

CORRUPTION IN POLAND AND ROMANIA, AFTER THE FALL OF COMMUNISM

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Abstract: Corruption is like a running nose, it's a symptom of a more serious disease – the bad economy. When people give bribes, they believe it's the right thing to do, and that the person taking bribes deserves to get it. They don't report it to the authorities, because they have accepted that this is the way things are in the environment they live in. They don't believe the justice will be served. They don't believe in their government. Sometimes they don't believe it's their country and their government. Estonia prime minister Mart Laar once said that "corruption is so ingrained that it had become a way of life ...,... we didn't even understand that it wasn't moral". It takes generations to take on corruption and win the battle.

In this abstract we will present the similarities and differences in two countries – Poland and Romania. Both countries have been in the past members of the Soviet Block. Both have had its share in suffering communism and central planned economy. As history has proven, the socialism and central planned economy is not efficient. Definitely it's not more efficient than capitalism. The comparison between Eastern and Western Europe countries shows the head start that the western countries have had, that allowed them to rebuild their countries starting in 1945, instead of 1990ies. These 45 years of socialism, and central planned economy where the government was supposed to build, produce, grow, teach, manufacture using state owned factories and resources, based on central planning and management caused constant delays and mistakes. It was not responding fast enough to the needs of the economy.

Keywords: Corruption, economy, communism, barber, Soviet Block

Black markets, grey area, corruption, are as close as it can get to free market in central planned overregulated economy. If something is hard to get, it means its price is too low, and the demand bigger than supply. If the shortage is caused by underproduction in government monopolized market, the corruption and black market will try to try to fix it. There are no taxes on bribes. It's a non-taxed income. It's easy to have it mistaken to free market. This is the reason why the alternate free market is born. Within the national economy failing, people started to make money on black market and in the grey area. The corruption and the personal contacts made it easier to get a doctor's appointment, buy food or a refrigerator. There are no taxes in alternative free market; there is no waiting time to get to the doctor or to get things done in the city council. All it takes is money. If you know the right people, that you could trust, or if you can bribe them, you could get the things done faster in the alternate free market economy than every day sick economy.

Unfortunately I have to agree with Francis Fukuyama who said: "economically it diverts resources away from their most productive uses and acts like a regressive tax ". It's because of inequality of access to goods, and that is contradictory to free market. Corruption is a distortion in a distorted reality, where few benefit on the expense of others. Our goal should be to both eliminate distortion that is corruption, and also fix the distorted reality – fix economy.

We and Them.

When governments respect the people, the citizens respect their government, and they obey the rules of law. When the citizens feel exploited, and see corruption in police, law enforcement, courts that is the state, than they will stand against oppression. The first step will be to divide what is “mine”, and what is “theirs”.

“They”, the state owned, and govern by the state, is the enemy. It’s not “our” country, it’s “their” country.

Whatever is public, no longer is considered “ours”. And when one has to choose between “ours” (family, friends, yourself), and “their” (public), he will always choose “ours”.

The examples of this behavior were very common in pre 1990 Poland. The common knowledge was that this is not our Government (influenced by Russia), therefore corruption was blooming. The people didn’t see anything wrong with stealing from “them”. Every public company, every public owned resources were prone to theft, misuse, waste. The bribe giving person, the bribe taking person didn’t see anything wrong in acting against the state. The state was “them”. And everyone’s business was to take care of your own.

After 1990 corruption was common, but when first free elections, and truly Polish government, corruption didn’t go away. It takes generations to change the way people react and perceive things. The behaviors don’t change overnight. First they have to feel that the Government is OURS that it acts in OUR interest. Than people will see corruption as stealing from US, that its unfair if someone puts his personal interest in front of OUR’s.

There are many reasons why corruption wins, but the most important is mutual respect of government and the people, education of young people, government that does not want the change strong enough, to punish, exterminate corruption. Sometimes the government decides not to act because it has nothing to offer instead of alternative free market earnings for their administration, and is implicated in benefits itself.

Corruption, failure of state, It’s not our Government, Resistance, Terrorism

There are still countries where people see the corrupt government and bribe taking politician, policemen, and judges. The most examples currently in Africa, Middle East, and all “dictatorship democracies” with no true free speech, free media and opposition. The people do not respect this kind of government. They will not work with “them”. They will resist “them”. In Nigeria the first place attacked by Boko Haram in 2009 was police station. The worst thing is that common people applauded because they considered Police as “them”, not “us”. Paul Radu from reportingproject.net quoted Afghanistan citizen: “How can they work with this government? The government does not hear them. The government does not do anything for them. The government doesn’t do anything for them. It’s just here to fill its pockets, nothing else”. When corrupt governments do not allow free press, or do not tolerate opposition, the next step of opposition is going underground and terror. Terrorism is the aftermath of corruption and failed governments. The disease that is more difficult to cure, the longer one is sick.

Corruptions, black market, first sign of free market in central planned and corrupt environment.

One would think that since it’s been so not long ago when we experienced communism and central planned economy that we should know better. The state should create a set of rules equal by everyone, with the same chances and opportunities for everyone, where extorting the poor is not possible. Other than that the state should not be allowed to make any decisions regarding specific economical processes. Any State decision can be bias, influenced, and create unfair opportunities

for some to prosper. The corrupt customs will give choice “pay me or pay the tax”. Whenever we give people too much power over others, and right to decide by subjective judgment about the amount of tax to be paid, we make corruption possible. Without example going from the top of government, on zero tolerance for corruption, the government officials, even when working in pairs will exploit the corrupt system. Wherever there will be government spending, European funds spending, there will be opportunities to prosper on expense of others. Governments are there to create the rules, and make sure everyone follows the rules. The simpler the rule, the easier it is to make sure everyone follows them.

Poland

As mentioned above, in starting 1990 Poland was undergoing the change process from central planned economy to free market economy. People started opening businesses and take initiative. That was not forbidden, it was allowed. Although the constitution of the Polish People’s Republic clearly defined the socialist character of domestic economy, Wilczek authored a bill that introduced, at least at the very basic level, pure capitalism. According to its provisions, every citizen could undertake any economic activity. The act, later referred to “Wilczek’s bill” was passed on 23 December 1988. The entrepreneurship of Poles, suppressed for years, was finally released. Poles put up stalls, mobile foldable tin stalls, and started to trade. They took out their cash “stashed under their pillows” and started to set up businesses. Some 2 million firms were set up and 6 million jobs were created in the period of a dozen or so months. Later in 1990 Poland was free again. It was officially “ours” In the 1990 the co-author from Poland, was 12 years old, and attended primary and then secondary school. He observed the change in mentality, and peoples approach towards the new free Poland. In classes 1-4 of Primary school he used to study Russian language. He still remembers his redemption of this language. The possibly due to the old and unpleasant teacher. Starting from 5th class, the English language lessons have replaced Russian language in his primary school. It was “our” country now. The reforms and switching to free market economy in Poland was fast, some say too fast. The polish people didn’t have time to change their habits. The author’s generation (the millennial) didn’t have these bad habits. In 2004 when authors wife went to the Ohospital to give birth to a child there was a fight between her mother and mother in law, where the young parents didn’t agree to give a present, a gift , an equivalent of 100 Euro to the nurses, to give them better care. They believed that it’s the nurses’ job to do good job, and take good care during this time in public hospital. At the same time, over ten years after communism has fallen, their parents (grandparents of a newborn) ware insisting that the bribe should be paid to nurses.

But the health care changed to better but not perfect. The Neurosurgeons, the Dentists, the Doctor of any field of Medicine opened private businesses. If the National health care made people wait for an appointment with a specialist for months, in public hospital, if one had the money, he could go to the same doctor for a private appointment in the afternoon. The doctor charged 30-100 Euro per visit and worked additional 5 hours per day, after he exited public hospital. Of course when a surgery was necessary, he directed his private patient to the public hospital. It is still the way to work around underfinanced public health care. The mother of the newborn was a patient in private business of the Doctor for 9 months prior to giving birth. He didn’t take bribes from her, but every month he took salary for visit of a private patient. He issued invoice. He paid taxes. The birth was in a public hospital where the same doctor works and takes delivery of the baby. Poland is slowly changing. The doctors are afraid of taking bribes. They are even afraid of taking a chocolate, alcohol or another token of appreciation after the surgery. Instead they created alternative free market economy LEGAL businesses where, if you can afford to pay for visit or a procedure without long waiting line.

Romania and Poland Comparison

Following the utopian and false markings of his metaphorically speaking red-bearded communism, following 27 years of economic, moral and social impoverishment, corruption has become a "country brand" practiced without psychosocial, moral constraints or reserves in all social environments, starting with the main institutions of countries, ministries and reaching areas such as health, education, labor market. Influence trafficking and corruption are the main driver of social regression and disfavor on the global market, regardless of the environment or context. The lack of meritocracy in the democratic social system is an inheritance from the beast of communism. The persecution of the intellectuals, the human mask, and the dispossession of the bourgeois properties led to this hybrid of society, which generated non-valiant beings, habitual customs, and unwholesome. Romania has been predicted 20 years of transition, a Romania politician, from a Romania in mentalities to a civilization-oriented face. The 20 years presumed for the transition did not bring Romania the renewal it needed; on the contrary, the villages plunged into poverty, illiteracy, errors and human horrors determined by the state of moral and social degradation. Cities have left the cemeteries of deserted industries, and aging populations aged. A people who have failed to change their mentalities and who have been internally manipulated to degradation cannot access quality information forming free visions.

Romania seems to have lost the magnifying glass with progress, with civilization. Still, in Romanian hospitals, bribery is a condition sine qua non to be treated properly both medical and human. Education is based on little or great attention given to teachers or, even more seriously, parallel education, the one in which the student is trained at home with either to obtain a high score or to achieve performance. To get a job is useful to be daughter, granddaughter, fine or mistress to someone. Otherwise your valences are not recognized, social humiliations are present as a natural form of adaptation to the world economic crisis. In the last year, Romania seems to be moving something in the socially and politically corrupt network, but the steps are so small that are unseen. The small clerk responds positively only if, under the smile of the citizen at the counter, he smiles even a small gift. Then there is also that thank-you gift considered natural, but which has the same influence on the economy and on society. The black market carries out such activities that influence the unseen economy, but which lowers the social level.

For a long time, bribery will be a problem in Romania. Unlike the factual situation in Romania, Poland eradicated the bribe from the root with civic and moral conscience. According to the current research, corruption and black market are more, around 50 % in Ukraine and Russia. Romania is one of the states that do not know techniques of demolition by the demagogue politician hunter of personal interests. Romania bribery is a symptom of free market economy - tax free pay – bribe; citizens believe that's the way it should be. They pay. They don't report to authorities. Corruption is a symptom of a poor tax system, weak government, and people used to it, and believing that there is no other way to get things done.

How to get rid of corruption

Getting rid of corruption is not an on/off switch. It's a long process, often lasting generations, with several key ingredients. The people must believe that the government (its "us" and "our "country) is working for their benefit. The people must believe that corruption is chased by the law, and that no matter what position you assume you will be punished. New Zealand prime John Key minister said: "you have to promote a culture which makes it close to impossible for corrupt to prosper or escape detection ". The example must come from the top of the government. The political and corporate corruption makes the most damage, by giving the excuse – if they do it, so can I, and by doing so, by being the part of the system I hurt "them" not "us". Paul Collier wrote: "If I expect those around me to continue to be corrupt, why should I change my behavior. Corrupt behavior is self-enforcing, and braking out of it is not easy" By taking Poland as an example, young generation will not consider bribing a police officer, and nobody will take bribe in presence

of another person. It is not considered a virtue, but rather a shameful and selfish action. Old generation that spent decades living in communism still would prefer to get things done using personal contacts and favors. But there also is fear of taking bribes. With today's technology everyone can be listened to, recorded, reported by someone who gave a bribe and investigated. There must be moment in time (usually with a new government) where the red line is drawn. From the moment when old ways no longer apply, where one will stop and fear his coworker and know that since yesterday the rules of doing things have changed.

John Githongo from Kenya described it as a two-fold task: "we need to embed a clear legal framework to deter and punish corruption, and we need to actually change the culture so that the concept of corruption is understood and recognized as anathema".

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