

CORRUPTION – A MAJOR THREAT TO NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Abstract

This article attempts to find corruption as a major threat to democracy, the rule of law, social equity and justice, undermines the principles of effective administration and the credibility of citizens in state institutions, and endangers the market economy and the stability of state institutions. Corruption is a global security problem, regarded as a major problem for a long time, but recognized as a first-degree challenge to international security only recently to loudly state at present that corruption is a gross violation of fundamental human rights. Developing a common policy concept of security and defense at international level to optimize the fight against corruption aims at creating common databases and an institutionalized system of contacts to improve and develop a new dimension of collaboration within multinational coalitions; reforming sector services by institutional depolarization; development and implementation of a modern concept of reform; implementation of legislative and institutional changes, improving staff management and training in accordance with international standards

Key-words: corruption, national and international security, democracy, rule of law, global security problem, corrupt countries, democratic transition, and international environment.

The beginning of the 21st century is characterized by profound transformations in the security environment and the emergence of new risks and challenges to states and societies. Corruption is perceived as an obstacle for development of countries since it weakens the legitimacy and effectiveness of the government, undermines economic growth, threatens foreign direct investments, is a threat to democracy, and undermines the welfare of people. Identifying new threats led to refocusing efforts from ensuring security against classic military threats towards asymmetric threats such as cross-border networks of organized crime, terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or corruption. In fact, high-level corruption represents a serious threat to security in general, consisting of limiting acts regulated by law, as well as accepting and soliciting bribes, undeserved favors, influence peddling, illicit activities carried out in order to obtain material or moral advantages, high social or political positions.

The multitude of types of corruption such as professional corruption, economic corruption or economic financial or business offences, includes political corruption consisting of various activities such as illegal funding of election campaigns, promoting to government positions of persons solely on political criteria, thus deepening the threats, risks and vulnerabilities of national, regional and international security. Corruption is a major threat to democracy, the rule of law, social equity and justice, undermines the principles of effective administration and the credibility of citizens in state institutions, and endangers the market economy and the stability of state institutions.

In a number of countries, corruption is the system itself. The governments of these countries are oriented towards achieving (serving) purposes which have nothing to do with public administration, oriented towards personal enrichment of ruling networks/parties. And it is no wonder that these governments are hated by the vast majority of citizens around the globe because of excessive bureaucracy, vested interest

to the detriment of national interests, for making decisions contrary to public opinion, because they can be bribed, for harboring public information and so on.

Thus, the structural dynamics combined with acute corruption and breaches of international security confirm once again that corruption is a serious problem and must be assessed at fair value. Corruption and inequality entertain each other, creating a vicious circle between corruption and unequal distribution of power in society as well as unequal distribution of wealth. The case of Panama Papers showed that it is still very easy for the rich and powerful to exploit the opacity of the global financial system to enrich themselves at the expense of the public good. From the resounding cases of corruption of Petrobras and Odebrecht in Brazil to the case of former Ukrainian President, Viktor Yanukovich show how the collusion between businesses and politicians deprives national economies of revenues of billions of dollars, revenues diverted to the benefit of the few at the expense of the many. This type of systemic corruption violates the human rights, prevents sustainable development and stimulates social exclusion [5].

Corruption is a global security problem, regarded as a major problem for a long time, but recognized as a first-degree challenge to international security only recently to loudly state at present that corruption is a gross violation of fundamental human rights.

Current studies reveal important information on the linkages between transnational organized crime and corruption as major threats to political stability, human security, democracy and economic development [12].

According to the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), Somalia, Southern Sudan, North Korea and Syria are perceived as the most corrupt countries in the world. These countries are mentioned as countries with poor performance in terms of fighting corruption, having weak institutions and governance. For the tenth consecutive year, Somalia has held the worst ranking in the CPI: in 2016 it scored only 10 points. Southern Sudan is rated bottom second, with a score of 11 points, followed by North Korea – 12 points, and Syria – 13 points. These countries are characterized by widespread corruption, underperforming governance and weak institutions [5].

The situation in 2016 showed that the social inequality and systemic corruption are mutually reinforcing and persist throughout the world. Thus, the situation leads to dissatisfaction with the political class and provides favorable environment for the emergence of populist politicians. The largest decline was registered in Qatar's CPI index, which dropped by 10 points compared to the previous year, Kuwait and Bahrain (each down 8 points). Among Eastern Partnership countries, Georgia showed an increased progress, ranking 44 (in 2015, it ranked 52), scoring 57 points. In 69% of the 176 countries included in the Corruption Perceptions Index the score in 2016 was below 50, on a scale from 0 ("highly corrupt") to 100 ("not at all corrupt"), thus showing how massive and widespread is corruption in the public sector worldwide. The CPI average in 2016 for EU countries was 64.6 points and for the Eastern Partnership countries – 32.4 points [5].

So, according to the research and analyses undertaken by professionals, 2016 did not bring major changes in this respect. Protesters around the world send a strong signal to decision-makers – it is time to fight high level corruption, to take urgent anti-corruption action.

Moldova scored 30 points in the 2016 CPI of the Transparency International [4], and ranked 123 out of 176 participating countries (for comparison, in 2015, the score was 33 points, it ranked 103 out of 168 countries). Thus, it is worth mentioning that in 2016, CPI results are the worst for Moldova in the last five years. For comparison, Russia and Ukraine ranked 131st and Romania 57 in this ranking.

Despite the fact that Moldova adopted a series of anti-corruption laws in 2016, that the reform of anticorruption bodies continued, an agreement with the IMF was signed and funding from development partners was unlocked, a series of events show the fact that laws are not working, democratic values are undermined and Moldova turns into a captive state [8].

Corruption is the main evil in Moldova and a failure of the government, which, through the existing functional system, uses the ruling networks through special levers of power to gain certain benefits and revenue streams. Currently, we are dealing with serious issues and problems of governance in the banking sector, policy gaps between pre-election and post-election periods, economic downturn of the main trade partners of Moldova and increased geopolitical tensions. Migrant workers' remittances, foreign trade and cross-border exposures of the banking sector are the main channels through which external shocks affect the country's economy [6].

Corruption, which is a phenomenon typical of the bureaucratic state, of the state budget, which permanently orients the direct or indirect/hidden energies of the nation to its own supply and not towards a healthy, normal evolution, is universal and is not characteristic only for the Moldovan society. It is considered that corruption is the misuse of public office, misuse meaning personal or a particular group's interest, which has a direct impact on economic and social development, damaging the potential benefits of free market forces, market economy rules are distorted and companies "bid on commission" to obtain an economically profitable contract.

Therefore, the aforementioned situations often hide activities related to functioning of the state. As a result, population is outraged and social unrest occurs. According to the author, the system itself is corrupt and the only way to change things in the country would be to change this system by setting up a mechanism of external (foreign) monitoring and verification. The legacy of this system, the so-called ruling network, was shifted from the outset to serve a specific target that has nothing to do with public administration, but the vested interest and personal enrichment of decision-makers, their relatives and close friends.

The democratization of Moldova revealed a number of problems that were previously partially preserved, partly, "cultivated" by the former Soviet regime. In general, most difficulties Moldova has been facing during the transition stem from the Soviet legacy. Economic legacy is manifested by a high degree of state interference in the processes taking place in the economy, in private sector activity through control bodies and numerous legislative and normative regulations; centralized distribution of funds from the consolidated state budget to the budgets of local governments; artificial regulation of energy prices.

Soviet legacy will continue to be an issue that will dominate directly or indirectly Moldova's developments as a state. The present situation is a mutation, a compromise between the Soviet system of values and the new reality of the market economy. Moldovan paternalism took the place of Soviet statist; the socialist system of distribution of goods in the state gave way to the so-called socially oriented market

economy, etc. The main factor that will propagate the legacy problem is the mentality of citizens rooted in Soviet psychosocial model and overlaid with the set of traditional values of Moldovans.

The democratic transition process in Moldova is a multidimensional phenomenon that is characterized by a high degree of complexity of the dual transition - political transition and transition to market economy. However, it should be mentioned that the double transition of Moldova was complemented by the need to build its statehood, admitting that “in addition to democratization and mercerization, post-communist states have inherited weak, inefficient bureaucratic institutions which had to be reformed” [11]. In this sense, the analysis of the idea of Moldovan statehood is not easy at all and it is worth mentioning that, to a great extent, a political structure was formed on this territory taking into account the permanent international confrontations between the great powers. Therefore, during the years of independence, Moldova showed a high degree of vulnerability of one of the main components of the state in terms of democratization and national security – the idea of state. Statehood crisis is expressed through an internal and an external dimension. The internal dimension of the crisis in Moldova’s statehood includes low confidence in state authorities, the state’s inability to manage the entire territory and the high level of corruption in the country. In this context, according to opinion surveys conducted in Moldova, the population is highly distrustful in the main institutions of the state [10]. Another direct challenge to the consolidation of statehood is corruption, which has a profound impact on the entire social mechanism that has taken alarming proportions and dimensions in Moldova. Also, the vulnerability of Moldovan statehood is expressed directly by the separatism of the Transnistrian region that questions the existence of the state. The external dimension of the crisis of the Moldovan statehood is conditional on non-recognition by the Russian Federation of the real independence of the Republic of Moldova and its status of neutrality, as well as the direct support given to the Transnistrian separatism [3].

The results of the project for the evaluation of the Moldovan National Security System, the perception of security among the population and the citizens, and the evaluation at the level of elites of civil society, academics and experts from within the Moldovan system of security institutions are spectacular and show that the common Moldovan citizen’s perception of security means political stability, fighting corruption, weak capacity of leaders and decision makers to develop and implement public policies, the war and violent military conflict [2].

According to sociological studies conducted by the same project, the main security concerns remain war, political instability of Government, corruption, inefficiency of governance and poor training of person sin public office, respectively, the lack of general confidence that Moldova is a serious state and can fulfill the duties of defending the national security in all areas where there are threats, risks and vulnerabilities. Suspicion, division of society and concern regarding the orientation of the others introduce other elements of difficulty in building a cohesive society and political will, even in areas of strategic importance such as foreign policy, security solutions or formulas for the defense of Moldova [2].

Therefore, the specific findings of the project show that corruption is the biggest problem of security of Moldova. Therefore, it should be listed as such in the strategy, so that all state institutions are concerned with the fight against corruption. Corruption affects economic life (it blocks the investments, alters

competition, leads to migration) and voting (in elections or Parliament, depending on the law), political decision making or security, increasing the vulnerabilities of the state.

Public procurements and organization of political parties in the form of corporations lead to corruption, and lack of transparency and democracy exists both within parties and in the Parliament, Specific local footprints nepotism and cronyism.

Institutions meant to fight corruption, ensure integrity, monitor campaign expenses of parties, public spending and the funding of political parties are not working, are inefficient, or are not allowed to do their job because of political appointments and interference. It is necessary to ensure efficiency and transparency in these of foreign assistance. To solve the problem of corruption, quite strong external pressures, transparent party democracy, transparent procurements, transparency of political party funding are necessary [2].

The published literature states that persons who hold or have held positions of public interest such as government officials, heads of government agencies, politicians, party officials, etc. and their families and relatives should receive increased attention. Increased attention would prevent fraud of banks, and acting against the people of Moldova through lies and lawlessness. By law, any banking transaction is followed by several state institutions, which are obliged to quickly intervene in case of substantial amounts being transferred to ghost companies or suspicious individuals. Through such situations, state institutions demonstrate incompetence and lack of professionalism, being unable to reveal transgressions. To prevent any state official from violating the law or the political involvement in banking operations, state institutions should be interested in fighting lawlessness. Control institutions responsible for the financial security of the state, fighting corruption and organized crime, for the maintenance of which millions of taxpayers' money is spent, should be punished and reformed [1, p. 72].

Thus, the banking system was used for laundering money from both internal and external sources. Among the major internal risks of the country are mafiozation, oligarchization, stolen billion and corruption. We have become known worldwide due to the theft of the billion lei, equivalent to 15% of country's GDP [7].

Making a statistical evaluation of the corruption phenomenon, in terms of number of persons convicted for corruption offences, we see that the number of convictions is relatively small, so corruption grows and penetrates easily more and more areas of society. Therefore, this recognizes that state institutions are weak and lack the ability/will to find the facts and acts of corruption on time and counter them. Inability of institutions or unwillingness of state is due to the mutual interest of the parties involved in acts and facts of corruption [9].

The lack of clear legislation, legal norms, regulation, and the absence of implicit legal obligations of those responsible in the state cannot lead to criminal liability. This resulted in the state annual budget which lost billions of lei as a result of fraudulent schemes operated by criminal networks, an obvious vagueness, as a result of which we still cannot say strongly that justice in Moldova can be separated from politics. To have affair, strong and independent justice system, which is always on the side of the law, requires joint collaboration to restore the dignity the justice system deserves. We can rethink and correctly restore justice by recognizing the role of justice in affirming democracy. Justice is one of the basic pillars of a strong society, the backbone of society. Despite this, the international press considers Moldova as a state

with a banking black hole, noting thus that the main risks in the short-term perspective refer to serious vulnerabilities and governance issues in the banking sector, discrepancies of politics during pre-election and post-election periods, downturn of economic activity of Moldova's main trading partners as well as increased geopolitical tensions.

The activity of central public institutions continues to be hampered by corruption, which affects the democratic decision-making mechanism in Moldova, and the fight against corruption is limited, being intended to counteract the consequences and not the causes of this phenomenon. Since independence, corruption has gained momentum due to the transition from the old authoritarian structures to democratic institutions. Meanwhile, corruption has managed to penetrate and to assert itself in the highest government structures. Despite the serious efforts of the bodies empowered to identify as many acts of corruption as possible, its extent is not abating, which generates a feeling of a formal process, unnatural for the fight against corruption by those institutions.

The fight against corruption is a whole culture in Moldova. Corruption can only be fought in cooperation with each member of the civil society, because if left only to institutions responsible for recording cases of corruption (NA C, MIA, Prosecution Office), it cannot succeed as long as joint efforts are not made, primarily by the Government. Simple citizens feel powerless against the system, so actions by civil society and various NGOs must be as efficient as possible. Ignoring this goal by the Government members represents a simulation of the process of fighting corruption, which creates the impression that Moldovan Government fails to fight corruption. The general public understands this and is not satisfied with the measures and initiatives undertaken to fight this evil.

A truly democratic country should overcome the obsolete mentality and ways of thinking by accepting democratic values and practices. These barriers impede the transition process and significantly reduce our country's efforts in maintaining the transparency of the budget process and public spending. Maintaining transparency of the budget process and public spending is one of the most important tools for meeting the pressing needs of society and ensuring progress and sustainable development of the country. Improving budgetary transparency and its monitoring would lead to meeting public needs and would ensure a substantial increase in the standard of living of population by streamlining public policies on fighting money laundering and transparent management of funds [1, p. 66-78].

Thus, identification of viable strategies for collaboration and exchange of experience between the Moldovan decision-makers and civil society organizations would help considerably to implement a viable national policy. This will allow Moldova to adjust to international and European standards.

The involvement of civil society organizations in this process will allow building the capacity to help strengthen the security and stability at regional and international levels. For effective cooperation, all EU policies and the development policy of the Republic of Moldova must be coherent, and civil society organizations must be motivated to enhance and improve coordination and coherence with these policies [1, p. 66-78].

Structural changes in the international environment are generated in the last two decades by intensified globalization, which have determined the awareness of new threats to national and international security. The fight against corruption is hampered by integrity problems even within the institutions that must enforce the law and fight against corruption. Thus, the linkages between organized crime and

corruption show a link between crime as a goal and crime as a means. So, most times, the organized crime groups use corruption as means of ensuring the protection of illicit activities; apart from this, the need to hide money coming from acts of corruption lead to ingenious financial schemes to launder money coming from acts of corruption.

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that, at present, corruption, which has enormous power to destroy the security and defense of states, is not on the agenda for bilateral and multilateral exchanges at high level. Experts and professionals in this area do not participate in making critical decisions. Decision makers are the ones who must promote democracy, the rule of law, free competition, and individual freedom, contribute to observance of human rights, strengthening of institutional capacities and provide adequate assistance for ensuring the effective functioning of a state. The countries of the world, acting in the spirit of genuine democracy and the rule of law, must adopt, in their fight against any destabilizing events: terrorism, corruption, organized crime or any similar activities, a defensive attitude for the entire system, citizens and countries. Developing a common policy concept of security and defense at international level to optimize the fight against corruption aims at creating common databases and an institutionalized system of contacts to improve and develop a new dimension of collaboration within multinational coalitions; reforming sector services by institutional depolarization; development and implementation of a modern concept of reform; implementation of legislative and institutional changes, improving staff management and training in accordance with international standards.

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14. Note. 2012 CPI: index score - 36, ranked 94 out of 178 countries included in the index; 2013 CPI: scored 35 points, ranked 102 out of 177 countries; 2014 CPI: scored 35 points, ranked 103 out of 175 countries, 2015 CPI: scored 33 points, ranked 103 out of 168 countries).