

CORRUPTION VERSUS THE NEED FOR INTEGRITY

Iuliana PANĂ, PhD student*
Dan DINU, PhD student**

Corruption is perceived as a factor of instability for a nation and a threat for the national security. In order to correctly assess the integrity of a person, system, or organization, a system of values and principles is required, with a simple but also correct expression at the same time.

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Corruption can be defined as the inappropriate use of the power entrusted for personal benefit¹, being characteristic of all types of society.

Corruption helped trigger crises during the Arab Spring as well as their subsequent conflicts. Also, the corruption is in NATO's vision the main factor that allowed the rise and development of violent extremist organizations such as ISIL or Boko Haram².

Corruption is seen as a factor of instability for a nation and a threat to its security. Former US Vice President Joe Biden noted that there are countries that exploit corruption to exert unfavorable influence and undermine the independence of neighboring countries, giving the example of Ukraine³.

Integrity and fight against the corruption are the two sides of the same coin. However, the emphasis must be on building integrity because it represents, in our opinion, a pro-active approach.

The revitalization of integrity has materialized in initiatives of international organizations and countries as well. For instance, UN created *International Group on Anti-Corruption*, OECD established *Development Assistance Committee*, and as an initiative of a group of states *Group of States Against Corruption* – GRECO was established. GRECO acts in the same manner as the signatories of the OECD against bribing foreign civil servants in commercial transactions. In addition, the OECD

provides expertise in promoting best practices in the field of public sector ethics both in member countries and in other countries around the world.

The notion of integrity has a vast sphere of meanings, namely: "the feature of being integral; honesty, probity; incorruptibility"; "it is a concept that speaks of consistent actions, according to values, methods, and measuring tools, as well as in relation with principles and expectations that can be verified by results". In ethics, integrity is considered as honesty and fairness, being assessed by the accuracy of one's actions. Therefore, integrity is the opposite of certain shortcomings such as inconsistency, hypocrisy or fakeness. Integrity expresses virtues, feelings and the application of personal convictions, without discrepancies between statements and the example of personal experience.

The origin of the word "integrity" derives from the Latin adjective "integer" (whole, complete), and in this context it refers to the array of qualities of an individual, expressed through honesty and consistency of character. When someone refers to another person's lack of integrity, that person is assuming the role of a judge who feels that he possesses those qualities that "integrity" implies, and as such, his or her judgment is an act in accordance with his / her own beliefs and with the values she claims to possess and practice at that time.

In order to properly assess the integrity of a person, structure, or organization, a system of values and principles is required, with a simple but correct expression at the same time. The lack of a system of values and principles can turn into abstract statements which, very easily,

**Ministry of Finance*

e-mail: iulianaka@yahoo.com

***Ministry of Finance*

e-mail: dan_dinu2000@yahoo.com

can be misinterpreted by anyone. The system of values and principles generated by human minds is validated only over time and has an adjustment and review process determined by the results. This statement does not invalidate the need for a system of principles and values, because the lack of such an arrangement invariably promotes inconsistency and confusion.

Probity, a term found in defining integrity, expresses "honesty, fairness, incorruptibility, integrity, loyalty, honesty".

Another term found in the definition of integrity is incorruptibility that conveys the idea of not being prone to corruption.

The phenomenon of integrity is in total antithesis with the phenomenon of corruption. Thus corruption can be defined from the etymological point of view - the word corruption comes from the Latin "corruptio, -onis" and "French" (corruption), meaning the behavior of an official who, in exchange for money or other undue benefits, trades the attributes of the function he holds. In the above sense, the concept also includes debauchery and abdication from honor or one's duties".

From a political, social, legal, and economic point of view, corruption occurs in society at all levels, so that "because of its forms of manifestation and its consequences", it "appears to be indissolubly linked to the evolution and transformation that any society knows"⁴.

Corruption is manifested in all areas. For example, Siemens was accused of bribing with nearly 70 million euro various Greek officials to gain one of the most valuable contracts, namely modernizing Greece's vast telephone network in the late 1990s. Adidas was accused of bribing basketball young players and US coaches to come to the American universities they sponsor. Recently, seven companies, including the German software manufacturer SAP, have been accused of corruption for obtaining government contracts in South Africa.⁵

From a legal point of view, most countries have had, for many years, anti-corruption policies embedded in their legislation and are increasingly applying them. Some have signed the UN Convention Against Corruption, and many have also signed the Anti-Corruption Agreement of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OCDE).⁶

Corruption is at the forefront of the concerns of international organizations, one of them being NATO. As a result of perceiving corruption as an element affecting the security of each Ally as well as the North Atlantic Alliance as a whole, the program of building integrity was put in place, focusing mainly on issues related to the risks of corruption in the defense domain and supporting existing national anti-corruption programs.

At the NATO Summit in Warsaw it was explicitly mentioned that the defense and security sector is certainly affected by corruption. The fact that NATO agreed to support the international effort to fight corruption and to develop those practical activities that help the Alliance member states in this regard shows that the organization's effort to combat corruption must be coordinated at national and international level, depending on the possibilities and limits of action of every state.

The subject of corruption in Romania is not new at all. The report for 2013 on the situation in Romania entitled "Human Rights Practices" prepared by the Office for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor of the US State Department stated that "Institutional corruption remains a widespread problem that affects all the structures of the society. Systematic social discrimination against Roma affects their access to adequate education, housing, healthcare and employment opportunities"⁷.

According to a 2018 Ernst & Young report, the phenomenon is experiencing a continuous expansion in Europe from North to South, our country being somewhere in the middle of the ranking, while the northern countries have the lowest percentage.

The 2018 survey of Earst & Young placed Romania among the countries that have had an important impact in the fight against corruption through the measures taken, mentioning the National Anticorruption Directorate as the main engine in this direction⁸.

The report of the Green Group in the European Parliament entitled "Costs of Corruption in the EU" shows that, at national level, damages caused by corruption for Member States' GDP go from 15,6 % in Romania (38,6 billion euro) to 0,76 in the Netherlands (however, reaching 4,5 billion euro, with Italy having a record in absolute terms, losing 236,8 billion euro annually due to corruption, France is the second with an annual loss of 120,2 billion euro due to corruption, and in Germany there is an annual loss of 194 billion euro)⁹.

Romania is cited first because, according to the authors, the ratio between GDP and the estimated value of corruption is the most unfavorable in Europe, thus strengthening the general message well known in Brussels of "a poor and corrupt country". For example, if, in absolute terms, the amount of corruption in Italy is enormous, it represents only a "hole" of 13% of GDP.¹⁰

Let us not forget that Romania is still within the sphere of political-legislative changes, being a society in which change can be seen almost in concrete terms without the need for arguments, no matter the attitudes or behaviors. In a Europe that is becoming more and more consecrated, Romania knows multiple forms of the phenomenon of corruption. Life styles are diversifying, and a category of population becomes more educated or perhaps more eager for power, thus differentiating itself from the rest of society. The political world has major changes almost every moment, and the parties do not seem to resist too much in the same structure.

Corruption cannot be eradicated overnight. There will always be at least a temptation to dodge the law or shorten normal procedures established by the state or the community. Currently, the overall trend is to stop the upward trend of corruption, to find methods and ways of action to raise awareness that an act of corruption affects society as a whole, affects state mechanisms by which it assures security and the welfare of their own citizens.

At the same time, along with the efforts to reduce corruption, a very serious campaign is also needed to build integrity based on a system of common values of the state and society that cannot be interpreted or adapted according to the interests of a person or a small group of people.

Conclusions

As it was mentioned previously in the article, integrity and the fight against corruption are complementary faces of the same coin, and we emphasize once more the need for the two components to be promoted at the same time, with the same weight, the absence of one making the other obsolete.

Promoting a system of values that results in increasing the resilience of society's members to corruption will have to be a joint effort of the entire community; it will have to start during the

process of educating younger generations while, at the same time, adult members of the community become aware of the fact that overlooking even common forms of corruption tends to weaken the whole concept of fighting corruption and building a society based on integrity, trust and honesty. The members of the community must perceive this as a necessary thing for society in order to be able to progress.

In conclusion, the fight against corruption should not be carried out by only a part of society; the whole society must be made aware of it and apply it, because if an act of corruption does not directly affect a certain member of the society, that citizen will feel in an indirect way the effects of corruption together with the entire society he /she is a member of.

NOTES:

1 J.J. Senturia, *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, vol. VI, renders the traditional definition of corruption: "The misuse of public power for private profit", 1993.

2 *Corruption and conflict: hand in glove*, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2018/Also-in-2018/corruption-and-conflict-hand-in-glove-nato-defense-security/EN/index.htm>, accessed at 13.02.2019.

3 Joe Biden, *Lupta impotriva coruptiei este pur si simplu PATRIOTISM. Coruptia este o alta forma de TIRANIE, un pericol pentru siguranta nationala*, <http://freedomhouse.ro/stiri/watchdog/item/327-biden-patriotism>, accessed at 12.02.2019.

4 Mihai Hotca, *Cauze, efecte și remedii*, 2017.

5 „Globalizarea a devenit un motor pentru corupție în Germania. De la Adidas la Siemens și Daimler – lunga spirală a corupției prin care marile companii germane își cumpără succesul”, *Ziarul Financiar*, <https://www.zf.ro/business-international/globalizarea-a-devenit-un-motor-pentru-coruptie-in-germania-de-la-adidas-la-siemens-si-daimler-lunga-spirala-a-coruptiei-prin-care-marile-companii-germane-isi-cumpara-succesul-16745470>, accessed at 13.02.2019.

6 *Studiu îngrijorător despre corupția din România. Toți românii sunt afectați*, *Capital*, 18.12.2018, <https://www.capital.ro/studiu-ingrijorator-despre-coruptia-din-romania-toti-romanii-sun.html?PageSpeed=noscript&page=2>, accessed at 10.02.2019.

7 *Raport SUA: România are probleme cu corupția și există ingerințe politice în justiție*, <https://www.caleaeuropeana.ro/raport-sua-romania-are-probleme-cu-coruptia-si-exista-ingerinte-politice-in-justitie/> accessed at 02.02.2019.

8 *Integrity in the spotlight*, https://fraudsurveys.ey.com/media/1627/global_fraud_survey_2018.pdf, accessed at 12.02.2019.

9 *The Costs of Corruption Across the EU*, <https://www.greens-efa.eu/files/doc/docs/e46449daadbfbec325a0b408bbf5ab1d.pdf>, accessed at 11.02.2019.

10 *Integrity in the spotlight*, https://fraudsurveys.ey.com/media/1627/global_fraud_survey_2018.pdf, accessed at 12.02.2019.

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