



ESEM
ESCUELA DE SEGURIDAD
MULTIDIMENSIONAL-USP

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Course on

ILLICIT MARKETS AND ORGANIZED CRIME IN THE AMERICAS



MINISTÉRIO DA
JUSTIÇA E
SEGURANÇA PÚBLICA



Eurofront

Class

Organized Crime and the State: The Challenge of Corruption Control

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Introduction

This class looks at three main questions:

- What are the conditions which lead to, and sustain, corruption in the Americas?
- What do these patterns of conditions mean for the fight against organized crime and illicit markets in the Americas?
- What can be done in practical terms to influence these patterns of conditions and, in doing so, begin to address the problem of corruption in the Americas?



Concepts

Corruption: Transparency International defines corruption as the **abuse of entrusted power for private gain**.

However, **there is no official agreement about what corruption is in practice**. Different groups of people in different countries define corruption differently when it comes to the question of whether one particular action signifies corruption or not.

This definitional difficulty for the term corruption – which is what in academia we call a **‘wicked problem’** – means that, in practical terms, we cannot solve corruption definitively across time and space.

Organizations

Transparency International: is a global NGO combating corruption through advocacy, research, and awareness campaigns. Founded in 1993, it promotes transparency, integrity, and accountability in public and private sectors. The organization publishes the Corruption Perceptions Index, ranking countries based on perceived corruption levels. It provides anti-corruption tools, supports regional chapters, and organizes conferences to foster collaboration.

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Corruption is one of the key challenges when it comes to confronting illicit markets and organized crime in the Americas. Not only does corruption prevent public funds being used for the good of society as a whole, it also destroys trust between the state and its population.

What we can do to fight it is to look for patterns of conditions which small-scale and large-scale corruption have in common and try and influence these patterns across time and space, as well as across all levels, from micro- to the macro. That way, we can disrupt the patterns which give rise to, and sustain, corruption.



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Summarizing the extensive research which exists on how corruption emerges and sustains itself, we can identify four key elements virtually all forms of corruption have in common:

1. The presence of a system within a larger system
1. Lack of transparency
1. Hidden externalities
1. Limits imposed on individual autonomy



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As such, corruption is a type of emergent order within a system of social interactions that benefits some at the expense of others and does so by engaging in specific activities that are intended to harm others or groups of others either directly or indirectly.

If we accept the above, then corruption becomes not a series of illegal acts using public funds for the personal enrichment of a person or a group, but the expression of an incoherent social order where an insider group enriches itself at the expense of an outsider group.



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Concrete actions to fight corruption have to focus on two issues:

- **Breaking down barriers between 'insider' and 'outsider' groups:** Give decision-making power to local commanders and engage, constantly, with groups whose influence reaches both downwards into the community itself and upwards to groups that have access to government.
- **Increasing transparency and accountability:** How the police communicate with those they are meant to keep safe is critical to how they are perceived.



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Corruption is a pattern of conditions which produces enormous tensions. As such, the fight against corruption needs to focus on this pattern of conditions. It **needs to focus on those conditions we can actually influence** and it **needs to focus on the possibility of scaling positive results across the system as a whole**.



Summary

- Corruption and illicit markets
- Corruption as a pattern of conditions
- Concrete actions to be taken to fight corruption



References

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