

2026

Corruption: an approach



• PAX[®] •
CONSULTING

Pax Consulting

21-05-2026

Index

1.	INTRODUCTION	3
2.	DATA GATHERED	3
2.1	Corruption index.....	4
2.2	Data from media.....	4
3.	FURTHER ANALYSIS	6
4.	ANALYSIS OF CATEGORIES BY COUNTRY.....	8
4.1	The case of Spain.	9
5.	CONCLUSION	10

1. INTRODUCTION

This non-paper offers an overview of corruption cases across a number of countries, with the aim of fostering a **broader and more nuanced understanding of this enduring phenomenon**, one that has long accompanied human societies in all their complexity and forms of organization.

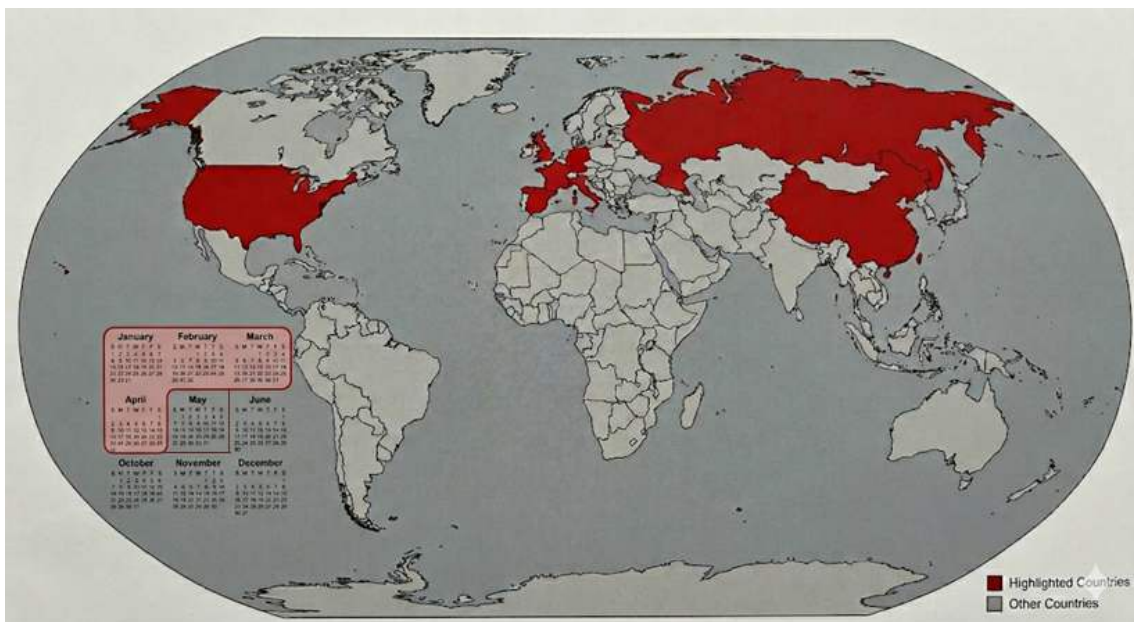
This interest stems from **recent news from China and from the muddy situation in Spain**, where several prominent political figures have recently been indicted.

We have focused on cases from the United States, United Kingdom, France, Spain, Germany, Italy, China and Russia. These represent Western liberal societies and autocracies. It might provide us with a **global view on corruption** in the first world and developing countries.

The cases included in this review have been drawn from **media outlets with national reach**, in order to preserve a broader and more representative perspective. Regional and local publications, however valuable in other contexts, have been deliberately set aside for the purposes of this survey.

2. DATA GATHERED

The period under observation starts on **1st January 2026** and extends until the day of publication. It is almost half a year of activity for every country. **The first and second quarters** are the most active in every sense (economy, politics, security and so on) and can serve as a great example.



The third quarter is defined by the low activity due to the summer holidays, and the fourth quarter is defined by the end of the year which compels law enforcement agencies to increase their activity in order to fix the numbers (activity statistics), as well as Christmas holidays. Regarding the statistics issue, it may sound weird, but it is a reality which affects, at least, law enforcement agencies in the Western world.

2.1 Corruption index.

According to the analysis carried out by Transparency International (TI), the studied countries hold the following positions regarding corruption:

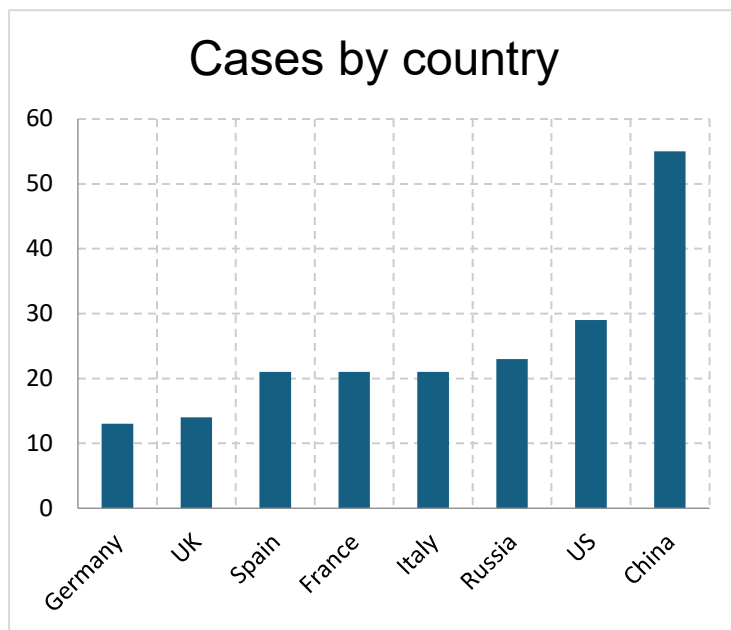
Country	CPI 2025 score	Global rank
Germany	77/100	10/182
United Kingdom	70/100	20/182
France	66/100	27/182
United States	64/100	29/182
Spain	55/100	49/182
Italy	53/100	52/182
China	43/100	76/182
Russia	22/100	157/182

TI has compiled data of 182 countries, and the highest score is given to Germany (77), being the number one Denmark, scoring 89 followed by Singapore (88).

2.2 Data from media.

As stated before, media have reported about corruption cases in the targeted countries and the chosen period as follows:

Country	Case count
Germany	13
UK	14
Spain	21
France	21
Italy	21
Russia	23
US	29
China	55



A first reflection induced by these data has to do with the ratio of corruption cases by population and it marks a difference among countries whose cases are similar in quantity. This is the case for Spain, Italy, France or the United States. The rationale behind this index (**corruption cases per capita or, far better, reported corruption cases per capita**) is similar to the GDP per capita which makes very clear the differences among countries and show how hard life is for locals.

In our case the final index casts the following results:

Rank	Country	Case count	Population 2024, millions	Cases per million inhabitants	Corruption-reporting per-capita index
1	Spain	21	48.807	0.430	198.4
2	Italy	21	58.986	0.356	164.1
3	France	21	68.517	0.306	141.3
4	UK	14	69.226	0.202	93.2
5	Russia	23	143.534	0.160	73.9
6	Germany	13	83.511	0.156	71.8
7	US	29	340.111	0.085	39.3
8	China	55	1,408.975	0.039	18.0

According to this data and the reorganization, **Spain is the country where corruption is mostly exposed**, while China keeps, not surprisingly, an outstanding low record.

Of course, **control of media in autocracies** play a defining role in these results. And this is exposed

by the global rank elaborated by TI. According to TI, China and Russia are the most corrupted among the targeted countries. But the new index depicts China as the least corrupted.

Among Western European countries, the divergence between the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) and the reporting-based index developed in this paper remains relatively limited, which is analytically significant. Because these states operate within broadly comparable institutional frameworks—characterised by pluralist political systems, relatively strong protections for freedom of expression, and a media environment capable of exposing public-sector misconduct—the results allow for a more meaningful cross-country comparison.

In methodological terms, this degree of comparability reduces, though does not eliminate, the distorting effect of regime type on visibility and reporting patterns. Within that context, the data suggest that **Spain and Italy continue to display a higher degree of corruption exposure** than countries such as Germany or the United Kingdom, pointing not only to a governance challenge, but also to a persistent gap in institutional resilience, preventive oversight, and enforcement credibility.

3. FURTHER ANALYSIS

What remains as a lasting truth is that corruption is a constant in human activity. As Samuel Huntington said with other words, *corruption can “grease the wheels” of the economy.*

The data also indicate that some degree of corruption tends to persist wherever meaningful economic activity is present.

While dealing with the gathered data these have been regrouped in these five categories:

Category	Definition	Case count
Political/government office corruption	Elected officials, ministers, party figures or senior government leaders accused, investigated or convicted over bribery, influence-peddling, embezzlement, illegal funding, abuse of	69

	office or misuse of public position.	
Public administration, judiciary & law-enforcement misconduct	Judges, prosecutors, police, prison, immigration, regulatory or other public servants accused or sanctioned for bribes, leaks, favours, contraband, improper access or abuse of official role.	46
Public procurement, subsidies & public-funds fraud	Public contracts, grants, subsidies, public-programme funds, procurement rigging or public-budget misuse, including EU/PNRR/FEDER or government scheme fraud.	27
Corporate, financial & commercial corruption	Private companies, financial institutions, executives, market actors or commercial bribery/fraud, including corporate settlements and commercial bribery schemes.	28
Defence, security & strategic-sector corruption	Military, defence procurement, intelligence/security, strategic infrastructure, aerospace, energy, rail, nuclear, state-defence or security-linked corruption.	27

Political corruption is paramount and the difference that shows up, compared with the other categories, might have to do with the fact that **politics require no technical qualification**, it is not a professional field which requires a specific training of any kind. Therefore, the mixture of people with **different backgrounds, unrelated to each other**, increases potentially the likelihood of corruption.

The other environments are more professional which seems to withhold a bit the spreading of corrupted behaviours.

However, it is quite worrying that **law enforcement and the judiciary appear to be the second more corrupted areas** in the targeted countries and the targeted period.

4. ANALYSIS OF CATEGORIES BY COUNTRY

Raw data offer the following picture:

Country	Political/government office corruption	Public administration, judiciary & law-enforcement misconduct	Public procurement, subsidies & public-funds fraud	Corporate, financial & commercial corruption	Defence, security & strategic-sector corruption	Total
US	8	17	1	1	2	29
UK	2	3	2	6	1	14
Spain	10	0	9	2	0	21
France	9	0	5	7	0	21
Germany	2	6	2	2	1	13
Italy	6	5	8	1	1	21
China	27	11	0	9	8	55
Russia	5	4	0	0	14	23
TOTAL	69	46	27	28	27	197

Regarding political cases, **China is the champion**. Looking into it further, it has to do with the process of political cleansing that President Xi is promoting and implementing.

Regarding the West, **Spain, France and the US populate the podium**. However, taking into account the size of political institutions in those three countries, it is very telling that **Spain keeps the pole position** while it has the smallest administration and the smallest population. Therefore, **political corruption in Spain reveals its weight and its capillarity**.

China champions all the categories but public subsidies, public-funds and procurement. It is explainable due to the **ongoing political and administrative cleansing**.

The US champions the corruption cases in the public administration, judiciary and law enforcement. The explanation lies on the Trump administration being focused on its fight against judges and former members of the Biden administration.

In the West, Germany seems to have its Achilles' heel in the judiciary and law enforcement field.

As it might be expected, **Spain and Italy take the lead in the field of corruption cases related to procurement, subsidies and public-funds fraud**.

France leads the corruption related to the corporate and financial fields, followed closely by the UK. The United States should also feature more prominently in this category. However, the sheer scale of the U.S. corporate sector and the breadth of its operational freedom may help explain why relatively few corporate corruption cases appear

in the data, despite the size and aggressiveness of both large and small US firms.

Russia stands out in corruption related to the defence, security and strategic sectors. This is closely linked to the Kremlin's control over oligarchs in the energy and defence industries. Given the demands of an ongoing war, Putin cannot allow the military-industrial complex to operate without restraint. The energy sector is equally vital to sustaining the war effort. In both areas, the Kremlin maintains tight control.

4.1 The case of Spain.

As stated before, Spain is number one in corruption per capita. These days it has been a blow



internationally the news related to the indictment of former President Rodríguez Zapatero involved in corruption cases related to dubious lobbying and money laundering. The case has made lines all over Europe, but it has been the case for the last two years due to cases related to the inner circle of the current President, Pedro Sánchez.

The extracted data show that Spain has a problem with political corruption as well as public procurement, subsidies and public-funds fraud. In a way, both categories are related to the functioning of the *res publica*.

It is also a problem for the European Union which has already been shepherding the Spanish government because of the use of European funds in areas where they should not have been used (pensions for instance or the lack of information regarding funds which should have been spent on railway maintenance, namely high-speed railways).

There are other states in Europe whose corruption level is higher than that of Spain, but their weight in terms of economy, population and political influence is far from becoming a problem. But Spain is the fourth economy of the EU, the fourth largest country and it carries a responsibility. The largest countries have to set an example for the other members of the Treaty.

If Germany, France, Italy and Spain do not set their bearings correctly, **the derailment of the union will happen.** The only remaining question will be when.

Brussels is watching very carefully how events develop in Spain regarding the President's entourage. Brussels is also aware that US authorities have also contributed to expose some of these cases. It goes without saying that the US have provided data to the Spanish police and maybe other institutions like Europol, related to Venezuelan money laundering networks. **Chinese activities are also being closely monitored in Europe and Spain stands out again in this field.**

Judicial proceedings underway in the United States are generating **substantial volumes of information** involving prominent Spanish figures. Cases linked to **Maduro, Pollo Carvajal, and other associated actors** are shedding light on networks of contact, patterns of activity, and long-standing relationships with left-wing individuals and political parties that, in some instances, have maintained ties with the Venezuelan regime for decades.

5. CONCLUSION

Although the dataset used in this study remains limited in scope, it nonetheless offers a useful analytical lens through which to examine contemporary corruption dynamics in Western democracies and in the principal autocratic systems considered in this review.

Spain emerges as a particularly negative case within the comparative framework of this report. While it does not resemble the most severe corruption environments commonly associated with weaker state structures, it remains clearly detached from the standards of integrity observed in Denmark and the Nordic countries, which continue to function as the principal benchmark for good governance in the Western world. Italy, although to a lesser degree, exhibits a broadly similar pattern.

Autocratic systems retain a decisive advantage in controlling the public visibility of corruption. In China, corruption allegations appear intertwined with a broader process of political consolidation and administrative cleansing, while in Russia they are connected to the tightening of state control over the military-industrial base and other strategic sectors. In both cases, anti-corruption discourse may serve not only a legal or

disciplinary purpose, but also a wider political and strategic function.

In Western political systems, corruption rarely operates as an individual phenomenon. On the contrary, it typically depends on the cooperation, tolerance, or active participation of a broader circle of institutional actors, including **civil servants** and intermediary officials, who enable its execution, facilitate its concealment, and extend its reach across multiple layers of the state apparatus. **This institutional diffusion is what gives corruption its depth, durability, and capillarity.**

For that reason, corruption often advances with limited immediate visibility and only becomes fully apparent once its effects are already entrenched and considerably more difficult to reverse.

