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TITLE: IS ANTICORRUPTION A NEOLIBERAL PLOT? ASSESSING THE ANTICORRUPTION PROJECT IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

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The consolidation of a global anticorruption regime can be seen has a combination of international policy instruments, ideologies about good and bad governance, and a whole set of promises, programmes and practices all intended to reduce corruption. After nearly two decades, we can give this assemblage a name: Anticorruptionism. This paper reviews the history of anticorruptionism and the current status of the anticorruption project in southeast Europe. It focuses on the ostensible issue of whether anticorruptionism has played any role in affecting, much less reducing, corruption in Southeast Europe. Alternatively a critical approach would see anticorruption as part of some other larger strategy connected with neoliberalism, market accommodation and new public management. In this second approach, corruption and anticorruption, instead of being a zero sum game, operate in two parallel worlds. If this is true, the evolution, flowering and eventual decline of anticorruptionism is not related to corruption. An understanding of the anticorruption industry and anticorruptionism can turn the discussion of “why corruption” on its head. Instead of seeing corruption as a cause or symptom of some governance problem, this paper focuses on ‘anticorruptionism’ as a problem, using comparisons with the evolution of ‘civil society’, ‘development’ and ‘human rights’

PAPER

Corruption, the manipulation of public trust for private gain, has been with us since the earliest modern states. That leaders manipulated public office for private gain was an accepted fact of life in ancient empires, feudal states and the early nation-states. Corruption has been considered pervasive in developing countries, both in the form of petty bribery of public servants, nepotism and outright looting by state leaders with Swiss bank accounts and commissions from Western mining companies. We also know that it was part of the fabric of life in the socialist states in the form of private privilege, favoritism and bribery for party and state leaders, their family, friends and cohorts. Finally, we know that the postsocialist transition has been rife with corruption during privatization schemes, land restitution, foreign investment contracts, and EU development. Corruption in the postsocialist period was more blatant and the inequities made more visible in an atmosphere where the press and opposition, not to mention the EU monitors, could call attention to it.

So how do we fight this pervasive corruption? This paper is precisely about corruption fighting as an object of research. It argues that corruption fighting now has its own dynamic, its own interests and actors. I call it the anticorruption industry, and this industry is supported by an ideology, or a discourse, that I call anticorruptionism. Although corruption is inherently local – with local actors, profiteers, connections, politicians and resources—anticorruption is not. Anticorruptionism has increasingly become globalized. While we can witness anticorruption parties and political struggles in many countries –Bulgaria, Russia, Brazil, India; or anticorruption campaigns in China and in Spain, we are also seeing the formation of a veritable global anticorruption regime. How did this regime get established? What is its impact on corruption? Since any group of actors has interests, how can the anticorruption regime be analyzed like any other interest group?

Let therefore summarize some of the characteristics of the global anticorruption industry, again, without using the term industry as a pejorative (summarized from a previous paper in Global Crime). The concept of ‘industry’ here is generic, with examples added from anticorruption.

* 1. There exists, initially, an articulated grassroots concern, in which a politician or media story highlights a specific case or issue. In the case of corruption it is generally something of a ‘scandal’, a major open breach of trust. ‘Fighting corruption’ emerges as a priority among several major policy actors, seemingly at the same time.
  2. A variety of initiatives are taken and ‘measures’ enacted to set up a framework for dealing with the issue. These measures include (a) declarations of intent or state- ments of ‘commitments’, (b) signing of agreements and conventions, (c) efforts to enforce or monitor these commitments/agreements by governmental and non- governmental actors, and (d) setting up of civil society monitoring coalitions. In the anti-corruption field, key governmental and intergovernmental organs are the Global Compact and the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), and in civil society organisations such as TI, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and the UNCAC coalition (an advocacy group pressing for stricter adher- ence to the UN Convention against Corruption).
  3. The policy area takes on institutional autonomy, with specific organs, office and bureaus established to deal with the problem. The problem becomes its own budget line. Those organs with the largest budget lines (World Bank, UNDP, USAID, OECD, EU, the UK foreign assistance unit DFID) become the major actors. Bureaucratic interests develop to sustain or expand budgets by expanding, main- streaming or exaggerating the definition of the problem and including ever more areas of concern. In the ‘anti-corruption’ field, for example, we obtain new policy areas: ‘corruption and crime’, ‘corruption and security’, ‘corruption and climate’, etc.
  4. A diverse group of secondary actors emerge who seek to influence the major actors by ‘pushing’ certain issues or priorities. These secondary actors include Western European bilateral aid agencies, donor foundations searching for new areas of concern, major NGOs and large consulting firms seeking to expand their activities. These secondary actors are at once donors, recipients of aid funds, stewards of funds, implementers of programmes and advocates for certain priorities. Hence, they may be combining fundraising activities with project management, being ever more integrated with the major policy decision-makers.
  5. A corpus of key texts emerges to which everyone pays reference, most especially the international or regional conventions. These declarations are invoked at inter- national gatherings, meetings, ritual celebrations (10 years since passing of Convention X) and in formulating new initiatives. Typically, the documents are broad on principle, whereas measures for monitoring and implementation are less

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clear and subject to further negotiation. What took place in the areas of human rights, development aid, women’s equality and environmental protection has now been replicated in the field of anti-corruption. Key UN, OECD or European con- ventions are followed up by various monitoring and compliance mechanisms. Getting countries to ratify or fulfil their commitments to these conventions is now seen as a key tool for fighting corruption.

* 1. An array of tools and indicators is developed to measure, assess and evaluate the extent of the phenomenon and the effectiveness of policy measures (in this case, measuring corruption and effectiveness of anti-corruption measures). These tools and methods, called ‘diagnostics’, become abstract, complex, standardised and comparable across countries and sectors. ‘Diagnostics’ becomes a branch in itself, accessible only to specialists. Various actors attempt to make their indicators the standards of the industry. In the anti-corruption industry, for example, the comprehensive World Bank Governance Indicators competes with the Bertelsmann Transformation Index, the TI Bribe Payers Index, the Global Corrup-

tion Barometer, the Freedom House index, the TI CPI and the more qualitative country studies of Global Integrity.

* 1. The major players who dominate the discourse – be they governmental, multilateral, private-sector or NGO – can effectively marginalise those who question the con- ventional approaches, or even limiting grassroots input. These players coordinate with each other, harmonising their terminologies, statistical categories, under- standings and view of appropriate solutions. Meanwhile, the initial grassroots ‘movement’ behind the problem evolves into more professional activities. Staff and personnel also become more professional and stable. Civil society leaders, government aid specialists and business leaders become more comfortable with each other, sharing similar perspectives, strategies and tactics. Deciphering ‘donor priorities’ and strategic fundraising becomes a key field of action for civil society organisations. In the anti-corruption industry, the governments within the UNCAC monitoring mechanism have succeeded in eliminating NGO input and country inspections. In the NGO sector, TI is administering its own Integrity Analysis of 27 European countries, with funds from the EU. The study is to contain the same kinds of data, gathered in the same way, from Sweden to Macedonia, from Hungary to the United Kingdom. Anti-corruption grassroots organisations, often loose affiliations of activists, now evolve into coalitions and organisations.
  2. Knowledge about the phenomenon, its causes, consequences and remedies is sys- tematised into knowledge regimes in which academics, specialist training, and project implementation overlap. Academic specialists move in and out of policy implementation areas, while policy specialists receive certified training in areas such as Governance, Project Management, risk assessment or CSR. A cadre of specialists emerges, whose major talent is to determine donors’ priorities. In the case of anti- corruption, there is now a whole retinue of specialists, trainers, project managers,

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diagnosticians, centring around foreign aid, public administration reform and private sector CSR. Anti-corruption knowledge banks have emerged, such as the [U4 group of European foreign ministries, the World Bank’s http://www.fighting- corruption.org,](http://www.fighting-corruption.org/) [TI’s Research and Policy unit, and the Business Anti-corruption](http://www.fighting-corruption.org/) Portal. These data banks contain risk assessments, project evaluations, and the inevitable catalogues of ‘lessons learned’ and ‘best practices’. TI, for example, assists anti-corruption activists with its Corruption Fighters Toolkit, Global Integrity assists aid professionals with its Country Assessments, the Danish Global Advice Network, financed by several European foreign aid ministries, assists businesses with information about corruption, the OECD offers information for government actors, the U4 assists European development aid organs, and the Internet Center for Corruption Research offers anti-corruption training.

1. A standardised, ‘industrial’ terminology develops in which key terms, problems and solutions are framed and understood. In the field of anti-corruption, for example, this terminology refers to types of corruption, understandings about the causes of corruption, extent, impact, the need for broad solutions and coalitions, the use of sanctions, and about the urgency of the corruption problem. One of these under- standings, for example, is that it is possible to change people’s corrupt practices if the right ‘tools’ are found. And the tools include a package of structural reforms, openness, enforcement, and raising awareness that corruption is bad, including bad for business. Among anti-corruption activists, TI has now developed a Plain Lan- guage Guide so that its members understand the phenomenon they are dealing with.
2. The industry produces a standardised product (of knowledge, measures, activities), which is then marketed by major actors as absolutely essential. Clients for the package – countries, municipalities, private sector associations or firms – are those seeking entry into key associations (EU, chambers of commerce), those who need credit worthiness, those who want additional foreign assistance, or those who do not want to lose these resources for lack of compliance. The anti-corruption indus- try, for example, produces an ‘anti-corruption package’, which some governments ‘purchase’ only reluctantly. The ‘customer’ (Romania prior to EU accession, for example) may lack ‘political will’ or may never really ‘come on board’, but they are compelled to accept the package anyway. The marketing of the package may be stimulated by a combination of external pressures, a trusted local ‘champion’, a public relations campaign (‘raising awareness’) and ‘capacity building’ among those clients who now see the value of the package (or the consequences of not accepting it). In the anti-corruption field, for example, the establishment of anti- corruption agencies and commissions, with the accompanying foreign consultants

and advisors and the continuing training, is one such trajectory.12

1. Various actors attempt to expand the industry so as to overlap or include neigh- bouring industries. The expansion can take place by linking previously separate policy areas (‘corruption and climate’, ‘corruption and gender’, ‘corruption and

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post-conflict aid’, ‘corruption and human rights’) or by connecting sectors of social activity (corruption and private business, corruption and NGOs). As a result, anti- corruption initiatives that were once limited to international business and corruption in foreign aid have now expanded into issues of environment/climate, water, organ- ised crime, security, sport, and issues of whistle blowing and access to information.

1. As the industry comes of age, local initiatives are increasingly tailored to the needs and donor priorities of the major industrial players. Public outreach, fundraising, branding and deciphering the donor landscape all become standard activities in the ‘home office’ or ‘secretariat’. The problem of ‘certification’ becomes an issue, insofar as local governments or NGOs need to ensure the public and their donors that they are indeed doing what they say they are doing. In the anti-corruption field, based as it is on integrity in public affairs, there have been several scandals or near-scandals in connection with foreign aid to anti-corruption agencies and bogus anti-corruption NGOs. Even TI now has an entire monitoring and certifi- cation process to ensure that none of its national chapters abuse the TI brand.
2. The final sign that an industry has come of age is that it spawns an *academic critique.* The critique of the industry poses questions as to its political correctness, ade- quacy of its programmes, its motives, effectiveness and interests. These critiques of development, humanitarian aid, of NGOs and of democracy promotion, often with a post-structuralist, discourse-analysis perspective, are well known. Yet the critiques tend to dwell on the margins of the industry and do little to substantively alter the established knowledge regimes, techniques or policies. The critique of the anti-corruption industry, for example, has centred on the misuse of the CPI, the

lack of impact of anti-corruption programmes and the notion that anti-corruption policies are but a handmaiden of neoliberal capitalism.13 These critiques have had little impact on the evolution of the anti-corruption industry.

If there is any region where the anticorruption industry has been implanted and anticorruptionism has made an impact, it is southeast Europe. The political conflicts in the region, the brutal forms of privatization, the pervasivness of organized crime, longstanding networks based on kin, clan, region, network, patronage and party, made southeastern Europe nearly infamous for corruption long before the communist period. Socialism and postsocialism only consolidated some of these corrupt networks and practices. Yet these same countries have for over a decade been the object of concerted anticorruption attention: from international donors, the EU accession officers, and from global and local civil society organizations. At the same time, most assessments of corruption in these countries point to the limited impact of this anticorruption effort. It is tempting to ask the usual Balkan question: who did this to us?

Instead, I will argue here that it is time to analyze anticorruptionism in a more sanguine way, much like we now analyze the development industry or the human rights industry. Like these two other industries, anticorruption is also a moral/ethical project. It is about making things better. Everyone is FOR development, FOR human rights and AGAINST corruption. There are no ‘procorruption’ forces out there, no procorruption party, no procorruption lobby. There are only those who are more militant in fighting corruption. Nor is there a controversy, as is the case with climate change, about whether corruption is occurring and whether it is ‘bad’. It is bad, and everyone agrees that it is bad. Unlike climate change, corruption has real victims forced to pay real bribes or real leaders with Swiss bank accounts.

The rise of the anticorruption industry and the hegemony of anticorruptionism has been nothing short of spectacular. Less than 20 years ago, corruption in the World Bank was called “the C word”. Today, Anticorruption is now a budget line in all aid programs, and high on the EU agenda for prospective and recently joined members. Anticorruption commissions are standard EU accession requirements, and the EU has become more vigilant in ensuring that these commissions can carry out their work; the measurement is the number of high level politicians arrested for abuse of power. Policies and budget lines mean that there are those who have interests, resources and strategies. They mean that there are decisions as to the right way and wrong way to fight corruption. There is a politics of anticorruption, a struggle of whether to go forward, or back off, to please a local clientele or the donors at the IMF or European Commission. Anticorruption ‘packages’ are now between donors and recipients negotiated.

What I would like to do here is pose a question of what kind of questions we should ask about the anticorruption industry. One kind of question is its impact. This question would be: after a good decade and a half of anticorruption campaigns, projects, programs, trainings, monitoring, evaluation, naming and shaming –after a good decade and a half of all this, has there been any reduction in corruption? Are things getting better? There are several possible answers: to this question: ‘yes’, corruption has declined, ‘no’ it hasn’t, ‘no’ it has increased, ‘no’ there have been unintended side effects, ‘yes’ it has declined but there have been unintended side effects, etc.

But perhaps there is another question to be asked. And that is what does all this anticorruptionism ‘mean’? What happens when an entire complex of ideas, practices, discourses, actors and resources begins to live a life of its own? When it becomes a package, or a vector or what Latour calls an immutable movable that can travel around the world and be implanted by global actors and manipulated by local ones. This, I believe is what has happened in Southeast Europe. And it has affected Southeast Europe more than other regions. This is certainly not the first time that western ideas and forms have been either imposed or enthusiastically adopted –or both -- in Balkan settings and tied into local projects. Balkan history is full of the undue influence of outside projects and their ruthless manipulation for local politics.

Let me therefore try to address the question of what kind of questions we should ask about anticorruption. Let me begin by addressing the ‘impact’ question. How indeed to we assess whether anticorruptionism has reduced corruption? Answering this question is very difficult. First there are definition problems. Perhaps a decline in corruption is specious, having occurred because corruption has become more sophisticated. Perhaps corruption has increased because the definition of corruption has become inflated. Corruption is now an empty container (or a floating signifier) used by various political actors looking for a convenient political tool. Not all abuse of power, for example, is corruption. Not all white collar crime or administrative incompetence is corruption. If you cannot define corruption in baseline terms, it is difficult to determine if you have reduced it.

There are also differences between scientific, policy-oriented and local definitions of corruption. In particular, whether corruption includes activities such as fraud, embezzlement or mismanagement in a private firm. Transparency International, for example, following the Enron scandal, altered its definition of corruption to include private corruption. In other countries, a local, popular definition of corruption would include political mismanagement; here in Sweden, there is a often an overlap between conflict of interest/jav/ and corruption.

Third, the data itself on measuring corrupt behaviour is often impressionistic, attitudinal, or limited to specific types of petty bribery. In this sense, the bribes paid to doctors may be going down, while the Swiss bank accounts of high officials may be increasing. The first can be assessed through interviews with citizens (did you pay a bribe last month), but the second remains invisible. Corruption perception surveys, of course, tell us little than people’s perceptions.

Similarly, one could measure the number of prosecutions by an anticorruption agency, a major part of such annual reports. These data may be encouraging for those in Brussels who fund such enterprises, but it says little about the general level of corrupt behaviour, or the underlying level of social trust that enables any government to operate.

So the problem of whether anticorruptionism actually reduces corruption in general requires some reflection. It is not simply a question of lack of adequate data. Some political transformations or policy initiatives cause people to act differently, and may result in replacing corrupt behavior with market transactions or honest bureaucracy. In Romania, the market economy has made meat available. I don’t need to bribe a butcher for access to a piece of meat. I just need cash. I may not need to pay off a policeman for a traffic ticket but I may still have to pay a gift to the doctor for good service. Under Ceausescu there was no such thing as corruption in international tenders or procurement. Or in EU funds. Hence, the phenomenon of corruption has changed, some forms disappearing, others becoming more hidden or complex.

Let us now examine the second question, of what the anticorruption project means, and to whom does it mean what. Here I think it is useful to go backwards and to review how the anticorruption project got started. After all, Anticorruption campaigns have existed in many countries for decades. The US had the world’s first anticorruption law, the foreign corrupt practices act, in 1977, but there were very few prosecutions. But it is not until the mid 1990s that anticorruption takes its place on the international agenda. Recall that it is less than a decade ago that we get a UN Convention against Corruption.

Here we can go back to the founding of the international NGO Transparency International. TI was founded in 1993 by Peter Eigen, a German economist working for the world bank, and several colleagues who were former diplomats, lawyers, businessmen and development experts. None of them had NGO experience. It was an elite organization founded by elites. Eigen had worked largely in Africa and became disgusted by the waste of World Bank aid money being taken largely by government elites with the collusion of businesspeople. Corruption, for Eigen and his colleagues, was a barrier to international business and a drain on effective aid. It was a hidden tax, especially on the poor. Fighting corruption needed to be placed on the political agenda. This fight took several forms: awareness raising, creating islands of integrity inside key government ministries, prosecuting corrupt officials, and getting aid organizations, businesses and government on board. The key tactic was to lobby powerful donor organizations to put anticorruption on the international development agenda.

Eigen’s key partner here was to be James Wolfensohn of the World Bank, the world’s leading donor. Eigen returned to his former employer, where corruption had been known as The C word, and got corruption and good governance moved up on the political agenda. Wolfensohn delivered a famous speech about ‘the cancer of corruption’, the first of many metaphors of corruption as an illness that could be cured. Since then, the bank and other donors have followed, and good governance/anticorruption is now a part of all Bank projects. This agenda includes reducing corruption in the aid process, and support for national anticorruption/governance institutions. At the same time, TI worked to eventually influence international conventions on corruption, in Europe, Africa and the UN, and to build a network of local anticorruption groups in each country. Most recently, TI’s branches have opened anticorruption resource centers where people can bring cases of corruption to local lawyers, in effect TI as an NGO is doing what the state prosecutor should be doing.

TI success was extraordinary. But it should be remembered that it was always difficult to find partners in Southeast Europe (In Bucharest, I myself sat with Eigen at a dinner in 1994 as he inquired after a Romanian TI partner; 5 more years would pass before a chapter was formed). TI now has an office in Brussels and receives its funds mostly from western European government agencies, EU, USAID and a few large donors such as Statoil. A part of this success was because its founding group consisted of well connected elites with time, funds and connections to decision makers. Its activities were visible and concrete, and sometimes dramatic. The most famous of its method is the development of the Corruption Perception Index, a survey of surveys of businessmen and local experts who rate each country for their corruption. The first CPI appeared in 1995 with just 40 counties. It now includes 170 and is used as one of the criteria for various aid programs. Countries now compete to move up on the survey, which again, measures corruption perception and not actual corruption.

Now where do the postsocialist countries, especially those in southeast Europe, fit in all this? The corruption in socialist and postsocialist countries arose partly as legacies of popular distrust of the state; the state was an obstacle which people evaded using bribes and favors. The new democracies also contained their inefficiencies and abuses of power, and as we know, many of these abuses were connected with privatization and the enrichment of politicians, including former communist party politicians and their families. Fighting mafia and corruption became a local political project. Accusing other politicians of corruption became everyday media politics. Corrupt transactions in the energy sector, in the construction of cell phones networks, in humanitarian aid or EU infrastructure funds, these were everyday headlines. But through the mid 1990s there was little progress in implanting an anticorruption regime. There were conferences, trainings and initiatives, but it was difficult to determine that the public sector was less corrupt or that bribery as a way life had been reduced..

By the early 2000s however, there was more pressure. The main impetus for the anticorruption project had two sources: EU accession and general development democracy assistance. The American aid projects for example, funded to private consulting companies by USAID, focused on Ukraine and Albania. They tended to focus on developing anticorruption coalitions among civil society, since the state organs seemed too weak. European and Scandinavian aid tended to focus on developing the state sector, especially in the Baltics, including ombudsman and anticorruption agencies. Clearly the most important driver of anticorruptionism in Eastern Europe was EU accession, and in the Balkans a combination of EU and World Bank aid. By the early 2000s, postsocialist countries have had a project to show to the world that they were less corrupt.

Showing that there is less corruption is not an easy task. It requires a sort of performance using indicators, measurements, surveys and comparisons with a more corrupt past, or more corrupt neighboring countries. Part of the production of the global anticorruption industry is to generate and sustain such statistical technologies. Thus the need for anticorruption consulting and expertise, and a faith that certain kinds of numbers and indices will reveal progress in society similar to a lowering of birth rates or reduction in the number of unemployed.

One might contrast the kinds of pressure mechanisms operating here: the world bank stipulated anticorruption in order to grant loans, the U.S. demanded an anticorruption effort in order to access its Millennium Challenge Fund, and the EU demanded good governance and anticorruption in order to qualify for candidacy or membership. While there is some overlap here, clearly the EU criteria tended to exert the most effective pressure.

Romania was one example of this kind of pressure. Prior to accession, Brussels’ officials made visits to Romania, issued reports and warnings against government pressure on the Romanian anticorruption agency. The agency was pursuing government officials for corruption. The government at the time protested against the EU mission, saying that it was political. Indeed it was. Brussels was supporting the Romanian anticorruption commission and gave the impression of interference in Romainian internal affairs. Were they interfering? Of course. Was it a good thing? It depends on your political party. Did it reduce corruption? We don’t know.

What we do know is that IMF and EU pressure put anticorruption on the agenda, and pushed the leader of the Romanian anticorruption agency to produce results. She did, Romania entered the EU. Following accession, however, the leader was forced out, the agency’s work paralyzed by the government who saw its prosecutions as politically motivated, and the EU has learned that there must now be post accession monitoring of anticorruption in places like Romania and Bulgaria. Later on this leader served as minister, entered the European parliament and is now a candidate for president.

Anticorruption is thus a mixture of agendas……. Sometimes these agendas are indeed good governance and reducing corruption. This may be to make the climate better for international business, or to promote more democracy and citizen participation. In this sense, anticorruption has been seen as a neoliberal plot.

Other times anticorruption operates as a condition to enter the EU club or get funds from USAID by using the right words. There is of course a long tradition of dissimulation in eastern Europe, of saying one thing and doing another…….fighting corruption is now one vehicle for this dissimulation.

And on still other occasions, fighting corruption is a slogan for political opposition. We can study accusations and counteraccusations of corruption.

We also fighting corruption as an instrument of the state against opposing forces. In this sense, authoritarian states fight the sort of corruption that they don’t like, or cannot control, and reinforce the corruption that serves them well. Anticorruption campaigns in China and Russia might resemble this category, and I would argue that Southeast Europe anticorruption campaigns also pick and choose their anticorruption platforms.

Finally, fighting corruption can be an instrument for foreign influence in the local affairs of certain countries. It is not accidental that TI branches have been singled out as subversive in many countries –Venezuela, Russia, etc.—as arms of a neoliberal, western imperialist subversion. Anticorruption is a global project, funding comes from abroad, the terminology is uniform, the leaders are sent for training abroad.

Seen from the government’s perspective, the picture of anticorruption NGOs as agents of foreign influence is accurate. Insofar as anticorruption is fighting abuse of power, those in power should be afraid of TI and various anticorruption projects. Vladimir Putin sees TI and other anticorruption NGOs as foreign agents, partly because of their foreign funding. He has tried to limit their activities and close them down. I suspect that if the Southeast Euorpean countries were not on an EU pathway, their anticorruption agencies and NGOs would have been neutralized long ago.

We have, therefore, an anticorruption ‘package’ that can travel, it is both exported, implanted, imposed, and enthusiastically taken on board by various actors.

I will close only by insisting that along with the valid study of corruption as both a cause and effect of poverty and government inefficiency in Southeast Europe, we also need to understand what anticorruption is all about. Anticorruption needs more than just an evaluation of whether it ‘works’ or has had ‘an impact’ on reducing corruption. We need to view the anticorruption assemblage as an international project with its local ramifications. Anticorruptionism acts a vehicle for quite different projects, many of which have little relation to corruption. This process is not new. We have seen this before in the ‘development’, ‘human rights’ and ‘civil society’ industries.

Anticorruption is not only a project but a budget line. It is a field of overlapping and conflicting interests, and we need to understand the interests at stake, also when we examine moral projects. Everyone is against corruption. So what.