

ANALYSIS OF SOME CASE STUDIES ON ELECTORAL CORRUPTION

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Abstract: Electoral corruption is one of the most serious threats to democracy and the fair electoral process. In essence, electoral corruption involves the manipulation of votes and electoral procedures through various illicit means such as bribery, intimidation, fraud and the use of public resources for partisan purposes. These practices not only undermine the integrity of elections, but also erode citizens' confidence in democratic institutions and the political system as a whole.

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Introduction

In many countries, electoral corruption is an endemic problem that affects not only developing countries but also established democracies. Whether it is the distribution of material benefits to voters to influence them, the manipulation of electoral lists, the intimidation of political opponents, or the falsification of ballots, these practices distort election results and endanger the principle of representativeness. As a result, leaders elected through such means can end up serving the interests of narrow, powerful groups at the expense of the common good.

Another important aspect of electoral corruption is its connection with other forms of corruption. Politicians who resort to illicit means to win elections will often perpetuate other types of corruption once in power. This creates a vicious circle in which public resources are diverted for private purposes, and state institutions are weakened and become ineffective in combating corruption. In this context, citizens are the ones who suffer the most, through the loss of access to quality public services and the diminution of economic opportunities.

Combating electoral corruption requires concerted efforts and complex strategies that involve both legislative measures and effective institutional mechanisms. Educating and mobilizing citizens, careful monitoring of the electoral process by non-governmental organizations and international institutions, and the firm enforcement of existing laws are essential to ensure free and fair elections.

The degree of investigation of the problem at the current time, the purpose of the research. At the current time, the importance and purpose of developing this scientific approach, arises from the author's intention to highlight in the foreground some landmarks of electoral corruption. At the same time, there is also the urgent need to carry out a comprehensive analysis regarding the essence of the research subject.

Materials used and methods applied. In the process of developing the scientific article, we were guided by several and various scientific research methods that made it possible to properly investigate the titular subject, among which we can list: the analysis method, the synthesis method, the deduction method, the systemic method, the historical method, as well as the comparative method.

The theoretical and legal basis of the scientific approach includes the defining material such as national legislation, as well as various sources from international specialized literature – which directly or indirectly address the essence and content of the subject under research.

Results obtained based on scientific analyses. Electoral corruption is a complex phenomenon that refers to various forms of influencing election results through illegal or unethical means. This includes acts such as vote buying, voter intimidation, electoral list manipulation and ballot box fraud. These practices undermine democratic principles and the right of citizens to freely express their political will.

Another definition would be that electoral corruption is the illegal use of funds, influence or other means for the purpose of obtaining a political or electoral advantage. This phenomenon has serious consequences for the integrity and credibility of the democratic process, distorting the will of citizens and undermining the fundamental principles of the rule of law.

Electoral corruption can take several forms, each with its own implications and effects on the integrity of the electoral process. The main types of electoral corruption include:

- 1) **Vote buying** – offering money, goods or material advantages in exchange for voting. This practice undermines the freedom of voters to freely express their choice;
- 2) **Voter intimidation and pressure** – threats, violence or any form of coercion on voters to get them to vote a certain way. This violates fundamental electoral rights;
- 3) **Institutional favoritism** – the use of public resources or official influence to favor a particular candidate or party. This abuse of power undermines the fairness of electoral competition.

Electoral corruption can use a variety of mechanisms to influence election outcomes. Some of the most common methods include *vote buying*, *voter intimidation*, *electoral manipulation*, and *illegal campaign financing*. These illegal practices pose a serious threat to democracy, undermining the integrity and fairness of the electoral process.

Vote buying is one of the most widespread forms of electoral corruption. It involves offering money, goods or other material advantages in exchange for a voter's vote. This practice distorts the will of the electorate and undermines democratic principles, as voting is no longer free and fair.

False electoral promises mean that politicians may resort to false or exaggerated electoral promises to win votes. This includes offering benefits or projects that cannot be delivered or are not in the public interest. Such manipulative tactics create a lack of trust in the political system and distort elections

Deceptive electoral advertising means that electoral advertising materials may be used to spread false or biased information about candidates. This may include personal attacks, distortion of achievements or policies, or exaggeration of qualifications. Such practices distort elections and cause voters to make decisions based on incorrect information.

Electoral corruption has a devastating impact on democracy, undermining the integrity and legitimacy of democratic processes. When elections are influenced by corrupt practices, the will of the people is distorted and public trust in the system is seriously damaged. Citizens lose faith in their ability to

choose their leaders through free and transparent voting, which undermines the basic principles of a functioning democracy.

The outcome of corrupt elections leads to the installation of leaders in power who are not legitimately elected and who do not represent the real interests of the population. They can then use state resources for their own benefit or that of affiliated interest groups, ignoring the needs and wishes of citizens. This leads to an erosion of government accountability and the rule of law, generating a vicious circle of lack of trust and alienation from the political system.

In the long term, electoral corruption fuels the frustration and disillusionment of the population with democracy, paving the way for authoritarianism, populism and political instability. Without strong electoral integrity, a democracy cannot survive and progress, and the country risks slipping into a deep democratic crisis.

The Republic of Moldova has made significant strides in recent years to combat corruption at the national level. There is a well-defined legislative framework, which includes a series of laws and regulations designed to prevent and sanction acts of electoral corruption.

Among the most important normative acts are the *Law on Preventing and Combating Corruption*, the *Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova*, the *Law on Financing the Activities of Political Parties and Electoral Campaigns*, and the *Electoral Code*. These laws establish both corruption offenses, including those related to elections, and sanctions for violating legal provisions.

Also, the Republic of Moldova operates the National Anticorruption Center, an institution specialized in preventing, investigating and combating the phenomenon of corruption. It carries out activities of monitoring, controlling and investigating corruption cases, including in the electoral sphere.

Sanctions for acts of electoral corruption are:

- **Criminal sanctions.** Acts of electoral corruption are considered serious crimes and can attract significant criminal sanctions. The individuals involved can be sentenced to imprisonment from 2 to 7 years, depending on the seriousness of the act. Fines and confiscation of illegally acquired assets can also be imposed;
- **Civil sanctions.** In addition to criminal sanctions, participants in electoral corruption may be required to pay civil damages. Affected victims or institutions may claim material and moral damages. Election results may also be annulled if the corruption significantly influenced the final outcome;
- **Ban on public office.** Convictions for electoral corruption may also result in a ban on holding public office for a period of 5 to 10 years. This sanction aims to deter and remove corrupt individuals from the electoral process and public administration;
- **Complementary sanctions.** In some cases, complementary sanctions may also be applied, such as confiscation of illicit assets, publication of the sentence in the media or prohibition of the right to stand for election. These additional sanctions aim to effectively punish those involved in corrupt acts and strengthen confidence in the integrity of the electoral process.

The role of the authorities in combating electoral corruption. In combating electoral corruption, the authorities play a crucial role. They are responsible for developing and implementing effective legislation against all forms of fraud and manipulation during electoral processes. This legislation must be clear, comprehensive and provide for strong sanctions for violations.

The authorities must also ensure rigorous supervision of all stages of the electoral process, from the registration of candidates to the counting of votes. They must closely monitor the activity of political

parties, the media and electoral observers in order to detect and sanction any attempt to corrupt the elections.

In addition, the authorities must promote transparency in the financing of electoral campaigns and ensure that voters are well informed about their rights and obligations. Civic education and awareness campaigns about the dangers of electoral corruption are also essential.

The role of the media in combating electoral corruption. The media plays a crucial role in combating electoral corruption. Through journalistic investigations, investigative reporting and in-depth analysis, the media can make a significant contribution to revealing and unmasking acts of electoral corruption. Journalists can expose to the public the complex schemes through which candidates or parties try to influence voters through illegal methods, such as offering money, gifts or favors in exchange for votes.

The media also has a responsibility to inform citizens about the legislation and sanctions applicable to electoral corruption, thus encouraging more conscious and responsible electoral participation. Through editorials, debates and interviews, the media can raise public awareness of the dangers that electoral corruption poses to the health of democracy.

In addition, the media can play an important role in monitoring the electoral process, reporting possible irregularities and violations of the law. The presence of journalists at polling stations and in party headquarters can ensure greater transparency and accountability of political actors.

Citizens' Responsibility in Preventing Electoral Corruption. Citizens play a vital role in preventing electoral corruption and maintaining the integrity of the electoral process. They have a duty to actively engage in the supervision and monitoring of elections, to ensure that fraud or manipulation does not occur. Citizens' duties include:

1. *electoral information and education.* Citizens must inform themselves about electoral laws and regulations, in order to be able to identify and report any illegalities;
2. *participation in election observation.* Citizens can become accredited electoral observers, who will monitor the conduct of the election and report any irregularities;
3. *reporting cases of corruption.* Citizens who witness acts of electoral corruption must immediately report them to the competent authorities, to ensure their investigation and sanctioning;
4. *refusal to be corrupted.* Citizens must exercise their right to vote freely and consciously, without being influenced by bribery or pressure. Civic engagement of citizens is essential to ensure free and fair elections that reflect the will of the people and strengthen democracy.

Awareness campaigns and civic education. In order to combat electoral corruption, it is essential to carry out awareness campaigns and civic education at the national level. Competent authorities, non-governmental organizations and the media should collaborate to organize information sessions in schools, universities, public institutions and within local communities. These campaigns could include seminars, debates, information brochures and audio-visual materials that explain in detail the mechanisms of electoral corruption, the applicable legislation and the ways to report possible violations.

Conclusions and recommendations. Finally, it is worth mentioning that electoral corruption represents a serious threat to democratic integrity and the well-being of society. This phenomenon distorts the will of voters, undermines trust in the electoral process and strengthens the power of those who resort to illicit practices. To effectively combat electoral corruption, sustained efforts are needed

from all actors involved: competent authorities, mass media, non-governmental organizations and, last but not least, citizens.

In order to ensure the integrity of elections and consolidate democracy in the Republic of Moldova, the following recommendations are required:

- a) *Strengthen the legal framework and enforce sanctions.*** Anti-corruption legislation must be updated and improved to provide effective tools to prevent, investigate and combat electoral corruption. Law enforcement authorities must act promptly and decisively to sanction any violations;
- b) *Increasing transparency and accountability of political actors.*** The financing of electoral campaigns, the expenses and activities of political parties must be subject to rigorous control and be carried out transparently. Citizens must have access to information on the wealth and interests of candidates;
- c) *Educating and involving citizens.*** Promoting civic education and the active participation of citizens in the electoral process are essential to raise awareness and reduce vulnerability to manipulation. Citizens must be informed and report any signs of electoral corruption;
- d) *Strengthening the role of the media.*** Journalists and media institutions play a crucial role in denouncing and exposing acts of electoral corruption. The media must act independently and professionally, providing reliable and objective information.

Only through a holistic approach and concerted involvement of all stakeholders will we be able to effectively prevent and combat the phenomenon of electoral corruption, guaranteeing the integrity of elections and strengthening democracy

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