

CORRUPTION: A PITFALL FOR PEACE & JUSTICE

Corruption results in unequal access to security and justice, increases inequality and divides societies. It can render whole sections of society marginalised, isolated, and discriminated against. Corruption diverts funds from vital public services, stymies economic growth, and in many countries, is a defining feature of people's interactions with their governments. It cuts across the Sustainable Development Goals—progress cannot be made on healthcare, education, and poverty without tackling the theft of state resources by the corrupt. In countries where more than 60% of people report paying a bribe in the last year, an average of 38% of people live in poverty, compared to just 8% where under 30% of people report paying bribes; 50% of children do not finish school, compared to just 9%; 482 women die in childbirth for every 100,000 live births, compared to just 45.

Corruption poses a threat to peace and security. The perception of corruption undermines public trust in government intentions and its ability to protect and provide. Of the 20 worst scoring countries in the 2011 Corruption Perceptions Index, over half have experienced violent conflict; peace operations have occurred in nine. Disillusionment and distrust in government institutions can bolster the ranks of non-state actors from organised crime groups to terrorist organisations. Boko Haram, ISIS, the Taliban, and others have drawn on public anger against official corruption to secure recruits and support. Where inequality and injustice are the norm, people become more likely to support change by violent means, threatening stability and peace in their countries.

Corruption in the defence and security services is particularly dangerous. The security forces are a country's first line of defence when it comes to protecting peace, establishing the rule of law, and reducing instability. But conversely corrupt or predatory security institutions can become one of the greatest barriers to peace and development. They are often at the forefront of the extortion, abuse, and criminality that perpetuates conflict in fragile states. In the defence sector, corruption hollows out militaries and prevents them from responding to national threats. Corruption in procurement has fatal consequences for front-line soldiers who see the equipment that they need illegally diverted, and for citizens who have to rely on corrupt leaders for their security. When security institutions are "captured" by those in power, defence budgets typically consume disproportionate levels of public funding.

Without security, sustainable development is impossible. The failure to tackle security issues is one of the biggest barriers to development, particularly in the world's least developed states. Conflict-affected countries are among those who performed the worst under the MDGs, with few states hitting even one of the 21 targets.¹ Including corruption in SDG16 was therefore vital to ensuring that these states do not get left behind again. Given the links between corruption and insecurity, tackling defence sector corruption, improving trust in the armed forces, and disrupting organised criminal networks is essential to guaranteeing the delivery of more just, peaceful, and inclusive societies by 2030. While we must tackle corruption across all sectors in order to achieve the targets set by SDG16, corruption in the defence and security sector should be a priority, particularly for states that face fragility and conflict.

¹ World Bank, *Stop Conflict, Reduce Fragility and End Poverty: Doing Things Differently in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations*, 2015
<http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/Feature%20Story/Stop_Conflict_Reduce_Fragility_End_Poverty.pdf>.

The impact of defence sector corruption on delivering just, peaceful, inclusive societies

DELIVERING PEACE

Corruption drives terrorist narratives and recruitment, destroys trust in state institutions, and reduces incentives for peace. Allowing grand corruption to thrive in the defence sector means that states pour resources into militaries that are ill-equipped and poorly motivated. Allowing even “petty” corruption to thrive in the defence sector can be deadly if it allows a car laden with explosives through a checkpoint, airport security procedures to be side stepped, or suicide bombers and illicit arms to cross borders. When corruption levels in the military are high, troops become a key source of smuggling, crime, and abuse.

Anger at corruption, injustice, and normalised violence have been identified as drivers of youth flight into the arms of al-Shabab and the Taliban in Somalia, and Afghanistan.² These countries have long struggled with high levels of perceived corruption – in 2015, Somalia and Afghanistan were in the bottom three scoring countries (along with North Korea).³ This is not a new trend- they have been among the lowest 10 countries scored since surveys started in 2007.

Corruption simultaneously hollows out the establishments that are meant to respond to threats to national security. Research from Transparency International’s Defence and Security Programme shows that state fragility is coupled with high levels of corruption risk in the defence sector. The Government Defence Anti-Corruption Index (GI) analyses corruption risk in defence establishments worldwide, scoring countries from A to F. The 15 countries classified as ‘high alert’ or ‘very high alert’ in the 2015 Fragile States Index all fell in bands E or F of the Government Defence Anti-Corruption Index, indicating very high to critical levels of corruption in this sector.

These defence establishments are characterised by high levels of nepotism and patronage, which reward loyalty above merit and can dangerously skew the ethnic or political balance of the military. They also suffer high risks of procurement corruption, which often deprives front-line troops of the supplies and equipment that they need to fight. Finally, the vast majority of states in these bands suffer high levels of payment corruption, with ghost armies of fraudulent personnel burdening stretched state budgets, while payment theft deprives soldiers of the means to sustain themselves, pushing them into criminality.

Corruption also threatens the success of peace operations. All of the UN’s peacekeeping missions are in countries where defence corruption risks were found to be High to Critical in the GI [see fig. 1]. In addition, major UN troop contributing countries were found to have poor control of corruption in their own forces. [see fig. 2] This lack of control has cost lives and undermined missions: in the DRC, peacekeeping troops have been involved in smuggling, and in CAR, peacekeeping troops have been involved in a number of human rights violations. ⁴ Where troops are seen to be facilitating corruption and crime, operations quickly lose credibility and public trust.

² Mercy Corps, *Youth and Consequences: Unemployment, Injustice, and Violence*, 2015 <https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/MercyCorps_YouthConsequencesReport_2015.pdf>.

³ ‘How Corrupt Is Your Country?’ <<https://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/infographic>> [accessed 20 January 2016].

⁴ Human Rights Watch | 350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor | New York and NY 10118-3299 USA | t 1.212.290.4700, ‘UN: Hold Peacekeepers Accountable for Congo Smuggling’, *Human Rights Watch*, 2007 <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2007/07/23/un-hold-peacekeepers-accountable-congo-smuggling>> [accessed 19 January 2016]; Somini Sengupta and Alan Cowell, ‘Chad, Amid Criticism, Will Pull Troops From Force in Central Africa’, *The New York Times*, 3 April 2014 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/04/world/africa/as-leaders-meet-report-describes-chaos-in-central-african-republic.html>> [accessed 14 December 2015].

Supporting and equipping security services in fragile states without tackling high levels of corruption can fatally undermine success. Failing to break defence sector corruption means that, while the technical capacity of troops might improve, their role as protectors rather than predators is not guaranteed. For example, in Iraq, the international community spent approximately \$20-26bn on rebuilding the army.⁵ But systems of civilian oversight and control weren't strengthened in parallel, and corruption levels have remained high. Today, there are reports of troops demanding bribes from innocent civilians in order to avoid detention, while arresting, torturing, and pressuring women to place pressure for bribes on male family members.⁶ In addition to hurting public trust, corruption also had immediate implications for the fight against ISIS: there are reports that personnel sold information about military positions, troop numbers, and operation plans to ISIS in exchange for large bribes. Corrupt officials allowed ISIS to raise taxes on Iraqi-held territory, in exchange for a cut of the proceeds.⁷

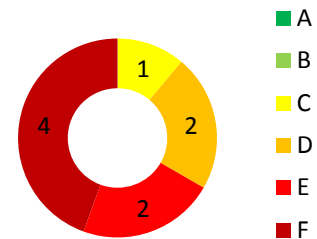
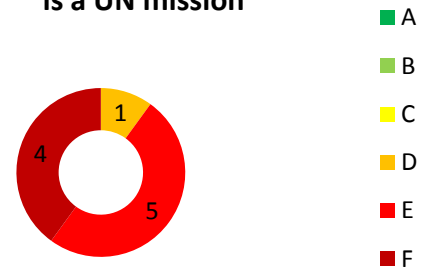
DELIVERING JUSTICE

Where police, judicial services, and security apparatus are corrupt, citizens lack the means to access justice and impunity becomes the norm. In the 2013 Global Corruption Barometer, which assesses perceived corruption in eight public services, the police and the judiciary are seen as the two most bribery-prone. An estimated 31 per cent of people who came into contact with the police report having paid a bribe. For those interacting with the judiciary, the share is 24 per cent.

Organised crime thrives where criminals can buy their way across borders, grease the palms of powerful backers, and buy impunity. This is compounded by collusion between criminal networks and security forces, who use their access to arms, checkpoints, border crossings, and transportation to fuel criminal activity.

When organised crime is embedded into a country's security sector, it impedes justice and peace. In Cote d'Ivoire, for example, the UN Group of Experts has cautioned that many of Army commanders, former rebels, facilitate and profit from the illegal exploitation of gold and diamonds in the country, and levy illegal 'protection' charges on legal exports.⁸ Non-state militias that support former president

GI scores: countries where there is a UN mission



⁵ Joshua Keating, 'The Fall of Mosul', *Slate*, 10 June 2014 <http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_world/2014/06/10/the_fall_of_mosul_the_u_s_spent_20_billion_on_iraqi_security_forces_who.html> [accessed 7 January 2016]; R. Jeffrey Smith, 'The Failed Reconstruction of Iraq', *The Atlantic*, 15 March 2013 <<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/03/the-failed-reconstruction-of-iraq/274041/>> [accessed 5 January 2016]; '\$26 Billion in US Aid Later, the Iraqi Military Is a Total Disaster', *Mother Jones* <<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/09/iraq-army-security-force-billions>> [accessed 12 November 2015].

⁶ Transparency International Defence and Security - Government Defence Anti-Corruption Index (2015): Iraq assessment, Q.17

⁷ Al-Monitor, 'Former Mosul Mayor Says Corruption Led to ISIS Takeover', *Al-Monitor*, 2014 <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2014/07/iraq-mosul-handing-over-isis-government.html>> [accessed 16 September 2015].

⁸ UNSC, *Letter Dated 14 April 2014 from the Vice-Chair of the Security Council Committee Established pursuant to Resolution 1572 (2004) Concerning Côte d'Ivoire Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, 14

Laurent Gbagbo have used Illicit diamond smuggling as a revenue stream to sustain their operations and to buy arms. This had a direct impact on international efforts to build peace in the country - one such smuggling-funded operation led to the assassination of seven United Nations peacekeepers from Niger in western Côte d'Ivoire by a Liberian militia.⁹ But because the state's police and military forces are deeply involved in criminal networks themselves, sometimes within the same networks, they allow corruption to flourish.

DELIVERING INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

When corrupt elites capture decision-making in their countries, they are able to divert resources towards their sects or allies, widening factionalism and inequality. When personnel are offered privileges, promotions, and power on the basis of loyalty rather than merit, it is a form of corruption that drives factional tensions. This can dangerously skew the ethnic or political composition of government institutions, keep incompetent personnel in important positions, and weaken institutions' professionalism and effectiveness. It excludes large segments of the population from guarantees of justice, security, and development. In a country with extreme levels of unemployment, military service should be an opportunity for people to gain employment with equal opportunities for advancement and success—but corruption excludes and marginalizes those without connections and money.

In Yemen, for example, research by Transparency International Defence and Security found that all senior positions within the intelligence services and the military were filled on the basis of political favouritism and family ties. Military units controlled by members of the family of president Saleh also received preferential treatment, including the bulk of U.S. security assistance to Yemen – indeed, all the US-trained Yemeni units were commanded or overseen by close relatives of Saleh. This led to severe inequities across the defence establishment, and a capabilities rift within the military, with drastic differences between the quality of units and the equipment they received. It also has an impact on peace. The Houthi rebels have drawn on the narrative that the central government is corrupt to secure recruits and draw public support from frustrated populations. And the Yemeni Army, hollowed out by corruption and torn apart by politicization, quickly collapsed when confronted with the Houthi forces.

April 2014 <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2014_266.pdf>.

⁹ UNSC, p. 43.

WHAT SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE

Indicators for a reduction in defence sector corruption risk

TI-DSP believes that defence corruption is central to achieving peace, and should be a key priority for achieving the targets set in Goal 16. The following are suggestions for national indicators that could be used to track progress in reducing defence sector corruption and improving public trust in defence and security establishments, as part of SDG 16. These are potential indicators that countries could be adopted nationally. They are drawn from specific questions in Transparency International's Government Defence Anti-Corruption Index, and data already exists for 2015 for over 100 countries.

- There is a published national defence and security strategy available online that is subject to independent external oversight, and which involves input from civil society
- Defence budgets (including for the intelligence services) are published online, including the percentage of funds spent on secret items and sources of defence income (such as natural resources).
- Numbers of personnel are accurately known, and published online, along with details of pay rates and payment systems.

What the UN as an institution can do to support member states

The UN as an institution could take steps to support member states in achieving these targets, particularly those where there is a UN mission. For states where there are UN operations, there are opportunities for reform and progress on governance and corruption; but the influx of funds and resources can also be diverted for corrupt ends, fuelling patronage networks and, eventually, the cycle of violence that corruption creates. As discussed above, where a UN operation is corrupt itself, or seen to be complicit, it puts the success of the operation at risk. The UN should consider including anti-corruption and accountability to be included in all UN mission mandates.

UN missions could create an anti-corruption/accountability focal point or a joint UN-host nation committee in host nations. This person or group would report regularly on progress to the Council and publish public reports on its work. The focal point/committee could report on anti-corruption and governance progress. It could conduct a risk assessment and develop a baseline at the outset of their work. The Security Council could require the Secretary General to include information from the focal point in all his regular reports to the Council on Peace Operations and to provide an annual report on accountability.

The focal point/council could also operate a whistleblowing system that would enable both citizens and those within the UN mission, as well as others such as contractors, to report corruption anonymously. This information would be included in their reports where it can be verified. This could help bolster public support in the peace operation, and give people an outlet to report safely on malfeasance by host nation personnel or by UN forces themselves.

Finally, the UN should adopt a due diligence policy on corruption, similar to that on human rights that mainstreams human rights across the work of United Nations actors supporting non-United Nations security entities. The main aim of the policy should be to ensure that support is consistent with anti-corruption principles and is not provided to security forces that risk committing grave violations, or where the relevant authorities fail to take the necessary corrective or mitigating measures.