

## *Chapter Eight*

# Challenges Of Democracy: Corruption

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On almost any given day, corruption is in the headlines, often outraging citizens not only around the world but also in the European Union (EU) and neighboring countries. In many instances they are using their votes or grass-roots people power for justice, accountability and democracy. This chapter will examine the linkages between corruption, authoritarianism and violent conflict, their legacy in Europe and its neighboring countries, and implications for European democracy and security. One often overlooked but essential source of anti-corruption clout is the grass-roots, organized in nonviolent movements and campaigns. The second part of this chapter will provide a systemic conceptualization of corruption along with a conceptual grounding of people power. It will examine how citizens wield this form of pressure. Recent evidence-based research on such bottom-up civic initiatives will be cited. People power and citizen mobilization can build democracy from the bottom-up, and in the process, are redefining both our understanding and practice of democracy.

### European Snapshots

*People who failed to prevent this embezzlement, people who failed to find criminals, people who failed to find where the money is, people who failed to seize this money—of course they don't inspire any trust among the public.*<sup>1</sup>

—Stanislav Pavlovsky, Dignity and Truth Movement, Moldova  
(former judge, European Court of Human Rights)

*I came here hoping that something will change, that we will manage to return democracy to Macedonia. I hope it is not too late for that.*<sup>2</sup>

—Julija Krsteva, Protester, Macedonia

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1. Rayhan Demytrie, BBC News, September 14, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34244341>.

2. Sinisa Jakov Marusic, Balkan Insight, May 17, 15, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-braces-for-big-anti-government-protest>.

*Beyond their opposition to austerity [Manuela Carmena, Ada Colau], they share a belief in the public good and an understanding of democracy as a system that shouldn't be left to the whims of so-called professionals... The new mottos are *confluencia* and *transparencia*: people and parties joining forces in order to end the corrupt, paternalistic politics of backroom deals, self-enrichment, and *bacer la vista gorda* ("turning a blind eye")."*<sup>3</sup>

—Bécquer Seguín and Sebastiaan Faber, on the May 2015 Spanish local and regional elections

In tiny Moldova, lawyers, former parliamentarians and officials, journalists and civic activists formed the Dignity and Truth movement during winter 2015, after \$1 billion vanished from the country's major banks. Meanwhile in Macedonia, citizens across the contentious ethnic divide have been mobilizing since spring 2015 over a wire-tapping and election-rigging scandal. They added pressure on the intransigent prime minister, who agreed to a political deal on new elections and reforms, facilitated by EU officials.

Back in the EU, also in May of that year, local and regional elections heralded the end of Spanish politics as usual. Two new parties—*Podemos* (We Can) on the left of the political spectrum and *Ciudadanos* (Citizens), on the right—made stunning gains. Both emerged out of civic mobilizations against austerity, inequality and corruption, including but not limited to the *Indignados* (The Outraged) movement. Over in the UK, the latest cash-for-access scandal erupted, after two Members of Parliament (and former foreign secretaries), were secretly filmed offering their services for money to journalists posing as representatives of a foreign company.<sup>4</sup> In September 2015, just after the House of Commons Standards Committee absolved them of wrongdoing, stating that "there was no breach of the rules on paid lobbying," some of its members divulged that they had misgivings about the decision.<sup>5</sup> "It is probably true that

3. Bécquer Seguín and Sebastiaan Faber, "In Spain's Seismic Elections, 'It's the Victory of David Over Goliath,'" *The Nation*, May 26, 2015 <http://www.thenation.com/article/spains-seismic-elections-its-victory-david-over-goliath/>.

4. Malcom Rifkind (Tory) and Jack Straw (Labour) were suspended from their political parties. Rifkind resigned from office while Jack Straw did not run in the May 7, 2015 elections; Anoosh Chakelian, "Lobbying Sting: Jack Straw and Malcom Rifkind Suspended from Their Parties," *New Statesman*, February 23, 2015, <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/02/lobbying-sting-jack-straw-and-malcolm-rifkind-suspended-their-parties>.

5. Peter Dominiczak, Claire Newell, Edward Malnick, and Christopher Hope, "MPs who 'Cleared' Jack Straw and Sir Malcolm Rifkind Reveal 'Misgivings,'" *The Telegraph*, September 17, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/investigations/11873070/MPs-who-cleared-Jack-Straw-and-Sir-Malcolm-Rifkind-reveal-misgivings.html>.

they [Straw and Rifkind] did not break the rules—and therefore we have got a problem with the rules,” conceded a member.<sup>6</sup>

That same month the BBC ran a story on a leaked report conducted by Kroll, a financial investigations company. Moldova’s missing \$1 billion was traced to Fortuna United LP (limited partnership), with an address in a run-down apartment north of Edinburgh. It is composed of two Seychelles companies, whose directors happen to own Royston Business Consultancy, which set up Fortuna United and is at the same location. Contacted by the news service, one of the directors declared, “I don’t have anything to worry about. I didn’t commit fraud myself or my partner didn’t do it. We comply with all the regulations.”<sup>7</sup> As these latter two cases reveal, countries perceived as relatively clean on some corruption measures look very different when one examines illicit financial flows, money laundering, and permissible abuses of power for private gain.

## Corruption and the Democracy-Accountability Defecit

*There are no corruption-free zones in Europe. We are not doing enough. That’s true for all member states.*<sup>8</sup>

—Cecilia Malmström, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs

The above stories are snapshots of the corruption challenges and threats facing the EU and surrounding countries. Recent research and opinion polls add to this less than rosy picture. Corruption is eroding the public’s trust in their political systems, governments, and institutions, from the EU down to their national and municipal levels. Transparency International’s 2013 Global Corruption Barometer found that across Europe and neighboring countries, political parties, a core pillar of democratic systems, are perceived to be among the institutions most affected by graft and abuse.<sup>9</sup> They included Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Finland, Germany,

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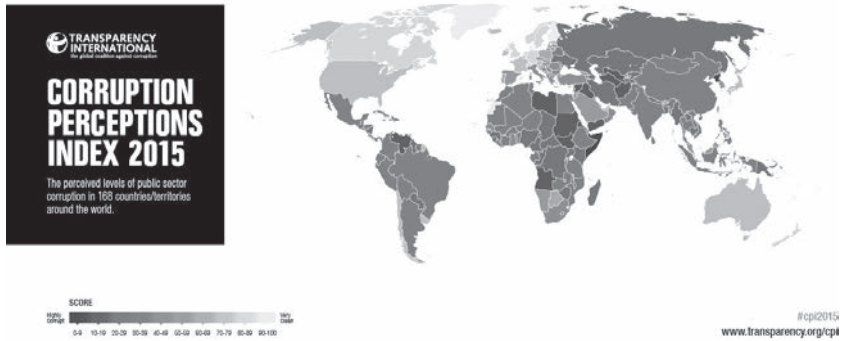
6. Ibid.

7. Tim Whewell, File on 4, BBC, October 7, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34445201>.

8. Ian Traynor, “There Are No Corruption-Free Zones in Europe, Commissioner Claims,” *The Guardian*, February 3, 2104, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/03/european-union-corruption-bribery-sleaze>.

9. A total of 114,000 people were surveyed in 107 countries.

**Figure 1. Transparency International's 2015 Corruption Perceptions Index**



Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.<sup>10</sup>

When it comes to perceptions of public sector graft, one finds a large range across the EU and periphery, from the least corrupt to some abysmal performers (Figure 1).

The 2015 Edelman Trust Barometer, which measures public trust in the institutions of government, media, NGOs and business in 27 countries spanning the globe, found that nearly two-thirds are now “Dis-trusters” among the general online population. This included France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the UK.<sup>11</sup>

A landmark 2014 European Commission Anti-Corruption Report echoed these results. It concluded:

Provoked by the crisis, social protests have targeted not only economic and social policies, but also the integrity and accountability of

10. Transparency International 2013 Global Corruption Barometer, October 14, 2015, <http://www.transparency.org/gcb2013/>.

11. 2015 Edelman Trust Barometer, October 11, 2015, <http://www.edelman.com/insights/intellectual-property/2015-edelman-trust-barometer/>.

political elites. High-profile scandals associated with corruption, misuse of public funds or unethical behavior by politicians have contributed to public discontent and mistrust of the political system.<sup>12</sup>

Malfesance is also hurting taxpayers, socio-economic development, and the provision of public services. The European Commission report found that corruption cost taxpayers around 120 billion euros per year, the equivalent of the EU's annual budget. While member states have most of the necessary institutions and legal instruments essential to prevent and combat corruption, measures taken by countries are uneven, genuine political will is often lacking, and public procurement is particularly vulnerable.<sup>13</sup> A 2013 study by the European Research Centre for Anti-corruption and State-building also found that in 20 out of 27 member states (before Croatia's accession), "government favoritism was the rule rather than the exception."<sup>14</sup> Even education is not immune. According to the Council of Europe, widespread corruption exists in this sector, it is found in mature EU democracies, and it touches all levels of education.<sup>15</sup>

Transparency International has also assessed corruption risks in ten EU institutions, including the European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Ministers, and the European Council. It found that these bodies are susceptible to corruption because of loopholes and lax enforcement of ethics, transparency and financial control rules.<sup>16</sup> The report concluded that "failure to make full and proper use of existing controls will not reassure a public that are skeptical of the commitment of politicians and bureaucrats to a more open and ethical style of government."<sup>17</sup>

Public opinion corroborates these findings. A Eurobarometer survey, released along with the report, found that 76 percent of Europeans

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12. Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: *EU Anti-Corruption Report* (Brussels: European Commission, February 2, 2014), 8.

13. Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, *Ibid.*

14. Alina Mingiu-Pippidi, "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Controlling Corruption in the European Union," Working Paper No. 35, European Research Centre for Anti-Corruption and State-Building, April 2013, 21.

15. Snežana Samardžić-Marković, "New Ethical Approach to Combat Widespread Corruption in Education," *New Eastern Europe*, September 7, 2015, <http://neurope.eu/article/new-ethical-approach-to-combat-widespread-corruption-in-education/>.

16. Transparency International EU Office, "First EU Integrity Report Highlights Risks of Corruption in European Institutions," Press Release, April 24, 2014.

17. Transparency International EU Office, "The European Union Integrity System," 2014, p. 9.

believe that corruption is widespread and 56 percent said that the level in their country increased since 2011. Overall, the majority of respondents stated that corruption exists in EU institutions, in their national public institutions (70%), and in their local or regional public institutions (77%). Over half of EU respondents agreed that bribery and the abuse of positions of power are widespread among politicians (national, regional and local levels) (56%) and among political parties (59%).<sup>18</sup>

## Corruption, Authoritarianism and Violent Conflict: A European Legacy

### *Corruption and Authoritarianism*

*Corruption may be a scourge for the ordinary people, but it is a vital governing tool for authoritarian regimes.*<sup>19</sup>

—Minxin Pei

Corruption is one of the most pernicious legacies of authoritarianism. The two go hand in hand. At its core, corruption involves abuse of power, impunity and unaccountability of powerholders, which is the embodiment of dictatorships. Autocrats and cronies thwart or inhibit rule of law and transparency, not only in the government and overall state, but in other sectors they influence or control, such as the economy, education, and media. They exploit natural resources and construct economic entities to enrich themselves, their families and other elites.

Autocrats understand well that their grip on power is not absolute. Corruption is a means through which they can rule and sustain control. It is used to buy and maintain loyalties from various pillars in society, from security forces to the bureaucracy, business, media, and sometimes minority ethnic groups and organized religion. In such regimes, powerholders also turn a blind eye to corruption, allowing self-enrichment from the office clerk all the way up to ministers. It is yet another method, indirect in this case, to sustain support.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, fabricated accusa-

18. Special Eurobarometer 397, European Commission, Directorate-General for Home Affairs, February 2014.

19. Minxin Pei, "Government by Corruption," *Forbes*, January 22, 2009, [http://www.forbes.com/2009/01/22/corruption-government-dictatorship-biz-corruption09-cx\\_mp\\_0122pei.html](http://www.forbes.com/2009/01/22/corruption-government-dictatorship-biz-corruption09-cx_mp_0122pei.html)

20. Shaazka Beyerle, "People Power Versus the Corruption, Impunity, Authoritarian Nexus," in Matthew Burrows and Maria Stephan, eds., *Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback?* (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council).

tions of corruption are often used to neutralize political competitors inside the regime, reformers, honest officials, political opponents, investigative journalists, civil society groups, human rights activists and organizers of nonviolent movements and campaigns. Over time, corruption can often become entrenched in the system in an escalating spiral, as more and more is needed to secure loyalty, support and riches for the regime. Taken to an extreme, such governments can become kleptocracies.<sup>21</sup>

Then again, corruption is the Achilles heel of authoritarians. It can lead to their downfall. Not only does graft and abuse erode their legitimacy, it rots their regimes from the inside out. It can enrich and strengthen competing political elites, who seek to usurp those in power.<sup>22</sup> As time goes by, this stimulates greater and deeper discontent among the populace, which ultimately can lead to nonviolent uprisings or tragically to violent conflict.<sup>23</sup> Some perceptive authoritarian regimes understand this dynamic. President Xi Jinping of China professed, “A great deal of facts tell us that the worse corruption becomes the only outcome will be the end of the party and the end of the state! We must be vigilant.”<sup>24</sup>

The second paradox concerns the capacity of autocracies to fight graft and abuse. Even if there is some degree of political will at the top, when corruption is endemic, oppressive rulers cannot rein it in, let alone stamp it out. Yet, they fear one of the strongest forces against malfeasance—an empowered and active citizenry. A Chinese saying, attributed to a former top leader, encapsulates the dilemma: “Corruption will kill the party; fighting corruption will kill it too.”<sup>25</sup>

## Corruption and Violent Conflict

*War economies are built on corruption as the parties in conflict rely on criminal syndicates, fraud and bribery to grease the wheels of the supply chain...*<sup>26</sup>

—Cheyanne Scharbatke-Church and Kirby Reiling

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21. Sarah Chayes, *Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security* (New York: Norton, 2015).

22. Kanybek Nur-tegin and Hans Czap, “Corruption: Democracy, Autocracy and Political Stability,” *Economic Analysis and Policy* 42, no. 1, March 2012.

23. Beyerle, *Ibid.*

24. “China’s Xi Warns of Unrest if Graft not Tackled,” Reuters, November 18, 2012.

25. Pei, *op. cit.*

26. Cheyanne Scharbatke-Church and Kirby Reiling, “Lilies That Fester: Seeds of Corruption and Peacebuilding,” *New Routes Journal of Peace Research and Action*, Vol. 14, no. 3-4 (2009), p. 3.

Violent conflict and corruption are intimately linked. Malfeasance is an enabler and sometimes the mechanism through which militaries, paramilitaries, non-state insurgents, and organized crime raise money, shift illicit finances across borders, purchase arms and supplies, and many other activities. A vicious cycle can develop, whereby more and more corruption is needed in order to maintain the conflict, which is perpetuated as warring groups begin to plunder resources or engage in illicit activities not only to fight but ultimately to enrich themselves.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, when the killing ends, corruption does not evaporate.

One reason stems from its systemic nature. Systems of graft and abuse that developed during the violent conflict tend to reconfigure. The vested interests previously benefitting from corruption adapt to the new reality and find new sources of illicit enrichment from the plethora of international funds pouring in for reconstruction and development, state building, and humanitarian aid.<sup>28</sup> A second reason is that many of the principal actors involved in the fighting retain influence and power after its cessation (often with the support of international actors). The Balkans is an example of such outcomes. For instance, mafia entities in Bosnia and Kosovo sought to tie up their power by gaining control over political and local economic processes.<sup>29</sup>

### *Implications for European Democracy and Security*

Once one takes into consideration Europe's recent experiences with authoritarianism and violent conflict, the challenges that corruption is posing to democracy, powerholder accountability, and state-building are not surprising. Prior to joining the EU, the recent histories of many member states were strewn with violent strife, coups d'état, and/or dictatorships (military or communist), including Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain. Neighboring countries experienced similar convulsions, from Albania to Georgia, Moldova,

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27. "Same Old Story: A Background Study on Natural Resources in the Democratic Republic of Congo," *Global Witness*, June 2004, 5, [http://www.globalwitness.org/media\\_library\\_detail.php/118/en/same\\_old\\_story](http://www.globalwitness.org/media_library_detail.php/118/en/same_old_story)

28. Shaazka Beyerle, "Civil Resistance and the Corruption–Conflict Nexus," *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, special issue on "Perspectives on Peace, Conflict and War," vol. 38, no. 2.

29. Karen Ballentine and Heiko Nitzschke, "The Political Economy of Civil War and Conflict Transformation," (Berlin: Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management, April 2005), [http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue3\\_ballentine\\_nitzschke.pdf](http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue3_ballentine_nitzschke.pdf).



Russia, Turkey and Ukraine. The Balkans suffered a double-whammy following the disintegration of Yugoslavia, ethnic cleansing, war, and the emergence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. Taken together, the majority of these countries are also the ones found to have significant corruption challenges.

The implications are sobering. Corruption and self-serving political elites are undermining the quality of democracy in the European Union, and its consolidation and resilience among neighboring nations. EU citizens are losing trust in electoral politics. Intolerance and ultra-nationalism are moving into the political sphere. During the 2014 European Parliament elections, anti-immigration parties won 140 of the 751 seats. Some existing governments are turning ominously authoritarian, such as Hungary, and potentially now in Poland, given the Law and Justice Party's efforts to change the Constitutional Courts and ultimately the Constitution. Over the weekend of November 12, 2015, the new Committee to Defend Democracy rallied thousands in cities across the country.<sup>30</sup> Similar forces can be seen in the candidate, potential candidate states and neighboring countries of the EU, where corruption is eroding the rule of law and the legitimacy of governments. The Turkish government is backtracking, in light of media crackdowns and ongoing efforts both before and after the November 2015 elections for constitutional changes to increase presidential powers. Relatively new democracies are weakened by malfasant political parties. Citizens may now have the right to vote but their choices are often limited and abysmal.

Corruption also hampers the capacity of new democracies to provide basic public services. Transparency International's 2013 Global Corruption Barometer found that Albanians and Serbs cited medical and health services as the institutions most affected by corruption.<sup>31</sup> By 2015, the former health minister of Ukraine estimated that at a minimum 30-40% of the medicine budget is stolen, while equipment is bought at inflated prices, and then sometimes not even used.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, it is citizens who often bear the brunt of graft and abuse, and many are trying to leave. In addition to the heart wrenching exodus to

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30. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/Poland/12047373/Opposition-demonstrations-as-Poland-faces-constitutional-crisis.html>.

31. Transparency International website, October 14, 2015, <http://www.transparency.org/gcb2013/results>.

32. Oliver Bullough, "Welcome to the Most Corrupt Nation in Europe," *The Guardian*, February 6, 2015.

the EU from Syria, Libya and beyond, a mass migration from the Balkans is also headed in the same direction. A Friedrich Ebert Foundation survey found that among 14-to-29-year-olds, almost two-thirds want to leave Albania, and over half from Kosovo and Macedonia.<sup>33</sup> According to a SpiegelOnline report, from January to August 2015, 29,323 Albanians, 5,514 Macedonians, 2,425 Montenegrins, and 11,642 Serbians applied for asylum in Germany. Over 100,000 Kosovars left the new country from about September 2014–August 2015.<sup>34</sup> A clique of corrupt politicians is seen to hold top government positions, jobs in the oversized public administration are said to go to their relatives and supporters, and profits from shady deals are difficult to trace. “They have lost all confidence in their young democracies, and they dream of a better life,” state the authors.<sup>35</sup> It should be noted that these figures don’t include those who cross the borders without a legal status.

Finally, corruption is directly and indirectly impacting the European security landscape with geopolitical ramifications. The following two cases are illustrative of its cascading effect.

*Moldova.* An October 2015 Associated Press investigation detailed how criminal networks in the country, with possible Russian ties, have been trying to sell radioactive material to violent extremist groups in the Middle East. Over five years, a Moldovan police-FBI sting operation uncovered cross-border smuggling with Russia and Ukraine, uranium possibly coming from the melted-down Chernobyl reactor, and an offer to secure a visa for a buyer interested in attack helicopters, armored personnel carriers, dirty bomb plans, and radioactive material.<sup>36</sup> “The developments represent the fulfillment of a long-feared scenario in which organized crime gangs are trying to link up with groups such as the Islamic State and al-Qaida—both of which have made clear their ambition to use weapons of mass destruction,” concludes the report.

Then there is Moldova’s 1 billion dollars, discussed earlier in this chapter. There are indications that politicians from the ruling pro-Europe

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33. Susanne Koebl, Katrin Kuntz and Walter Mayr, “What is Driving the Balkan Exodus,” *Spiegel Online*, August 26, 2015, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/western-balkan-exodus-puts-pressure-on-germany-and-eu-a-1049274.html>.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*

36. Desmond Butler and Vadim Ghirda, “AP Investigation: Nuclear Black Market Seeks IS Extremists,” Associated Press, October 7, 2015, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/9f77a17c001f4cf3baeb28990b0d92eb/ap-investigation-nuclear-smugglers-sought-terrorist-buyers>.

coalition were involved in the theft.<sup>37</sup> The disgraced government is seen as turning a blind-eye to corruption, paying lip-service to combatting it, and being too close to oligarchs.<sup>38</sup> The Dignity and Truth Movement, though pro-Europe in perspective, is demanding the government's resignation and early elections. Could this herald a victory for pro-Russian opposition parties linked to their own set of oligarchs? Perhaps, if enough citizens want to punish the present group in power or simply want them out. The geopolitical consequences for Europe and beyond are grave.

*Ukraine.* While graft and impunity have plagued the country since its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, there is a consensus that it drastically increased during Viktor Yanukovich's rule. The most prominent elements are malfeasance in the police and judiciary, as well as state and regulatory capture throughout the public sector at all levels.<sup>39</sup> A 2015 National Integrity System report on the country concluded that "corruption remains a systemic problem in Ukraine on all levels of public administration."<sup>40</sup> Others simply say that corruption is the system.

Following the onset of the violent, pro-Russian separatist conflict in eastern Ukraine, another harsh reality set in. Corruption had seeped into all levels of the military, undermining its capabilities and putting soldiers at even greater risk in the battlefield. How does this play out on the ground? Essential equipment, such as body armor, has been found to be sub-standard. New recruits have not been given adequate supplies. Families have had to spend approximately 2000 U.S. dollars to properly equip their loved ones before sending them off to the frontlines, while others spend the money on bribes to avoid combat.<sup>41</sup> Soldiers report that supplies, food, equipment and parcels from home are stolen, and army command demand bribes for treatment of combat wounds.<sup>42</sup> Even

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37. Piotr Oleksy, "The Moldovan Indignados," *New Eastern Europe*, June 4, 2015, <http://www.neweasterneurope.eu/articles-and-commentary/1616-the-moldovan-indignados>.

38. Judy Dempsey, "Waiting for a New Moldova," *Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe*, Carnegie Europe, September 10, 2015.

39. Andrew McDevitt, *The State of Corruption: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine* (Berlin: Transparency International, 2015).

40. "Ukraine: Fight against Graft Inhibited by Government Influence on Anti-corruption Institutions," Transparency International-Ukraine, August 2015.

41. Aleksandr Lapko, "Ukraine's Own Worst Enemy: In War Time Corruption in Ukraine Can Be Deadly," *New York Times*, October 7, 2014.

42. Clement Ch, *Corruption: The Achilles Heel of Ukrainian Army*, Euromaidan Press, October 6, 2014; Alya Shandra, "Ukrainian Soldiers are Casualties of Corrupt Army," Euromaidan Press, April 30, 2015, <http://euromaidanpress.com/2015/04/30/ukrainian-soldiers-are-casualties-of-corrupt-army/>.

more disturbing, there are allegations that some high ranking officers sold information about a unit's movements and positions to Russians.<sup>43</sup> Transparency International-UK's 2013 Government Defence Anti-Corruption Index gave Ukraine a D+. Russia got an even worse grade, D-.<sup>44</sup> Presumably the separatists are not much better. If the Ukrainian military could clean up its act, it could well gain a strategic advantage.

## A Systemic Definition Of Corruption

The most commonly used definitions of corruption are: "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain" and "the abuse of public office for private gain."<sup>45</sup> They do encompass the phenomenon, but there are some limitations to them. First, corruption is not merely a collection of interactions between a corruptor and a corruptee (willing or unwilling). Second, the abuse of power is not limited to private gain, but also transpires for political gain or collective benefits for a third party, entity, group, or sector, for example, state security forces, political parties, businesses, financial services, and unions. Third, as evident in the EU and neighboring countries, corruption also occurs in the economic realm and among non-state sectors in society.

In practice, corruption functions as a system of power abuse involving a tangled web of relationships, some obvious and many others hidden. One also needs to take into consideration that within this system are long-standing interests wanting to sustain the venal status quo. They will often resort to lawsuits, intimidation, violence and even murder to thwart anti-graft efforts and stop reformers, integrity champions, investigative journalists, and activists. Thus, my preferred definition of corruption is:

a system of abuse of entrusted power for private, collective, or political gain—often involving a complex, intertwined set of relationships, some obvious, others hidden, with established vested interests, that

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43. Ibid.

44. Transparency International UK Defence and Security Program website, October 14, 2015, <http://www.defenceindex.org/>.

45. "Frequently Asked Questions about Corruption," Transparency International website, [http://www.transparency.org/news\\_room/faq/corruption\\_faq](http://www.transparency.org/news_room/faq/corruption_faq); Daniel Kaufmann, "Ten Myths about Governance and Corruption," *Finance and Development*, 41 (September 2005), <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2005/09/index.htm>.

can operate vertically within an institution or horizontally cut across political, economic and social spheres in a society or transnationally.<sup>46</sup>

Malfesance and impunity can also be viewed from a bottom-up perspective, through the experiences of regular people. “Where corruption is endemic, it is the poorest that pay the highest price,” observed Laurence Cockcroft, author and co-founder of Transparency International.<sup>47</sup> Aruna Roy, one of the founders of the Right-to-Information movement in India, characterizes corruption as: “the external manifestation of the denial of a right, an entitlement, a wage, a medicine...”<sup>48</sup> Thus, it constitutes a form of oppression and a loss of freedom that people can directly experience.

### **Adding People Power and Civil Resistance to the Anti-Corruption Equation**

People power refers to the social, economic, political and psychological pressure that is exerted by significant numbers of individuals organized together around shared grievances and goals, conducting nonviolent tactics, such as civil disobedience, non-cooperation, strikes, boycotts, monitoring, petition drives, low-risk mass actions, power-holder engagement, community skills-building, and demonstrations. Gene Sharp, a seminal nonviolent resistance scholar, recorded over 198 types of tactics, and new ones are constantly generated by movements and campaigns, including those targeting corruption.<sup>49</sup> People power is a positive force that constructively confronts and seeks to change injustice and oppression.

Civil resistance—also called nonviolent resistance, nonviolent conflict and nonviolent action—is the civilian-based method to fight oppression and injustice through which people power is wielded. While active and strategic, it does not employ the threat or use of violence against human beings.

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46. This systemic definition was developed by the author, who wishes to credit for inspiration, points made by Maria Gonzalez de Asis, World Bank, in an unpublished, working paper.

47. Laurence Cockcroft, *Global Corruption: Money, Power, and Ethics in the Modern World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 3.

48. Aruna Roy, “Survival and Right to Information,” Gulam Rasool Third Memorial Lecture. MKSS website, <http://www.mkssindia.org/node/42>.

49. Gene Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 2005).

People power and civil resistance impact corruption and produce change through three dynamics. First, they disrupt systems of graft and unaccountability, thereby making “business as usual” difficult or impossible. Second, they engage with powerholders and the public, in order to pull people towards their side, as well as to shift positions and loyalties within systems of corruption. Third, they apply (nonviolent) pressure through the power of numbers, that is, people collectively raising their voices over shared grievances and demands.

This framework is essential for developing new approaches to impacting corruption, gaining accountability, and building democracy. Traditional efforts to curb corruption have been top-down and elite-driven, with a focus on institutional development and reform, rules and integrity practices, such as public finance management. They are based on a flawed assumption that once anti-corruption frameworks are put in place, illicit practices will cease. But how can institutional mechanisms bring forth change, when they must be implemented by the very institutions that are corrupt? Those who are benefitting from graft are often expected to be the ones to curb it. Consequently, even when political will exists, it can be obstructed, because too many people have a stake in the dishonest status quo.

People power and civil resistance add a strategic advantage to curbing corruption. They can bring extra-institutional pressure to push for change and disrupt malfeasant systems when state and non-state powerholders are: indifferent to civic demands, beholden to special interests, corrupt and/or unaccountable, and institutional channels are blocked or ineffective.

What does this look like in reality?

*Bosnia and Herzegovina: Dosta!* (Enough!), a nonviolent, youth movement, promotes accountability and government responsibility to citizens, and seeks to foster civic participation across religious and ethnic groups in the country. In 2009 it launched a digital and on-the ground campaign that led to the resignation of Prime Minister Nedžad Branković over his acquisition of an upscale, state-owned apartment for approximately 500 euros through a series of administrative maneuvers. He left office a year and a half before his term was over.

*Italy: Addiopizzo* (Good-bye Protection Money) is a youth anti-mafia movement in Palermo that empowers businesses to publicly refuse to pay pizzo, educates schoolchildren about integrity, and mobilizes citizens to resist the Cosa Nostra crime group through simple, everyday acts,

such as patronizing pizzo-free stores and businesses (reverse boycott). By 2012, 1,000 businesses joined the pizzo-free network, a new civic group, *Libero Futuro* (Future with Freedom), was formed by the older generation of anti-mafia advocates to complement the youth movement. The latter encourages and helps businesses go through *denuncia*, the process of testifying to the police and courts about mafia extortion.

*Russia:* The Movement to Defend Khimki Forest targeted corruption and impunity, and used both nonviolent action and legal efforts to prevent the bisection of an old-growth, state-protected woodland outside Moscow for a large highway and illegal development involving the French firm, Vinci. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank pulled out of the project. In 2010, then President Dmitry Medvedev temporarily suspended the project. In June 2013, Sherpa, the French human rights lawyers' group, along with other European NGOs, filed a formal complaint of corruption against Vinci with the Paris Prosecutor. In October 2013, the magistrate announced the opening of a preliminary enquiry into financial crimes. Nonetheless, construction began and the motorway is now open through the forest. While the movement did not succeed in changing the route or stopping the project, it valiantly delayed construction for years. Activists report that traffic is as bad as before, and there may yet be repercussions depending on the French court's verdict, which had not been announced as of October 2015.

*Turkey:* In 1997, the six-week "One Minute of Darkness for Constant Light" campaign pressured powerholders to tackle the crime syndicate, which refers to a nation-wide network of politicians, parts of the police, paramilitary groups linked to state security institutions, mafia and private sector. Through low-risk mass actions based on turning off lights for one minute every evening at 9:00 p.m., approximately 30 million people mobilized around the country over six weeks. As a result, it broke the taboo of exposing the country's crime syndicate, and led to judicial investigations, trials and verdicts.

These examples come from an international research project I conducted to document, analyze and distill general lessons from organized, sustained campaigns, movements and civic initiatives to impact corruption and impunity.<sup>50</sup> Sixteen cases were documented in total. In addition

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50. The research culminated in a book: Shaazka Beyerle, *Curtailing Corruption: People Power for Accountability and Justice* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner 2014), and self-study curriculum, *Freedom from Corruption*. Information can be found here: [www.curtailingcorruption.org](http://www.curtailingcorruption.org).

to the above four, grass-roots efforts were also studied in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Egypt, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Philippines, South Korea, and Uganda.

### **Five Takeaways for Curbing Corruption and Reinforcing Democracy**

At a minimum, there are five takeaways relevant to Europe and neighboring countries.

1. Organized, well-planned, strategic civic campaigns/movements power targeting corruption very often emerge in societies enduring poor governance, poverty, low levels of literacy, and severe repression, the latter perpetrated by the state, paramilitary groups, or organized crime. In spite of these tough contexts, or perhaps because of them, citizens are mobilizing, engaging in civil resistance, wielding people power to curb corruption and injustice, and building democracy from the bottom up.
2. Citizens-organized in grass-roots movements, campaigns and community initiatives-are protagonists and have achieved outcomes, for example:
  - *Afghanistan*: Community monitoring initiatives of reconstruction and development projects achieved an 82 percent success rate (460 out of 560), whereby problems were uncovered and rectified as a result of community pressure, or those responsible for the projects (contractors and the State) cooperated during the process, or no problems were found in an otherwise highly corrupt setting.
  - *Brazil*: Winning passage of the grass-roots Ficha Limpa (Clean Slate/Record) legislation, which prohibits candidates from taking office if they have been convicted of specific crimes by more than one judge (misuse of public funds, drug trafficking, rape, murder or racism).
  - *India*: Empowering regular people to refuse bribe demands by submitting Right to Information petitions and using the “Zero-Rupee” currency, and promoting values of integrity among university students, many of whom will become the next generation of officials, educators, business people and politicians.
  - *Indonesia*: Defending the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) from an organized plot led by senior officials in the police, judiciary and



Attorney General's office to neutralize it, and securing the release of two falsely imprisoned deputy commissioners.

- *South Korea*: 69 percent of candidates deemed “unfit to run for office” (59 out of 86) lost the 2000 National Assembly elections after a national blacklisting campaign.
  - *Uganda*: SMS community monitoring of police intimidation and extortion together with locally-developed officer integrity training improved police behavior, and led to their requesting help from citizens and a civic group to overcome problems they faced within the institution.
3. Top-down and bottom-up approaches are complementary and synergistic. Bottom-up nonviolent campaigns, movements and local civic initiatives can:
- Empower and protect honest powerholders and integrity champions actively pursuing accountability, reform and change from within the system.
  - Empower and protect honest state officials who simply don't want to engage in corrupt practices, that is, noncooperation with corruption.
  - Disrupt vertical and horizontal forms of corruption, for example, through monitoring officials, parliamentarians, institutions, budgets, spending, public services, schools, hospitals, and development/anti-poverty programs.
  - Create political will to enact policies, laws and administrative mechanisms to curb illicit financial flows and/or to implement them.
  - Contribute to changing behaviors, practices and general norms regarding corruption.
4. Civic initiatives targeting corruption are incubators of democracy. They build democracy through action, such as informal elections, citizen-led surveys, monitoring elections and documenting fraud, and even voting for anti-corruption heroes. They are “exercises in participatory democracy that challenge the traditional ‘rules of the game’ in governance.”<sup>51</sup> In my research, I observed that anti-corruption movements and campaigns were sometimes precursors to nonviolent democracy movements, or successors of them in new democracies. In the latter cases, veterans went on to lead bottom-up efforts against corruption and impunity.

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51. Manuela Garza, “Social Audits as a Budget Monitoring Tool,” International Budget Partnership Learning from Each Other Series, October 2012, 6.

5. Civil society, including regular people, can be the eyes and ears of anti-corruption efforts, from reform of the police to delivery of public services to development and reconstruction efforts. They often bring valuable input to the design of these efforts, as pointed out by the deputy editor of *Ukrainian Week*.

*It is equally important for Ukraine's partners to interact with these [civil] initiatives and initiators on a regular basis to understand all the nuances of local political processes. These activists are knowledgeable enough to perceive these nuances, and most of them are not linked to the old system or its business interests. Ukraine's Western partners can make the Ukrainian government hear the voices of these activists much better than it does now.*<sup>52</sup>

—Anna Korbut

In conclusion, when political parties become entrenched, self-serving and corrupt, when voters face venal choices, when kleptocrats plunder their countries, when leaders veer to authoritarianism, democracy becomes a hollow shell. Organized civic initiatives, challenging the malfeasant status quo and engaging constructively with leaders and reformers, are upholding democracy from the bottom up. Their actions point to a new conceptualization of democracy that extends beyond representational political processes. Genuine democracy is a practice involving an active citizenry, government and state accountability, and the synergies between them.

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52. Anna Korbut, "Reforms in Ukraine: No Room for Pessimism," *Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe*, Carnegie Europe, August 6, 2015.