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The interpretation of the Form of Corruption and the concept of the Code of Corruption Forms

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Abstract

This article examines a very significant issue: the meaning of a form of the phenomenon of corruption and the prerequisites that must exist for a scholar, to attribute the term "form of corruption" to a specific act. The article, also explores the concept of the "Fundamental Equation of a Form of Corruption", analyzes the notions of impact and the identity of a form's impact and investigates how these differ across countries worldwide. The article concludes by presenting the forms of the corruption phenomenon, which the author has termed the "Code of Corruption Form".

Keywords: Corruption Phenomenon; Corruption form; Fundamental Equation of a Form of Corruption; Impact; Identity of the impact; Code of Corruption Forms

1. Introduction

The term corruption, refers to a phenomenon· a human creation that can be observed in all countries of the world, regardless of geographical region, historical period, or cultural paradigm. Therefore, it must be understood through its definition: "corruption pertains to a human phenomenon that encompasses a set of forms, which vary from country to country, in terms of their origins, dimensions and consequences" (Prontzas,2017,2024).

In the context of the human phenomenon of corruption, its manifestations—that is, its forms—are human actions that are integral to human history and not mere exceptions. A form of corruption relates to a specific historical reality, situated in time and space, which reflects an individual's pursuit materialized through their actions and resulting in an impact.

Within the theoretical framework of the phenomenon of corruption (Prontzas,2023), specific conditions are scientifically required for a human action to constitute a form of corruption, to be named as such by a scholar and to be included within the framework of the phenomenon's manifestations—in other words, in its Code of Corruption Forms. What are these conditions? The first condition involves the existence of a scholar, who, by applying a specific scientific methodology, assigns the term "form of corruption" to a human action, for one specific social union only. The second condition requires that this attribution, be understood and accepted by the population within the cultural framework of the specific social union whose members perform the human action in question. This requirement arises from a specific necessity: once the term "form of corruption" is assigned to a human action, the question arises, as to how to address it· the management of this issue will ultimately have to be implemented by the same population that created it. The third condition pertains to the involvement of at least two individuals in the creation of a form of corruption. These individuals will enact the fundamental equation (Fundamental Equation of a Form of Corruption [F.E.F.C.]: Pursuit + Action = Impact) for each form of corruption, as one individual's pursuit, realized through their action, produces an impact on the other (Prontzas,2023).

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It is necessary to note here that, when a person lives in isolation, have no awareness of the corruption phenomenon or its forms. This premise forms the basis of the aforementioned condition: a form of corruption requires at least two individuals to emerge. However, this duality alone does not lead to the phenomenon. If a form of corruption remains confined to its duality, it constitutes merely a personal dispute that does not disrupt, influence or impact an organized social union. Therefore, the fundamental equation of a form of corruption must not only exist but also develop within a civilized social union, exceeding the limits of its duality. Another crucial condition is thus added: in each form of corruption, the pursuit must achieve such creative intensity that it produces an impact. Without a material or immaterial impact stemming from the pursuit, the phenomenon of corruption and its forms do not exist.

Thus, the self-evident conclusion emerges: where there is no pursuit culminating in an impact on someone or something else, there can be no form of corruption. This is also the point of completion of the fundamental equation: the pursuit, combined with action, leads to impact. To the initial question of what constitutes a form of corruption and what it pertains to, the answer is precise: A form of corruption refers to a human action that, reflecting an individual's pursuit—*homo corruptus*—produces an impact within the framework of a specific social union.

We, therefore, speak of the phenomenon of corruption and the existence of its manifestations, when we observe the impacts of its forms. The impact thus becomes a formal criterion for attributing the term “form of corruption” to a human action. The substantive criterion pertains to the central conceptual role assigned by the scholar to the constituent elements (*homo corruptus*, pursuit, action, impact) of this action/form, within the construct of the Code of Forms of the phenomenon for a specific social union.

What does the impact of a form of corruption mean and what is its identity? Each form of corruption, whether existing or future, as the phenomenon is continuously evolving, is both a creation of an individual and a product of the culture of the social union within a specific geographical area and time. If the aspiring scholar avoids the scientific error of conflating forms of the phenomenon with the phenomenon itself (Prontzas,2024), they must pose a dual question: Does each impact of a form of corruption have an identity? And subsequently, why should the identity of the impacts of a form of corruption concern us?

Firstly, these impacts may have four types of effects: negative impact, positive impact, “balance-producing” impact, and a composite category where all these occur simultaneously (Prontzas,2017). The concept of impact concerns the nature and direction of the effect. The identities of the impacts of a form of corruption may have a material dimension, an immaterial dimension or both simultaneously. In the material dimension, there is a specific outcome, for example money· in the immaterial dimension, the reflection of the pursuit emerges as an issue of mentality, culture, and civilization, as well as the perception of the impact's identity by a specific social union. Subsequently, when a scholar of the phenomenon assigns the term “form of corruption” to a human action, the question of what to do with this form of corruption and how to manage it arises.

Here, a critical issue emerges: Why should we use the term “management” instead of “confrontation” when dealing with a form of corruption? The answer to this question encompasses both general and specific reasons. The general reasons relate to the nature of a form of corruption—this manifestation of the human phenomenon of corruption in a specific social space and time. The specific reasons pertain to the core “constituent elements” of a form of corruption (*homo corruptus*, pursuit, action, impact).

As for the general reasons, a form of corruption pertains to a human action. However, this action may correspond—according to the theory of the phenomenon—to a form of corruption in one country on the planet, while in another country, it may merely represent a customary, religious, or professional requirement. Thus, when we speak about “confront corruption”, we demonstrate not only a lack of understanding of the scientific field of the phenomenon of corruption and its forms, but also, an attempt to disregard the cultural diversity of each population on the planet (Prontzas,2024). Moreover, this approach proves that we deliberately limit the perception of populations regarding the phenomenon of corruption to specific forms (for example bribery, tax evasion) while equating the phenomenon with these forms to serve particular interests. The consequences of this unscientific practice are suffered by populations worldwide.

The second general reason for preferring the term “management” over “combat” lies in the fact that no form of corruption can be fully understood in terms of its consequences solely through legislation (laws, decrees, conventions, etc.), whether national or international. If this were the case, the numerous laws existing in various nation-states (for example Greece) worldwide concerning certain forms of corruption would have been effective, at least for those forms they address. The third general reason pertains to the nature of a form of corruption, which necessitates its management due to the various impacts it generates (positive, negative, or balancing).

Regarding the specific reasons for preferring the term “management” over “confrontation,” it must first be noted that, attempting to “combat” the possibility of the existence or utilization of a form of corruption, is akin to the misleading question about the probability of a meteorite colliding with Earth· in an unexplored, chaotic and unknown universe, it is impossible to predict the trajectory of an unknown meteorite. Similarly, in the unknown and chaotic human mind, it is impossible to predict the pursuit and movement of an unknown homo corruptus.

The specific reasons, stem from the constituent elements of a form of corruption: homo corruptus, pursuit, action and impact. When a form of corruption is utilized by a homo corruptus, it acquires three dimensions: differentiation, dual isolation and epistemological context. Differentiation defines its type and distinguishes it from other forms of the phenomenon. Dual isolation separates, on the one hand, the motives of homo corruptus, their pursuits in utilizing the form of corruption and on the other, the conditions for developing this form of corruption within the specific social union. The epistemological context involves explaining the role of this form of corruption within a civilized and organized social union.

Both the general and specific reasons necessitating the logic and practice of managing a form of corruption help the scholar/manager understand a fundamental principle: The forms of the phenomenon of corruption, are not merely creations of human civilization· they are simultaneously a challenge to the meaning of the relationship between humans and materiality, nature, life and coexistence. This start, helps the scholar, grasp the meaning of managing a form of corruption. What is this meaning? It is the ultimate point that scientific study of the phenomenon and its forms can reach, within a social union. This meaning presupposes the credibility of the scholar/manager, a credibility that distinguishes them from the various advocates of vague and overused “transparency.”

Within this framework of conditions and requirements, the scholar of the phenomenon of corruption, always mindful of the evolutionary dynamics of the phenomenon’s forms, holds in their hands a guide for studying the forms of the phenomenon of corruption· the Code of Corruption Forms. The application and utilization of this Code should be evaluated by the scholar, for each social union separately, in accordance with the aforementioned considerations about what constitutes a form of corruption. This Code is represented by the following diagram (Prontzas,2023,2024).

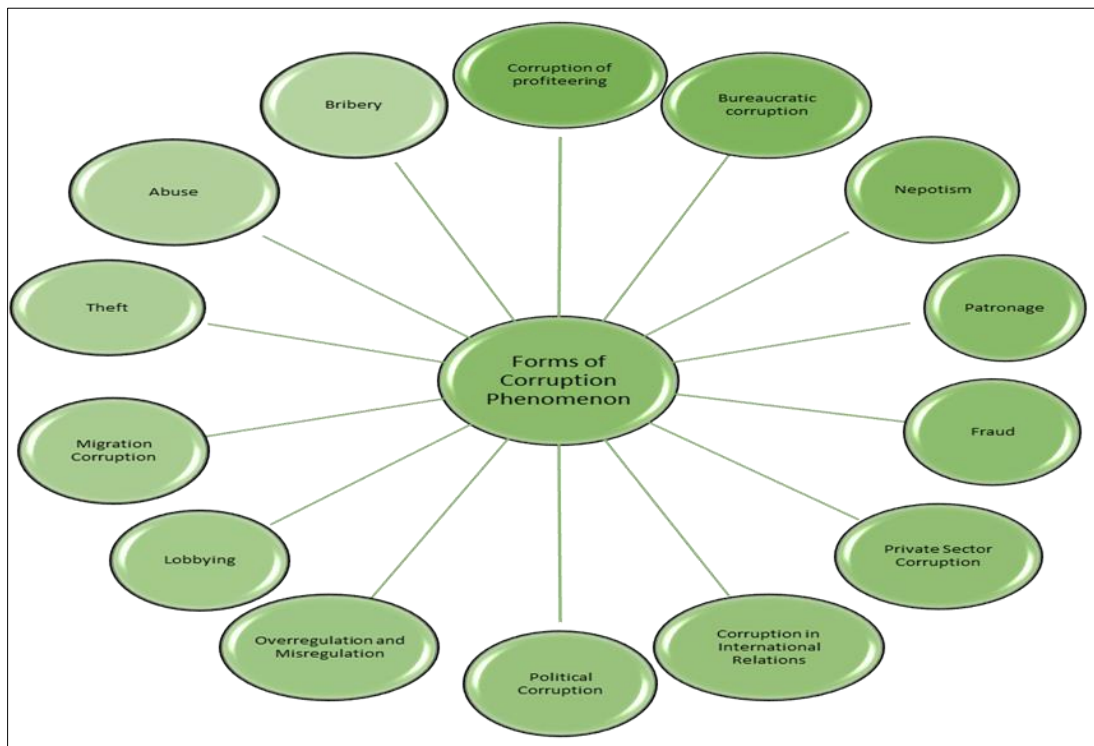


Figure 1 Code of Forms of Corruption

The first of the forms of this code, is the *corruption form of profiteering*. A speculative act, or otherwise a speculative episode, pertains to the collective psychological compulsion that prevails for a short period within a market economy, leading to a sudden surge in the price of the underlying asset or object of speculation. In the modern world, the operation of economic systems depends directly on capital and financial markets, with financial markets constituting a structural

element of the contemporary capitalist economic system, encompassing both the primary and secondary markets. The functioning of market mechanisms, with trading prices shaped by the diverse preferences of market participants, has historically been and continues to be the cornerstone of stock exchanges. As the preferences of market participants shape transaction prices, the role of the human factor in the operation of the supply-demand mechanism—and consequently in the creation of value—is pivotal. It is precisely from this crucial point that speculation intersects with the phenomenon of corruption in this particular form (Prontzas,2017). If a speculator sells what they do not possess and buys what they will never own, they align themselves with the rationalization dynamics of human behaviors. Furthermore, asymmetric information among investors constitutes a critical element in this equation. Speculative games, as a characteristic feature of capitalist markets, rely on the mechanisms of trade, on the alignment of preferences and choices among market participants, and on transactions driven by the instincts of the *homo economicus* seeking to optimize their decisions (Kindleberger,2000). The transition of the *homo economicus* to the *homo corruptus* marks the genesis of this form of corruption—a form encompassing a wide array of actions and processes. From the exploitation of “dot-com” opportunities and the financial crises linked to “ninja loans” and CDOs in the early and late 2000s, respectively, to cryptocurrencies and publicly traded “shell companies” in the current decade, these phenomena illustrate the evolving landscape of corruption form of profiteering (Prontzas,2023).

The next form of corruption, that of *theft*, pertains to a human action typically observed in environments with weak control and punishment mechanisms. Manifestations of this form range from petty theft by low-ranking employees to the misappropriation of public resources, sometimes involving the embezzlement of cash and other times through the so-called “ghost workers” (OECD,2012).

The term *nepotism* was initially used by scholars to describe the allocation of power and principalities by the Pope to his biological sons as well as to other relatives. Today, it refers to a form of corruption in which a specific strategy of power distribution is implemented by a high-ranking public official. This strategy involves the appointment of close relatives to positions within public administration or the granting of various favors (Robertson,1999). The motives for such actions may include enhancing the family’s social prestige, increasing its income, or aiding in the construction of a personal “political machine.” In contemporary Western democracies, this form of corruption is often associated with the *spoils system*, wherein political positions are distributed among members of the victorious party following an election (White, 1934). What distinguishes nepotism from closely related forms of corruption, such as patronage or favoritism, is the element of familial ties.

Patronage, as a distinct form of corruption, was particularly widespread in England during the reign of Walpole, from the late 17th to the early 18th century. Historical analyses reveal that patronage and diplomacy were among the principal occupations of the King’s ministers, with Walpole himself needing to master the management of this form of corruption (Wilson, 1961). Patronage involves practices whereby a high-ranking official or even an entire political entity appoints individuals to positions or services, awards contracts to specific companies, or grants other forms of favoritism. Such practices, therefore, fall outside the realm of merit-based assessment or the evaluation of the qualifications or suitability of those appointed or favored (Tarkowski,1983). This exclusion of meritocratic principles underscores the essence of patronage and related forms of corruption, which prioritize personal, familial, or political gains over the broader public interest (Prontzas,2013).

The form of corruption known as *fraud*, encompasses a broad array of human actions. These range from the submission of false information, multiple financing claims, unfair bidding practices, tailored procurement specifications and the leaking of bid details, to unjustified direct awards, procurement fragmentation, the circumvention of competitive processes, multiple payment requests by the same contractor, fictitious contracts and services, falsified or inflated invoices, product substitution, intellectual property violations and bid tampering (Mckinney, Johnston,1986). At its extreme, fraud manifests as a systematic or systemic combination of some or all of these practices (Gardiner, Lyman, 1984). Such combinations often serve diverse objectives, such as securing favorable performance evaluations for meeting annual targets, whether by executives of multinational corporations or by officials in state auditing or tax enforcement agencies (Prontzas,2017).

Abuse, on the other hand, represents a distinct form of corruption, covering an equally wide spectrum of human actions. This spectrum includes for example, the misappropriation of funds by individuals entrusted with their safekeeping or management (Bernstein,1976). Abuse also extends to actions driven by motives such as financial gain, arising from the exploitation of a position of authority tied to specific duties, which ultimately infringes upon the rights of one or more individuals. Additionally, it encompasses acts such as exceeding the bounds of representative authority, the misuse of power of attorney and abuses within financial markets (Prontzas,2023).

The next form of corruption, that of *private sector corruption*, encompasses a wide array of human actions, rooted in an economic framework within a nation-state often referred to as the *informal economy*. This term signifies that segment of economic activity conducted in secrecy, which cannot be measured or recorded by a country's official statistical services, despite its rightful inclusion in the formal national product as it generates added value. It is essential to distinguish the term *informal economy* from *shadow economy* (Prontzas, 2015, 2017). While the informal economy pertains to activities within a nation-state, the shadow economy represents a continuously evolving global "ecosystem" (Kunjufu, 2002). This form of corruption also includes practices such as tax evasion and tax avoidance, which fall under the category of what is often termed *skilled money management* (Minsky, 2008). Moreover, private sector corruption encompasses techniques such as money laundering, network intrusions, cyberattacks and deepfake technology, as well as organized crime, the illegal trade in wildlife, the financing of terrorist organizations, human trafficking, informal value transfer systems, and, ultimately, environmental degradation (Palan, 2003). These activities illustrate the multifaceted nature of private sector corruption, highlighting its ability to transcend national borders and disrupt not only economic systems but also social, political and ecological structures (Prontzas, 2023).

Political corruption represents yet another complex and challenging form of corruption to analyze and address, as it encompasses human actions embedded in intricate and diverse realities of culture and coexistence (Prontzas, 2013). These realities range from the phenomenon of *officeseeking* (individuals striving to secure positions of power for self-validation) to the conditions and rules governing elections, the criteria for selecting individuals for parliamentary and administrative offices at regional and local levels, the regulations surrounding campaign financing and the frameworks for managing conflicts of interest within parliamentary systems (Mcmenamin, 1980). These factors extend to the structural realities of partocracy and clientelism, which serve as pillars of political systems, shaping their foundation, dynamics and evolutionary trajectory (Prontzas, 2017).

Interlinked with political corruption in creating a toxic "justice-suppressing environment", are the corruption forms of *overregulation* and *misregulation*. *Overregulation* refers to an excessive proliferation of legal provisions, whether primary (laws) or secondary (presidential decrees, ministerial decisions, etc.), within a nation-state. At its core lies the quantitative dimension of regulatory production. In contrast, *misregulation*, pertains to the qualitative dimension, focusing on the complexity, linguistic clarity (or lack thereof) and coherence of legal provisions. It involves issues such as contradictory regulations on the same subject, an overreliance on legal professionals (*lawyer dominance*), excessively intricate administrative procedures enshrined in legislation and ad hoc or arbitrary regulatory measures introduced by governments (Prontzas, 2023).

Migration corruption, involves an extensive range of human actions and processes spanning various and distinct fields. These actions and processes accompany migrating populations as they traverse regions and interact with local populations, whether during their journey or at their final destinations. Furthermore, this form of corruption, encompasses the ways in which local populations engage with, manage, exploit or address migratory flows, as well as the mechanisms and strategies employed to direct and utilize these flows in response to the demands of the globalized labor market (Prontzas, 2017).

Extortion, as a distinct form of corruption, is primarily exploited by individuals within either the public or private sector who employ coercion and/or threats, whether sporadically or systematically, to achieve personal objectives (Hindriks, Keen, 2002). This form of corruption, can escalate into the creation and development of a network of relationships, that spans the private and public sectors of a nation-state or even operates at the intersection of the two (Mcchesney, 1997). Through the strategic use of coercive practices and both direct and indirect threats, such networks aim to secure their desired objectives (Prontzas, 2023).

Bribery, as a form of corruption refers to human actions that constitute one of the most common methods for rapid wealth accumulation. It is perhaps the most recognizable form of corruption. This recognition, has contributed to the persistent and classic scientific error of equating bribery with the broader phenomenon of corruption itself (Prontzas, 2024). This form of corruption, spans a vast domain of activities, ranging from private individuals seeking to "purchase" services or privileges from central or regional administrations to government officials aiming to "sell" such services to private parties (OECD, 2013, 2014). Examples include targeted government contracts designed to secure a project for a particular company or to violate its agreed terms, negotiations to reduce tax obligations, obtaining exclusive rights through license transfers, or manipulating legal outcomes through delays and threats of inaction. The expansive scope in which bribery operates is responsible for several of its defining characteristics (IM, 2002). One such characteristic is its ability to simultaneously take on vastly different dimensions within a single country—for example, functioning as an unofficial "tax" on certain interactions while producing varying outcomes such as uncertainty or predictability in administrative or legal processes (Prontzas, 2023).

Bureaucratic corruption, is a form of corruption manifested within the field of bureaucratic administration at the level of a nation-state, an international or regional organization or even a large multinational corporation. The key characteristics of this administrative field, which simultaneously serve as enablers of this type of corruption, include the inclination towards conducting work in written form, rigid rules and adherence to procedural norms (Gupta, Abed, 2002). These tendencies are compounded by fundamental attributes such as permanency, specialized knowledge, perception and awareness of specific administrative operations and policy implementation processes, depending on the context in which corruption arises (Palmier, 1985). These factors create a framework of monopolistic power where this form of corruption can emerge. The elements of permanency, knowledge and monopolistic power allow for the conceptualization of bureaucratic corruption through an equation: $BC = MP + DI - A$ (BC = Bureaucratic Corruption, MP = Monopolistic Power, DI = Discretionary Intervention, A = Accountability). This equation is based on the assumption that, in any public administration context, bureaucratic corruption occurs when a government official leverages their monopolistic power over a good or service through discretionary intervention towards a recipient, having lost their sense of accountability (Prontzas, 2023).

The corruption form of *lobbying* pertains to the practices of so-called pressure groups, which involve covert or behind-the-scenes exertion of influence on individuals holding some form of power, such as political, legislative, judicial or central and regional administrative authorities. The goals of these pressures aim at fulfilling specific objectives of these groups, which range from legislative amendments to intergovernmental agreements. These pressure groups or lobbies, vary in categories according to the field in which they operate and their specific objectives. The field of operation may be global, regional or within individual nation-states. Examples include energy lobbies, banking lobbies, defense industry lobbies and pharmaceutical lobbies; additionally, there are those that develop within each nation-state, such as lobbies of various professional categories, political and economic families, scientific lobbies and religious lobbies. A characteristic feature of the subtle, difficult-to-distinguish and complex nature of managing these boundaries in the practices of this form of corruption is evident in cases where contact with a lobby of a state official or an international organization representative is necessary and useful when specialized knowledge and information are required on specific issues (Prontzas, 2014). Thus, some international organizations and nation-states have adopted measures to manage this form of corruption. For instance, the European Union, in 2014, instituted the mandatory registration of meetings with lobby representatives held by the heads of General Directorates of the European Commission (Prontzas, 2023).

Finally, in completing the Code of Forms of Corruption, the *form of corruption in interstate relations*, refers to a long list of human actions in the field of international relations, within the realm of contacts and the interests of entire nation-states (Prontzas, 2017). It represents a particularly challenging form to analyze and manage, as it encompasses a vast collection of human actions within the complex and diverse realities of culture and coexistence between states around the world, both regionally and globally (Drumheller, Monaghan, 2007). Individual states that constitute, for example, a regional international system with limited control over its functions, facing varying degrees of compliance for each of them, all within the context of a highly competitive international system of states where each is influenced by the others, are some of the sources of this form of corruption (Prontzas, 2023).

The description of all these forms of corruption, is certainly not of a legal nature. In fact, it cannot and should not be, since legislative definitions rarely resolve a scientific issue. Typically, a legislative definition, rather than solving a problem, creates additional ones. Therefore, the Code of Forms of Corruption serves as an open guide for detecting human actions as forms of corruption, intended for a scholar studying the phenomenon of corruption. According to what has been previously mentioned regarding what constitutes a form of corruption, it becomes evidently necessary to specialize this code within each distinct civilization, each distinct culture, in every structure of coexistence around the world (Prontzas, 2023).

2. Conclusion

In conclusion, given the evolutionary dynamics of both the phenomenon of corruption and the social associations where these forms are utilized and have an impact, as well as the variations in the interpretation of human actions from one social association to another, this Code, does not constitute a closed guide. Rather, it is an open framework for recognizing the phenomenon of corruption, adaptable to new forms that may arise from the ingenuity of each *homo corruptus*.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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