mapping: The Capital-by-Capital Strategy

ELNET's strength lies in its decentralized operational structure. By establishing permanent bureaus in Europe's political nerve centers, the organization tailors its influence campaigns to

the specific cultural and political mechanics of each host nation. Table 2 outlines the global architecture of ELNET's leadership.

ELNET Office	Leadership / CEO	Key Strategic Focus / Highlight
<b>London (UK)</b>	Joan Ryan	Preemptive political capture of the Labour Party; media management.
<b>Paris (France)</b>	Dr. Arié Bensemhoun	Techwashing; embedding Israeli intelligence with French Ministry of Defense.
<b>Berlin (Germany)</b>	Carsten Ovens	Brokering defense contracts (Arrow 3); neutralizing left-wing opposition.
<b>Brussels (EU/NATO)</b>	Matthijs Schussler	EU institutional lobbying; integrating Israeli intelligence into NATO.
<b>Rome (Italy)</b>	Roberta Anati	Energy diversification via the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF).
<b>Warsaw (CEE)</b>	Marta Kubica	Eastern flank resilience; securing Romanian and Polish defense contracts.
<b>New York (FELNET)</b>	David Siegel	Funneling US billionaire capital to subsidize European operations.

## London: Strategic Preemption and the Capture of the British Apparatus

The United Kingdom branch of ELNET, established in 2021, operates under the direction of Joan Ryan, a former British Member of Parliament who previously chaired the Labour Friends of Israel and famously resigned from the Labour Party in 2019 to protest Jeremy Corbyn's leadership. ELNET-UK's strategy is characterized by an acute focus on preemptive political capture and media narrative management.

Recognizing the impending shift in UK domestic politics, ELNET systematically pivoted its focus toward the Labour Party. Investigations by *Declassified UK* revealed that pro-Israel lobbyists, prominently featuring ELNET, financially supported 13 out of 25 members of Prime Minister Keir Starmer's cabinet since they became MPs. This included Starmer himself, Foreign Secretary David Lammy, and Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds—the official directly responsible for overseeing arms exports to Israel. By organizing exclusive visits to Israel for Labour staffers and cabinet members like Health Secretary Wes Streeting, ELNET executed a "clear agenda" to shape the foreign policy of the incoming government long before they took office.

The success of this strategy became evident during the Gaza conflict. Freedom of Information requests revealed that ELNET UK aggressively lobbied the UK government against implementing an arms export ban to Israel, with Joan Ryan warning that such a ban would embolden "hostile entities". Furthermore, Peter Mandelson, a disgraced Labour grandee and prominent ELNET participant, utilized backchannels to conduct unofficial diplomacy with the Israeli government on behalf of the Conservative government during the early months of the Gaza war, demonstrating the organization's cross-party reach. Mandelson's involvement

highlights the highly insulated nature of ELNET's target demographic, as he maintained ties with convicted trafficker Jeffrey Epstein long after his offenses became public, reflecting the broader milieu of ultra-wealthy, globally connected elites that ELNET cultivates.

ELNET-UK also dedicates significant resources to shaping the British media environment by organizing exclusive junkets for prominent journalists from outlets such as the *Telegraph*, *Spectator*, and *Mail on Sunday*. Reporters like Zoe Strimpel and David Rose, upon returning from these curated trips, subsequently published articles dismissing charges of Israeli genocide, casting doubt on Palestinian casualty figures, and advocating for the total destruction of Hamas. Strimpel explicitly told investigators regarding her trip: "As for Elnet, the more pro-Israel the better in my view". The organization similarly utilizes retired military officers—such as former NATO commander Sir John McColl, Johnny Mercer, and Colonel Richard Kemp—who return to the UK to publish op-eds validating the IDF's rules of engagement, providing an uncritical military veneer to the war.

## **Paris: Senate Intrusions and the Civilizational Binary**

Under the leadership of Dr. Arié Bensemhoun, ELNET-France operates aggressively to embed Israeli strategic priorities within the French state apparatus. ELNET-France organizes the France-Israel Strategic Forum (FDS), cultivating deep ties with the French Ministry of Defense and the Quai d'Orsay.

The boldness of ELNET's French operations was starkly illuminated during the 2021 Milipol homeland security exhibition in Paris. ELNET chaperoned a high-level Israeli delegation, including Yoav Gallant, to the exhibition. Rather than focusing on the trade floor, ELNET utilized the event as cover to host an array of shadow meetings within the hallways of the French Senate and the Ministry of Armed Forces, securing private dinners with the military governor of Paris and meetings with Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin.

Furthermore, ELNET-France heavily utilizes "techwashing"—the deployment of technological innovation as a diplomatic shield to legitimize state policy. At a massive 4,000-person event hosted by ELNET at the VivaTech salon in Paris in March 2025, the organization blended startup capitalism with hardline political rhetoric. At this event, French Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau delivered an explicitly Islamophobic address, declaring "Down with the veil," equating Muslim identity with extremism in a room convened to celebrate Israeli technological prowess. Domestically, ELNET-France aggressively targets left-wing political factions, actively supporting media campaigns in outlets like *Franc-Tireur* that label parties like La France Insoumise (LFI) as inherently antisemitic, thereby marginalizing domestic political opposition to Israeli policies.

## **Berlin: Capturing the Defense Apparatus and Neutralizing the Left**

Opened in 2014 and directed by Carsten Ovens, ELNET's German bureau is arguably its most materially successful outpost, directly brokering the massive Arrow 3 and Spike missile deals. ELNET Germany's Executive Director, Carsten Ovens, alongside former Israeli Air Force Chief Amikam Norkin, directly lobbied German parliamentarians to advocate for the creation of a "German-Israeli Defense Technology Center," further entrenching the military-industrial relationship.

Beyond defense lobbying, ELNET-Germany's most sophisticated maneuver has been its targeted neutralization of left-wing political opposition. Historically, the German left-wing party, *Die Linke*, harbored strong anti-militarist and pro-Palestinian sentiments. ELNET recognized this vulnerability and systematically targeted high-profile MPs within the party, providing fully funded

travel to Israel for figures such as Stefan Liebich (former foreign policy spokesperson) and Martina Renner.

These tailored trips successfully fractured the party's foreign policy consensus. Following a series of ELNET-sponsored visits in 2011 and 2015, *Die Linke* broke from its historical stance and publicly positioned itself against the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, subsequently launching anti-BDS resolutions in Thuringia and Berlin. By neutralizing criticism from the political left, ELNET ensured a completely uncritical, cross-party consensus within the Bundestag regarding support for Israel. The internationally recognized Lemkin Institute for the Prevention of Genocide has issued severe criticism of ELNET Germany, accusing it of disseminating disinformation and denialist narratives regarding the Gaza conflict among German political decision-makers.

## **Brussels, Rome, and Warsaw: Institutional Enmeshment and the Eastern Flank**

ELNET's Brussels office, led by Matthijs Schussler, focuses on the institutional machinery of the European Union and NATO. Functioning as a registered lobbyist entity (declaring two full-time equivalent lobbyists), the Brussels office conducts annual strategic dialogues centered on cybersecurity, counter-terrorism, and Middle East stability. Schussler, leveraging his background as a senior policy advisor at the European People's Party (EPP), utilizes crises to reinforce ELNET's narratives. Following the November 2024 soccer riots in Amsterdam, Schussler capitalized on the media environment to declare the events "unprecedented" and traumatic, reinforcing the narrative of a besieged Jewish diaspora needing stronger Israeli ties.

The expansion into Rome (established 2023) and Warsaw highlights ELNET's recognition of shifting geopolitical power centers in Europe. In Rome, under CEO Roberta Anati, ELNET leverages the robust trade relationship between Italy and Israel. The bureau's strategic focus is on energy diversification and maritime security via the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), exploiting Europe's desperate need for non-Russian natural gas. The board of ELNET-Italy reflects deep corporate capture, featuring members like Paolo Scudieri (head of the international Adler Group) and Alessandro Comini to ensure industrial alignment alongside political lobbying.

In Warsaw, Marta Kubica directs ELNET Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Drawing on her ten years of experience at the Israeli Embassy in Poland and her tenure as a Diplomatic Protocol Specialist at the US Embassy, Kubica advances diplomatic initiatives centered on crisis management and resilience. Utilizing the Ukraine conflict as a backdrop to showcase Israeli defense innovation to nervous Eastern European states, ELNET successfully organized the Romania-Israel Strategic Dialogue, which culminated in Romania's multi-billion-euro acquisition of Rafael air defense systems.

## **Ideological Trajectory: The Rightward Shift and the Civilizational Narrative**

While ELNET was founded in 2007 with a non-partisan veneer designed to cultivate a "big-tent" consensus, internal documents and historical analyses trace a distinct rightward ideological shift within the organization. This shift accelerated concurrently with the election of Donald Trump in 2016 and the corresponding rightward trajectory of the Israeli government. As foundational

figures aged, control consolidated around figures like David Siegel and a heavily right-wing Israeli office, deeply aligned with the administration of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israeli settler lobby.

This ideological crystallization is evident in ELNET's formal policy positions. The organization's leadership has actively promoted narratives that contradict international law. For example, the CEO of ELNET Israel published assertions in the *Jerusalem Post* that the West Bank is "not occupied" but rather designated for Jewish national self-determination. Furthermore, Joan Ryan, the executive director of ELNET-UK, has aggressively campaigned to delegitimize any characterization of Israel as an apartheid state, labeling it a "myth" rooted in Soviet propaganda, and asserting that fighting antisemitism is functionally inseparable from fighting criticism of the State of Israel. In formal submissions to the United Nations, ELNET has defended Israel's right to deny UN humanitarian operations within its territory.

To mask the controversial nature of these positions, ELNET employs a sophisticated "civilizational" narrative, best captured by the slogan pushed by its leadership: "The West is Next". Emmanuel Navon, CEO of ELNET Israel, explicitly stated, "Rome and Jerusalem are both the targets of radical Islam: Israel is on the frontline, but the West is next". This framework, heavily promoted to conservative European audiences, posits that Israel is fighting a vanguard war against radical Islam on behalf of Europe. By equating Palestinian resistance exclusively with global jihadist terrorism, ELNET effectively weaponizes European anxieties regarding immigration, terrorism, and Islam, securing alliances with right-wing and nationalist European parties that view Israel as an ethno-nationalist model.

The dissemination of this narrative is heavily funded by the exact same American donors who finance Western Islamophobic think tanks. The overlap is not coincidental; it is a calculated strategy rooted in ideologies like Bat Ye'or's "Eurabia" conspiracy theory, which posits that Arabs are attempting to Islamicize Europe. By leveraging this civilizational panic, ELNET ensures that European policymakers view the defense of Israel not merely as a foreign policy choice, but as an existential requirement for the survival of the West. Furthermore, ELNET promotes geopolitical concepts such as the Indian-Middle East-Mediterranean Economic Corridor (IMEC), framing Israel as the vital node capable of squeezing Russian and Chinese influence out of the Mediterranean. This appeals directly to post-Brexit UK desires for global relevance and European fears of Eastern encroachment.

## **Strategic Synthesis and Future Outlook**

The European Leadership Network represents a fundamental paradigm shift in the mechanics of transatlantic geopolitical advocacy. By recognizing the structural limitations of the European political finance system, ELNET successfully reverse-engineered the AIPAC model, replacing brute-force campaign spending with the meticulous, psychological, and material cultivation of a highly targeted elite class.

Through the strategic deployment of over \$11 million in recent American philanthropic capital, ELNET has effectively subsidized an immense lobbying infrastructure capable of altering the foreign policy of sovereign European nations. The organization's ability to seamlessly integrate the emotional manipulation of subsidized political travel with the hard, material reality of multi-billion-euro arms brokerage is a testament to its operational sophistication. By capturing the defense committees of nations like Germany and Romania, preemptively neutralizing the foreign policy stances of the British Labour Party and the German Left Party, and embedding Israeli intelligence narratives deeply within NATO frameworks, ELNET has achieved a level of

institutional capture unprecedented for a foreign-aligned non-governmental organization in Europe.

However, this architecture is not without profound vulnerabilities. The opacity of ELNET's financial structures, combined with its reliance on right-wing American capital to influence European democratic processes, poses severe legal and reputational risks. The documented instances of illegal foreign funding within the French Senate, alongside the systematic failure of German MPs to declare sponsored travel as political contributions, indicate that ELNET operates at the absolute margins of European transparency and anti-corruption laws. Furthermore, the blatant crossover between ELNET's non-profit diplomatic initiatives and the commercial interests of Israeli defense contractors—evidenced by direct financial donations from arms manufacturers like IAI—threatens to shatter its carefully constructed facade as a non-partisan purveyor of democratic values.

Ultimately, ELNET's operations illuminate the profound permeability of the European political establishment. As long as American billionaire capital remains untethered by stringent international lobbying regulations, and as long as European political and military elites remain highly receptive to the allure of exclusive intelligence briefings, subsidized travel, and advanced defense technology, ELNET will continue to function as the indispensable conduit linking Washington's wealth, Jerusalem's strategic imperatives, and Europe's geopolitical posture. The organization's continued success relies on maintaining the delicate balance between public diplomatic posturing and covert elite curation—a balance that will undoubtedly face increased scrutiny as the geopolitical consequences of its defense brokering reshape the European continent.

## Works cited

1. ELNET - Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ELNET>
2. US Donors Fund Pro-Israel Lobby Driving European Policy - Report - Palestine Chronicle, <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/us-donors-fund-pro-israel-lobby-driving-european-policy-report/>
3. Pro-Israel lobbying deepens its ties in Europe, by Yossi Bartal (Le ...), <https://mondediplo.com/2026/06/05elnet>
4. AIPAC - Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AIPAC>
5. Friends of Elnet | Skokie, IL | 990 Report - Instrumentl, <https://www.instrumentl.com/990-report/friends-of-elnets>
6. ELNET: Uncovering Israel's Influence Networks in Europe - IJ4EU, <https://investigativejournalismforeu.net/projects/elnets-uncovering-israels-influence-networks-in-europe/>
7. Lobby group taking journalists on propaganda tours of Israel, <https://www.declassifieduk.org/lobby-group-taking-journalists-on-propaganda-tours-of-israel/>
8. PROGRAM - ELNET, <https://elnetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/ELNET-EIPC-2023-List-of-Speakers.pdf>
9. Shabtai (society) - Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabtai\\_\(society\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabtai_(society))
10. The Founder - Shabtai.tv, <https://www.shabtai.tv/the-founder/founder>
11. An elite Jewish society at Yale fractures over its director's embrace of Itamar Ben-Gvir, <https://www.jta.org/2025/04/23/united-states/an-elite-jewish-society-at-yale-fractures-over-its-directors-embrace-of-itamar-ben-gvir>
12. Why is Shabtai at Yale legitimizing Itamar Ben-Gvir? - The Forward, <https://forward.com/opinion/713803/itamar-ben-gvir-yale-united-states-visit/>
13. Friends of Elnet | Skokie, IL - Cause IQ, <https://www.causeiq.com/organizations/friends-of-elnets,452212393/>
14. Friends Of Elnet - Nonprofit Explorer - ProPublica, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/452212393>
15. European Leadership

Network (ELNET) - Influence Watch,  
<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/european-leadership-network-elnets/> 16. ELNET: The secretive group taking MPs on trips to Israel - openDemocracy,  
<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/elnets-trips-israel-gaza-uk-politicians-trump-donors/> 17. CausalML\_book\_2022.pdf - Applied Causal Inference Powered by ML and AI,  
[https://causalml-book.org/chapters/CausalML\\_book\\_2022.pdf](https://causalml-book.org/chapters/CausalML_book_2022.pdf) 18. Islamophobia in Europe: How governments are enabling the far-right 'counter-jihad' movement - University of Bristol Research Portal,  
[https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/files/192414854/Aked\\_Jones\\_Miller\\_Counterjihad\\_report\\_2019.pdf](https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/files/192414854/Aked_Jones_Miller_Counterjihad_report_2019.pdf) 19. TECHWASHING AND FASCIST POLITICS: Israel's 'Start-Up Nation' laboratory - Transnational Institute, <https://www.tni.org/files/2026-02/State-of-Power-2026-Chapter7.pdf> 20. ELNET (organisation) - Wikipédia, [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/ELNET\\_\(organisation\)](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/ELNET_(organisation)) 21. Annual Report 2021 | ELNET,  
<https://elnetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Annual-Report-2021-short-version-external-use.pdf> 22. ELNET's 3rd International Policy Conference,  
<https://elnetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Third-EIPC-Report-final-version-for-website.pdf> 23. SUNDAY, MAY 18, 2025 OPENING CEREMONY - COCKTAIL RECEPTION 6-10PM Normandie room, Hôtel du Collectionneur, 51-57 Rue de Courcelles, Paris - European Parliament,  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/erpl-app-public/mep-documents/DAT/attachments/10/c7a16498-aa90-48aa-b8ae-0169eaba8058\\_1747992002272.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/erpl-app-public/mep-documents/DAT/attachments/10/c7a16498-aa90-48aa-b8ae-0169eaba8058_1747992002272.pdf) 24. DEFENDING AGAINST THE SMALL DRONE REVOLUTION: GERMAN-ISRAELI PERSPECTIVES ON NEW SECURITY FRONTIERS,  
[https://elnets-deutschland.de/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Policy-Briefing-C\\_UAS-ESDI.pdf](https://elnets-deutschland.de/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Policy-Briefing-C_UAS-ESDI.pdf) 25. Community Shabbat Morning Services with Guest Speakers from European Leadership Network - Event - Valley Beth Shalom,  
<https://www.vbs.org/event/community-shabbat-morning-services-with-guest-speakers-from-european-leadership-network.html> 26. Mandelson 'lobbied Israel for Tory government' during Gaza genocide - Declassified UK,  
<https://www.declassifieduk.org/mandelson-lobbied-israel-for-tory-government-during-gaza-genocide/> 27. Power to decide who's guilty - Le Monde diplomatique - English edition,  
<https://mondediplo.com/2019/10/13epstein> 28. General 2 - ELNET UK,  
<https://elnets.uk/our-network> 29. France is an influential global player in international institutions such as the UN Security Council, NATO, and the G7. It is a leading military and nuclear power, with the second largest diplomatic network globally. It is dominant in Europe, both politically and economically and has significant historic and political links to the Middle East. - General 2 — ELNET UK, <https://elnets.uk/france> 30. Techwashing and fascist politics - Transnational Institute,  
<https://www.tni.org/en/article/techwashing-and-fascist-politics> 31. VivaTech Press Releases,  
<https://vivatech.com/media/press-releases> 32. The growing power of France's pro-Israel lobby - Le Monde diplomatique - English edition, <https://mondediplo.com/2025/09/04israel-france> 33. The French left and the antisemitism trap - Le Monde diplomatique - English edition,  
<https://mondediplo.com/2024/10/06france-defamation> 34. Mr. AIPAC Goes to Europe – the Diasporist, <https://thediasporist.de/mr-aipac-goes-to-europe/> 35. Genocide research institute levels accusations against Germany - Middle East Monitor,  
<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20260117-genocide-research-institute-levels-accusations-against-germany/> 36. General 2 — ELNET UK, <https://elnets.uk/central-and-eastern-europe> 37. European Leadership Network - LobbyFacts,  
<https://www.lobbyfacts.eu/datacard/european-leadership-network?rid=465822925861-62&sid=1>

08356 38. A European Jewish leader on Amsterdam violence: 'A line has been crossed' - The Forward, <https://forward.com/opinion/673333/israeli-fans-attacked-in-amsterdam-soccer-riot/> 39. Poland | ELNET, <https://elnetwork.fr/affiliates/poland/> 40. Marta Kubica | Warsaw Security Forum, <https://warsawsecurityforum.org/profile/marta-kubica-2024/> 41. Representing Israel on Meta - Le Monde diplomatique - English edition, <https://mondediplo.com/2024/12/09meta> 42. Our use of cookies - <https://committees.parliament.uk>, <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/125294/html/>