

State Capture and Corruption in (North) Macedonia* during Zoran Zaev's Rule (2017-2021)

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Abstract

Corruption flourishes when governance structures are deficient, where impartiality in government is abused by powerful interests. We use a framework for measuring corruption, the TASP framework – referring to types, sectors, activities and places developed – to analyse the rule of prime minister Zoran Zaev (2017-2021) focusing on the issues of state capture and corruption. Our analysis builds upon public and media perceptions about corruption. We argue that SDSM's rule in the mentioned period was not just detrimental to the faith North Macedonian citizens have in government and its institutions. The corruption of Zaev's government violated international norms of transparency and standards compliance and corroded, weakened, and endangered the foundations upon which democracy rests. We reveal a high number of instances of illiberal and corrupt practices of SDSM government in the period 2017-2021. The magnitude of cases involving state capture and grand corruption indirectly reveals that, following the victory at the 2020 parliamentary elections and the formation of the second Zaev government, the ruling elite undertook systemic political corruption, manipulating policy formation and public institutions to their own advantage. Essentially, Zaev's rule replicated previous illiberal practices of Nikola Gruevski leading to the monopolization of power in the pursuit of particularistic interests.

Keywords: North Macedonian government, corruption, state capture, Zoran Zaev rule, TASP framework

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Introduction

On 17th of January 2022, North Macedonia's³ parliament elected Dimitar Kovachevski as prime minister of a Social Democrat (SDSM)-led government. Kovachevski succeeded Zoran Zaev, who stepped down after his party failed to win the local elections held in October the previous year. During his reign (2017-2021) Zaev won support of ethnic Albanians by supporting legislation that made Albanian the country's second official language. Signing a Treaty for Friendship and Cooperation with Bulgaria and the so-called "Prespa Agreement" with Greece that led to the country's name change into North Macedonia and the removal of Athens' blockade on NATO membership, Zaev also enjoyed a positive reputation in the international community. Together with Aleksandar Vucic and Edi Rama, he was one of the founders of the Open Balkan initiative, formerly known as Mini-Schengen Area, an economic and political zone of cooperation of three member states from the Balkans – Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia.

Despite the apparent successes in international politics North Macedonia under Zaev's rule was not fully democratized. In the "Nations in Transit" reports by Freedom House it was and still is classified as a "Transitional or Hybrid regime." This paper analyses the rule of Zaev (2017-2021) focusing on the issues of state capture and corruption. Did Zaev bring democratic changes to the country, or did he quickly adapt the illiberal practices of the right-wing Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski (2006-2016) to his benefit? We argue that SDSM's rule in the mentioned period was not just detrimental to the faith citizens have in the government and its institutions. The corruption of Zaev's governments violated international norms of transparency and standards compliance and corroded, weakened, and endangered the foundations upon which democracy rests. In effect, Zaev's rule replicated and modified previous harmful policies leading to the monopolization of power, pursuing particularistic interests.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. In the first section, we discuss the complexity of corruption and state capture in North Macedonia in the period before Zaev came to power. We discuss corruption and state capture during Nikola Gruevski's rule. In the following section an overview is given of the backsliding of rule of law and democracy and the illiberal and corrupt practices of SDSM government in the period of 2017-2021. Section 3 presents our data and methods. The next section reports in detail the analysis of the corruption cases of Zaev's government and the seizing of structural, cultural and

³* The bracketed word "North" in the title signifies that the country name was changed from "Macedonia" to "North Macedonia" in the period under consideration. Following the Prespa Agreement (June 2018), the Macedonian parliament voted to amend the constitution and change the name of the country to the Republic of North Macedonia with the amendments entering into force in mid-February, 2019. Nevertheless, the country is unofficially referred to as "Macedonia" by many of its citizens and of the local media outlets. This applies also to the authors of this article who consider the name-change process illegitimate and contrary to the country's Constitution. Accordingly, they refrain from using "North" in the country designation and it is the BJIEP editors' decision to use the constitutional name of country – North Macedonia (editor's note).

economic resources and powers for private and political party gains. Section 6 discusses the findings, before concluding in the last section with implications and future research directions.

State capture 1.0

Informal ties between political and economic elites in the Western Balkans have enabled political parties to capture institutions through patronage, cronyism, and clientelism (Daskalovski, 2017; Kraske, 2017; Bartlett, 2020; Taseva, 2021/a; Resimić, 2022). In February 2015, Zaev begun releasing sets of illegally recorded phone conversations. The accusations against Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and the Head of the Intelligence Service (DBK) Sasho Mijalkov were that they have, during the last few years, secretly and illegally wire-tapped some 20,000 people including journalists, opposition leaders, businessmen, NGO activists, academics, religious leaders, members of the judiciary and others prominent intellectuals. The recordings have augmented the fear that the system was designed with the objective of maximizing wealth, power, and impunity for the benefit of specific individuals and networks, rather than serving the public interest (Daskalovski, 2017). A widespread 'sense of impunity' of the VMRO-DPMNE and DUI officials, amplified by a long-standing absence of alternation in government existed. Among the public there was a feeling that Prime Minister Gruevski and his associates have learnt to maximize wealth and power for their own benefit, while undergoing a large-scale extraction of resources from society and employing part of these resources through clientelism.

The control of the public institutions was overwhelming. The VMRO-DPMNE led government established control and management of different power systems by "placing suitable and loyal party members/supporters for rectors, directors, general managers, presidents, members of managing and supervisory boards, councils and so on" (Mitevski, 2018: 171) Political influence on the judiciary in North Macedonia has been apparent for many years. Many critically oriented media were closed down in this period. If we take the standard definition of "state capture", that "it occurs when the ruling elite and/or powerful businessmen manipulate policy formation and influence the emerging rules of the game (including laws and economic regulations) to their own advantage" (Hellman et al., 2000) and that the distinguishing feature of state capture is a high level of secrecy, then we can easily confirm that the rule of the Gruevski government fits in this category. The wiretapping scandal unveiled the secrecy.

Following the 2016 elections, SDSM took power in coalition with the ethnic Albanian Democratic Union for Integration (DUI). Coming to office, Zoran Zaev vowed "economic prosperity, EU and NATO integration, and zero tolerance for corruption" (Marusic, 2017). Prime Minister Zaev promised "honest and responsible governance, a strong fight against crime, and institutional reform" (Dimeska, 2021: 2) He announced a responsible, reformist, European government, seeking to deal with the naming dispute with Greece. He also pledged to rid the courts of political interference so that many high-profile graft

investigations and trials could be brought to swift and fair conclusions (Marusic, 2020). Zaev promised to dismantle the “state capture” across all branches and levels of government and create conditions for the country’s Special Public Prosecutor to get to the bottom of the wiretapping affair (Bliznakovski, 2017).

State capture 2.0

Although the country underwent an important political change in 2016, the evidence suggests that this has not put an end to state capture, while some of the practices and mechanisms of capture remain untouched (Daskalovski, 2017; Taseva, 2021/a; Resimić, 2022). Corruption in the judiciary and an unreformed public administration remain an outstanding issue (Taseva, 2021/a; BTI, 2020; Bliznakovski, 2021). Overall corruption remains “one of the key obstacles to democratic transformation, as evidenced by international governance indices that point to the country’s lack of progress in curbing corruption” (Resimić, 2022: 1876). North Macedonia ranks poorly on the Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index (CPI), and World Governance Indicators (WGI) dataset developed by the World Bank.

Already in the first year in power, despite the resolute pro-EU rhetoric and support from Brussels, SDSM “stalled on many of the envisioned reforms... its newly appointed officials demonstrating certain unethical practices, and there have been indications for corruption as well... while promising comprehensive reforms, the rule of SDSM continues[d] as “business as usual” (Vangeli, 2017: 7). Problems of politicisation and corruption in public employment procedures are particularly challenging (Taseva, 2021/b). Much of the captured state during the VMRO-DPMNE and DUI coalition remained intact. SDSM “inherited an elaborate and apt network of coercive and extractive state institutions, which it has also continued to use in a way that has alienated great portions of the population” (Vangeli, 2017: 7). In any case, Zaev’s government did not fulfill its mission and electoral campaign pledges. A BIRN fact-check in June 2020 showed that of “43 promises Zaev made during the [inauguration] speech, just 16 have been fully met and 12 only partially; no progress has been made on any of the rest” (Marusic, 2020).

Zaev signed the so-called “Prespa Agreement” with his Greek counterpart Tsipras, pledging to change the name of the country. The agreement was, and still is highly unpopular and the government could not secure popular support in a referendum. Yet Zaev sought the 2/3 majority necessary to change the Constitution and ratify the Agreement. The process was completed “by means of intimidation and ‘reconciliation’ with eight opposition MPs who had been charged by the Special Prosecutor’s office or by the regular state prosecutor (regarding the events of 27 April), including a quick change of the Criminal Code to provide them guarantees that they won’t be charged in the future” (Vankovska, 2019: 73). Their support for the name change came only after parliament passed a much-disputed Amnesty Law that legally absolved some of the participants of the 2017 riot. Not surprisingly while the independence of the judiciary is formally guaranteed it has been pointed out that there

are “indications of political influence on the decisions of the judiciary” (BTI, 2020: 12) In the discussed case, the court decided to release the mentioned eight opposition MPs, just a day before the voting on changing the country's constitutional name.

Zaev's time in office was also marred by “many corruption affairs, such as a major case that involved the country's special public prosecutor, an owner of a TV station close to his party and an oligarch close to the previous regime” (Jovanovic, 2021). While SDSM made progress in managing the various ethnic Albanian minority coalition partners, such successes stand in sharp contrast to “the failures in the field of rule of law” (Marusic, 2020). The public also became disillusioned after the so-called “Extortion” affair in 2019, in which “people close to Zaev allegedly participated with Katica Janeva, the special prosecutor in charge of investigating organized crime and corruption, in extorting money from businessman Jordan Kamchev” (Dimeska, 2021). Moreover, “one of Zaev's top advisers, Dragi Rashkovski, was placed under house arrest for alleged impropriety regarding the purchase of government software, even though Zaev regularly proclaimed Raskovski's innocence” (Ibid.). In another case, Zaev's previous deputy prime minister was found by the Anti-Corruption Commission to have concealed a private interest in a decision that the government made (Jovanovic, 2021).

Various reports confirm that in 2021 “the state administration and state-controlled enterprises remain the domain of political appointees, whereas directors and board members in the state-run companies and institutions usually come from the ruling parties' structures, regardless of their experience in the related field, and even lower-level appointments in schools and hospitals have to pass ruling parties' filters” (Dimitrievska, 2021; Dimeski, 2021). In April, 2021 police officers were arrested as part of a criminal gang supplying passports and identity documents to high-level criminals. More than 200 passports were issued to foreign nationals including members of international crime groups and drug cartels as well as an ISIS member (Damovski, 2021) A video was also released of police cars escorting a Turkish crime lord that received such a passport, while photos on social media show an off-duty policeman acting as a bodyguard to the same person as he walks through the streets in Skopje. The affair has indicated a high level of corruption within the Interior Ministry.

The country fell drastically in the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI, 2022) ranking from 62nd in 2012 to 111th in 2020. North Macedonia ranked 67th in 2013, 64th in 2014, 66th in 2015, 90th in 2016, 107th in 2017, 93rd in 2018, 106th in 2019 and 111th in 2021. Sladjana Taseva, president of the North Macedonian section of Transparency International, said that the 2021 ranking is “a sign of a captured state, high level political corruption, lack of transparency in public sector and the inefficiency of the control and regulatory bodies that is a consequence of insufficient capacity for their work.” The president, Stevo Pendarovski emphasized in an interview on October 15, 2020, that no senior politician has been brought to justice and held accountable for corruption, “...they all seem to enjoy impunity due to a culture of political protectionism and party control” (Taseva, 2021/a: 6).

Zaev's management of the COVID-19 pandemic was “also disastrous and brought the country to fourth place in the world in terms of the number of COVID-19 deaths per capita” (Jovanovic, 2021). Corruption allegations were rife in the botched attempts for

procurement of Chinese vaccines. Anti-Corruption officials and the country's president stated that "allegations that the Health Minister pursued a dodgy deal to procure Chinese COVID-19 vaccines for his own profit must be carefully investigated" (Marusic, 2021). The sense of impunity was prevalent when after a fire in September 2021 in Tetovo, at a makeshift COVID-19 hospital, 14 people died, the health minister, Venko Filipce, tendered his resignation, but Zaev did not accept it, and, when no one took responsibility when 44 people Macedonians died in a traffic accident in Bulgaria. In April 2022, the Public Prosecutor's Office for the Fight against organized crime and corruption issued an order for investigative actions against the Secretary General of the Government, Muhamed Zekiri. According to the prosecution, from April 2021 to January 2022, Zekiri, along with two Croatian citizens, made a contract for consulting services worth almost a million euros without a public procurement tender. He is a former journalist, who joined SDSM, eventually becoming its Vice-President in 2019. A close associate of Zaev, Zekiri was the second Secretary General of the government that faced corruption charges.

Other cases of corruption and nepotism occurred in 2022. Radio Free Europe reported that tenders in the public enterprise REK Bitola were awarded to companies of SDSM members (Mitevaska, 2022). In November, 2022, Islam Abazi, with a very sparse portfolio and with suspected affiliations to DUI, the junior ruling party, was elected as the new head of the Organised Crime and Corruption Prosecution. He is from Zajaz, the place of birth of Ali Ahmeti, the leader of DUI, and appeared in a number social media photos together with party functionaries, indicating possible DUI influence in his election. Abazi won despite "being the only one who did not present a platform for his candidacy ahead of the election, and the only one who refused to participate in several televised debates between the candidates" (Marusic, 2022). The Organised Crime Prosecution deals with several high-profile cases involving former officials close to the current Social Democratic government and VMRO-DPMNE.

The Platform of civil society organizations for fight against corruption released a statement underlining that "the election of the Head Public Prosecutor for Fighting Organized Crime and Corruption and head of the Judicial Council, the turmoil in the councils (the Judicial Council and the Council of Public Prosecutors) destroy the perception of impartiality and do not instill confidence in the improvement of the quality of justice" (CCC, 2022). Moreover, the Platform was especially harsh evaluating the fight against corruption of the government explaining that problems reoccur in most of the areas vulnerable to corruption. In the press release it was noted that "the trend of public procurement with favorable winners, low competition and poor performance control and delivery of goods, works and services continues while the high "tax" of corruption causes the domestic business not to develop or, on the other hand, quality foreign capital does not want to invest in the country; and young people continue to leave the country" (Ibid.).

The State Commission for Prevention of Corruption in its Annual Report on the Implementation of the National Strategy for Preventing Corruption and Conflict of Interest noted that 22 out of the 111 activities foreseen to be implemented in 2021 were fully

implemented, or just 20%, 27% of the activities are being implemented and a majority of 53% of the activities have not even been initiated for implementation (DKSK, 2021: 9). Realization of activities was not much better in 2022.

On Data and Methods

Corruption thrives when governance structures are deficient, where impartiality in government is abused by powerful interests. While not all corruption is the same, it typically manifests itself in similar forms, from the petty instances of bribery, extortion, to conflict of interest, a public official hiring one's own company for government contracts, hiring unqualified friends, party colleagues or family members for government jobs, misappropriation, nepotism, and the so-called grand political corruption or state capture. How should corruption be measured? The Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International is a global ranking of about 180 countries, annually conducted since 1995, and the most widely cited source of corruption data. This is, however, a measure of perceptions of corruption, perceptions of its incidence and not evidence of corruptive behavior. They are, in effect, proxy measurements (Graycar, 2015).

One useful framework is the TASP analysis developed in Graycar and Prenzler (2013) and Graycar (2015). The TASP analysis indicates the types and activities of corruption and sectors and places in which it is prevalent. The TASP framework assists in pinpointing the nature, location, and context of public sector corruption. Per Graycar (2015) corruption comprehends and encompasses many types of behavior, such as bribery, extortion, cronyism, misuse of information, abuse of discretion. These behaviors can take place by way of different activities such as appointing personnel, procuring services, controlling, and regulating activities such as issuing permits and licenses, constructing things and so on. Many of these occur concurrently in different sectors such as health, energy delivery, tax administration, justice etc., and in different places, such as regions, micro localities, or specific workplaces. These concepts, described as TASP (types, activities, sectors, places) provide a framework for the analysis of corrupt events in the public sector.

Indicators of Corruption

For a number of reasons, in this paper we have decided to slightly modify the TASP framework for the analysis of corruption. We believe that the original TASP framework could not capture the enormity and variety of corruption types and activities that occurred for the duration of the rule of SDSM 2017-2021. During Zaev's reign there were numerous instances of petty and high-level corruption. His government modified the state capture of Gruevski. Such a combination of "ordinary" and high levels of corruption, benefiting state capture, requires an extensive elaboration of types and activities and upgrade of the TASP framework. To do that we have used the glossary of terms from the UNESCO-ETICO portal, a web-based platform that provides tools, information and resources to policymakers and

education stakeholders who are looking to address the issue of corruption in the education sector (ETICO, 2007). Given the complexity of the situation and some very specific but atypical corruption practices, we added the category of ‘other’ activities and sectors. We also utilized concepts from Amundsen (2000), Vurmo et al. (2021) and Galev et al. (2021) so that our framework incorporates also concepts and activities based on studies of state capture and grand corruption. Finally, we have ignored the ‘places’ part of the TASP matrix as all the cases pertained to North Macedonia and have national repercussions. The upgraded TASP framework as used here is presented within Table 1.

Table 1: Upgraded TASP Framework

Type	Activities	Sectors
<p>Bribery offering, giving, receiving, or soliciting of any item of value to influence the actions of an official, or other person, in charge of a public or legal duty.</p>	<p>Appointing personnel</p>	<p>Construction</p>
<p>Extortion the practice of obtaining something, especially money, through force or threats.</p>	<p>Buying things (Procurement)</p>	<p>Health</p>
<p>Misappropriation (of funds) [t]he unauthorized, improper, or unlawful use of funds or other property for purposes other than that for which intended.“ Embezzlement is misappropriation when the property or funds involved have been lawfully entrusted to the embezzler. In circumstances where the funds are accessible to, but not entrusted to, the perpetrator, it is not embezzlement but can still be considered larceny, misappropriation, misapplication, or some other similar term.</p>	<p>Delivering programmes or services</p>	<p>Tax administration</p>
<p>Self-dealing „one takes an action in an official capacity which involves dealing with oneself in a private capacity and which confers a benefit on oneself. Example: „work[ing] for government and us[ing] your official position to secure a contract for a private consulting company you own“ or „using your government position to get a summer job for your daughter.“</p>	<p>Making things (construction/ manufacturing)</p>	<p>Energy</p>

<p>Patronage (party favors) The appointment or hiring of a person to a government post on the basis of partisan loyalty. Recruitment of administrators based on their membership of a political party.</p>	<p>Rebuilding things (after a disaster)</p>	<p>Environment and water</p>
<p>Abuse of discretion It happens in the issuing of permits and licences, procurement, real estate development, and often in the judicial system in some countries.</p>	<p>Controlling activities (licensing/regulation/issuing of permits)</p>	<p>Forestry</p>
<p>Misuse of information Breaching secret information(databases), in which case a person uses confidential information for personal advantage. Key motivations for improperly accessing confidential information from public sector databases include personal interest (curiosity), material benefit (such as a financial incentive), relationships (organised crime groups or calling on favours, threats) and personal circumstances (drug-related issues, anxiety, broken relationships).</p>	<p>Administering (justice for example)</p>	<p>Customs and Immigration</p>
<p>Creating or exploiting conflict of interest a situation in which a person or organization is involved in multiple interests, financial or otherwise, and serving one interest could involve working against another.</p>	<p>Mismanagement of security</p>	<p>Legal system</p>
<p>Nepotism, clientelism and favouritism (friends, family) Inclination to prefer acquaintances, friends and family over strangers. When public officials demonstrate favouritism to unfairly distribute positions and resources, they are guilty of cronyism or nepotism, depending on their relationship with the person who benefits.</p>	<p>Mismanagement of power for electoral gains</p>	<p>Education</p>
<p>Embezzlement Illegally appropriates, uses or traffics the funds and goods they have been entrusted with for personal enrichment or other activities</p>	<p>General mismanagement of public resources and abuse of authority</p>	<p>Disaster relief</p>

<p>Capture (or leakage) Illegal use of public resources and therefore lack of resources for the intended purpose. Allocated spending used by public officials for purposes unrelated to education or captured for private gain (leakage).</p>	<p>Other Activities</p>	<p>Security</p>
<p>Facilitation payments Small bribe (also called a ‘facilitating’, ‘speed’ or ‘grease’ payment) made to secure or expedite the performance of a routine or necessary action to which the payer has legal or other entitlements. Payments made to obtain a copy of one’s diploma.</p>	<p>when a member of parliament or official with law- or policy-making power is involved in criminal offences in such a capacity;</p>	<p>Local government</p>
<p>Fraud Offence of intentionally deceiving someone in order to gain an unfair or illegal advantage (financial, political or otherwise). Countries consider such offences to be criminal or a violation of civil law.</p>	<p>when a top-level decision-maker of a regulatory body is involved in criminal offences in such a capacity;</p>	<p>Welfare</p>
<p>Ghost worker Draws salary but does not work</p>	<p>when alleged criminal offences committed involve a public official who obtained his/her position through a revolving-door situation;</p>	<p>Political System/ Elections</p>
<p>Illicit (or non-authorized) fees Recurrent payments collected from parents by school principals or teachers for examination, sports, school development, boarding, etc., once or more per academic year. They can be illegal when clearly proscribed by law.</p>	<p>cases linked to tailor-made laws⁴</p>	<p>Other Sectors</p>
<p>Informal payments Payments collected from parents by school principals or teachers whenever official permission, assistance, or other documentation is required.</p>	<p>asymmetric control over the media and the financial sector,</p>	

⁴ Legal acts that are enacted with the purpose of serving only the interests of a natural person, a legal person or a narrow group/network of connected persons and not the interest of other actors in a sector, group in society or the public interest.

<p>Misallocation of resources Dubious or inappropriate spending of budget resources. School meals allocated to well-off families instead of poor families</p>	<p>asymmetric influence over domestic and foreign policy.</p>	
<p>State capture grand corruption</p>	<p>impunity by interfering directly with the justice system and stymieing enforcement in order to thwart being held to account.</p>	
	<p>Using the levers of state control, they may also suppress independent efforts by civil society and the media to investigate and expose corruption.</p>	

Source: Created by the authors

Corruption during Zaev 1 government (2017-2020)

We collected evidence of possible corruption and state capture from the main North Macedonian news aggregators www.time.mk, www.grid.mk and www.vesti.mk in the period from 31st of May 2017 when Zaev-led government was inaugurated to 15th of July 2020 when snap parliamentary elections were held. In this period, we identified a total of 82 indications for corruption cases: 16 cases in 2017; 24 cases in 2018; 25 cases in 2019; and 17 cases in 2020. A majority of the cases of corruption, cited in the annexes, are based on publications in opposition-leaning media. The methodology does not differentiate the relative weight of the suspected corruption cases. All the indicators for corruption were classified according to the types, activities, and sectors of corruptive behavior. Time wise the period under research was 3 years, 1 month, and 14 days or a total of 1140 days. The research reflects the public/media perceptions about corruption without prejudice to the actual number or cogency of corruption cases. Per our data of indicators of corruption, there was one such case every 13.9 days, one per every two weeks. Even if we assume that not all indicators for corruption can be, or will be proven in court as corruption, or that they will be considered by the prosecution, the prevalence of one corruption case every two weeks seems very high for EU candidate country. Moreover, these numbers are low compared to the cases the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (DKSK) processed. Namely, in 2020 there were 550 cases submitted to DKSK where citizens felt that a “corruptive behavior, misuse of authority or conflict of interests” occurred, and the Commission opened an investigation regarding 102 of those (DKSK, 2021). In 2019 these numbers were even higher, as there were 1172 cases submitted by citizens, and the Commission opened an investigation regarding 245 of those.

A very interesting question is what types of indications for corruption we have identified in our research during Zaev1 government. In this period, among the more prevalent types of cases, we identified 8 indications of bribery, 8 indications of extortion, 12 indications of patronage (party favors), 15 indications of nepotism, clientelism and favoritism (friends, family), 10 indications of misallocation of resources and 13 indications of state capture grand corruption. The next issue that we focused on is what kind of indicators for corruptive activities we can identify in the period of the first Zaev government rule. In this period, among the more prevalent activities, we identified 13 indications of appointing personnel, 23 indications of buying things (procurement), and 7 indications of mismanagement of power for electoral gains – electoral fraud, and indications for general mismanagement of public resources and abuse of authority each.

Finally, we analyzed in what kind of sectors we have identified corruptive indicators. Among the more prevalent sectors where we identified corruptive indicators there are: 11 cases in the health sector, 12 cases in the sector of Energy, 9 cases in the sector of Security, 11 cases in all the other sectors. All the cases with links to the news articles enumerated by date of happening are given in the Annex 2 of this paper. The classification of the cases according to the upgraded TASP Framework within the categories of types, activities, and sectors, and according to the enumeration of indicative cases per Annex 2, is given in the Annex 1 Table.

What can we infer from the data on the indicators for most frequent types, activities, and sectors of corruption during Zaev1 government (2017-2020)? The most frequent indications of corruption are cases of nepotism, clientelism and favoritism (friends, family); activities linked with the procurement process, within the Energy sector. Nepotism is closely linked with the problem of corruption when patronage (party favors) occurs. The high frequency of nepotism and patronage is linked with the second highest indicator of corruptive activity we have identified which is indicator of illegally appointing personnel. There is a quite a mixture of prevalent sectors where we identified corruptive indicators ranging from health care to security and energy as well as the category of all sectors.

Corruption during Zaev 2 government (2020-2021)

As for the data in the previous period, we again collected evidence of possible corruption and state capture from the main North Macedonian news aggregators www.time.mk, www.grid.mk and www.vesti.mk for the time between 16.7.2020 (one day after the snap parliamentary elections) to 23.12.2021 when Zaev resigned from the post of prime minister. In this period, we identified a total of 239 indications for corruption cases: 52 cases in 2020 in the period 16.7-31.12, 2020, and 187 cases in 2021 in the period 1.1.2021-23.12.2021. As per our method, all these indicators were classified according to the types, activities, and sectors of corruptive behavior. Timewise the period under research was 1 year, 5 months, and 7 days or a total of 525 days. This time period is about half of the length of the Zaev1 government one, previously analysed in the paper.

Per our data of indicators of corruption there was one such case every second day (every 2.19 days). Again, as per the analysis for the previous period of rule of Zaev, and even if we assume that not all indicators for corruption can be, or will be proven in court as corruption, or that they will be considered by the prosecution, the prevalence of one corruption case every two days is very high for EU candidate country. Again, these numbers are low compared to the cases the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (DKSK) processed. Namely, in 2021 there were 704 cases submitted to DKSK where citizens felt that a “corruptive behavior, misuse of authority or conflict of interests” occurred (DKSK, 2021).

A very interesting question is what types of indications for corruption we have identified in our research for this period. During the Zaev2 cabinet rule period, among the more prevalent types of indicative cases, we identified 19 cases of patronage (party favors); 26 cases of nepotism, clientelism and favoritism (friends, family); 21 cases of abuse of discretion and 109 cases of state capture or grand corruption. The magnitude of cases involving state capture and grand corruption indirectly reveals that following the victory at the 2020 parliamentary elections and the formation of the second Zaev government, public officials have started to exercise corruptive practices with impunity and in a large-scale mode of operations. Practically, during this period the ruling elite undertook systemic political corruption, manipulating policy formation and public institutions to their own advantage. As a result, there is a broad erosion of the rule of law, economic stability, and confidence in good governance.

The next issue that we focused on is what kind of indicators for corruptive activities we can identify in the period of the second Zaev government rule. In this period, among the more prevalent activities, we identified 27 indications of controlling activities (licensing/regulation/issuing of permits); 29 indications of problematic cases of buying things (procurement); and 69 indicative cases of general mismanagement of public resources and abuse of authority. Finally, we analyzed in what kind of sectors we have identified corruptive indicators. Among the more prevalent sectors where we identified corruptive indicators, there are 17 cases in the health sector; 31 cases in the sector of Local government; 58 cases within the legal system/judiciary; and 65 cases in all the other sectors. Having in mind that the corruption has reached high levels and that there was a state capture in this period of analysis it makes sense that there were so many cases involving the legal system and the judiciary. Curiously, the high number of cases in the management of local government influenced the poor results of the SDSM led coalition at the 2021 local elections.

Again, as in the analysis of the Zaev1 government, all the cases with links to the news articles enumerated by date of happening are given in the Annex 2 of this paper. The classification of the cases according to the upgraded TASP Framework within the categories of types, activities, and sectors, and according to the enumeration of indicative cases per Annex 2, is given in the Annex 1 Table.

What can we infer from the data on the indicators for most frequent types, activities, and sectors of corruption during Zaev2 government (16.7.2020- 23.12.2021)? During the

second government led by Zoran Zaev the most frequent indications of corruption are cases of state capture or grand corruption; activities linked with of general mismanagement of public resources and abuse of authority; in various sectors (the category of all the other sectors). Even though the timeframe for the analysis of the activities of this Zaev government is about half of the length of the previously led government, we found significantly more cases of indications of corruption. In fact, the increase in the number of cases is almost fourfold (239 to 82), although the period of analysis is almost half the length of the first one. There is a reasonable explanation that following the winning of power in 2017 and the confirmation at the parliamentary elections in 2020, the ruling elites assumed illusions of impunity, consolidating their grip on the public institutions, and exercising excessive power, de facto capturing the state.

Conclusions

This paper analyzed the rule of Zaev (2017-2021) focusing exactly on the issues of state capture and corruption. Our analysis reveals that SDSM's rule in the mentioned period was marred by multiple corruption scandals leading to the monopolization of power pursuing particularistic interests in the hands of the ruling elite. After explaining the complexity of corruption and state capture in North Macedonia in the period before Zaev came to power, we provided a synopsis of the regressing of the rule of law and policy making in the period of 2017-2021. To evaluate corruptive practices, we have slightly modified the TASP (types, sectors, activities, and places) framework for the analysis of corruption as developed in Graycar and Prenzler (2013) and Graycar (2015). Furthermore, we have used the glossary of terms from the UNESCO ETICO portal (ETICO, 2007), and have utilized concepts from Amundsen (2000), Vurmo et al. (2021) and Galev et al. (2021).

The results of our analysis reveal a high number of instances of illiberal and corrupt practices of SDSM government in the period 2017-2021. During Zaev 1 government, in the period from 31st of May 2017, when Zaev-led government was inaugurated, to 15th of July 2020 when snap parliamentary elections were held, we identified a total of 82 indications for corruptive cases, one per every two weeks. The most frequent indications of corruption are cases of nepotism, clientelism and favoritism (friends, family); activities linked with the procurement process within the Energy sector. During the second government led by Zoran Zaev the increase in the number of cases is almost fourfold (239 to 82) and the most frequent indications of corruption are cases of state capture or grand corruption; activities linked with of general mismanagement of public resources and abuse of authority; in various sectors. The magnitude of cases involving state capture and grand corruption indirectly reveals that, following the victory at the 2020 parliamentary elections and the formation of the second Zaev government, the ruling elite undertook systemic political corruption, manipulating policy formation and public institutions to their own advantage. Essentially, Zaev's rule replicated previous illiberal practices of Nikola Gruevski leading to the monopolization of power pursuing particularistic interests.

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Annex 1: TASP applied for MKD case for Zaev 1 and 2 governments

TASP applied for MKD case for Zaev 1 government

Type	Activities	Sectors
<p>Bribery offering, giving, receiving, or soliciting of any item of value to influence the actions of an official, or other person, in charge of a public or legal duty. 21, 29, 30, 32, 47, 56, 57, 79</p>	<p>Appointing personnel 1, 4, 7, 9, 11, 24, 31, 42, 43, 44, 49, 55, 69</p>	<p>Construction 21, 29, 36, 60, 78</p>
<p>Extortion the practice of obtaining something, especially money, through force or threats. 28, 40, 48, 52, 60, 73, 81, 82</p>	<p>Buying things (Procurement) 13, 14, 23, 25, 27, 35, 38, 39, 45, 50, 51, 59, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 72, 74, 76, 77, 78, 80</p>	<p>Health 1, 6, 38, 39, 50, 56, 59, 61, 77, 80, 81</p>
<p>Misappropriation (of funds) [t]he unauthorized, improper, or unlawful use of funds or other property for purposes other than that for which intended.” Embezzlement is misappropriation when the property or funds involved have been lawfully entrusted to the embezzler. In circumstances where the funds are accessible to, but not entrusted to, the perpetrator, it is not embezzlement but can still be considered larceny, misappropriation, misapplication, or some other similar term. 5, 10, 12, 41, 50, 51</p>	<p>Delivering programmes or services 2, 37, 56, 68</p>	<p>Tax administration 31</p>
<p>Self-dealing “a situation where one takes an action in an official capacity which involves dealing with oneself in a private capacity and which confers a benefit on oneself. Examples include “work[ing] for government and us[ing] your official position to secure a contract for a private consulting company you own” or “using your government position to get a summer job for your daughter.” 25</p>	<p>Making things (construction/manufacturing) 16</p>	<p>Energy 13, 16, 22, 23, 25, 27, 34, 35, 43, 45, 64, 72</p>

<p>Patronage (party favors) The appointment or hiring of a person to a government post on the basis of partisan loyalty. Recruitment of administrators based on their membership of a political party. 1, 4, 6, 11, 14, 24, 37, 45, 49, 69, 72, 78</p>	<p>Rebuilding things (after a disaster)</p>	<p>Environment and water</p>
<p>Abuse of discretion It happens in the issuing of permits and licences, procurement, real estate development, and often in the judicial system in some countries. 42</p>	<p>Controlling activities (licensing/regulation/issuing of permits) 21,36, 60, 81</p>	<p>Forestry</p>
<p>Misuse of information Breaching secret information(databases), in which case a person uses confidential information for personal advantage. Key motivations for improperly accessing confidential information from public sector databases include personal interest (curiosity), material benefit (such as a financial incentive), relationships (organised crime groups or calling on favours, threats) and personal circumstances (drug-related issues, anxiety, broken relationships). 20, 23</p>	<p>Administering (justice for example) 3, 52, 57, 82</p>	<p>Customs and Immigration 66</p>
<p>Creating or exploiting conflict of interest a situation in which a person or organization is involved in multiple interests, financial or otherwise, and serving one interest could involve working against another. 15, 16, 22, 35, 36,</p>	<p>Mismanagment of power for electoral gains-electoral fraud, 28, 30, 32, 47, 48, 73 79</p>	<p>Legal system 3, 52, 57, 82</p>
<p>Nepotism, clientelism and favouritism (friends, family) Inclination to prefer acquaintances, friends and family over strangers. When public officials demonstrate favouritism to unfairly distribute positions and resources, they are guilty of cronyism or nepotism, depending on their relationship with the person who benefits. 2, 3, 7, 9, 13, 27, 31, 39, 43, 44, 55, 63, 64, 65, 66</p>	<p>Mismanagment of security 12, 20, 40, 41</p>	<p>Education 2, 42, 44</p>

<p>Embezzlement Illegally appropriates, uses or traffics the funds and goods they have been entrusted with for personal enrichment or other activities</p>	<p>General mismanagement of public resources and abuse of authority 5, 6, 10, 11, 34, 58, 61</p>	<p>Disaster relief</p>
<p>Capture (or leakage) Illegal use of public resources and therefore lack of resources for the intended purpose. Allocated spending used by public officials for purposes unrelated to education or captured for private gain (leakage). 34</p>	<p>when a member of parliament or official with law- or policy-making power is involved in criminal offences in such a capacity; 26</p>	<p>Political System/ Elections 28, 30, 32, 47, 48, 73 79</p>
<p>Facilitation payments Small bribe (also called a 'facilitating', 'speed' or 'grease' payment) made to secure or expedite the performance of a routine or necessary action to which the payer has legal or other entitlements. Payments made to obtain a copy of one's diploma.</p>	<p>when a top-level decision-maker of a regulatory body is involved in criminal offences in such a capacity; 46</p>	<p>Welfare 4, 68</p>
<p>Fraud Offence of intentionally deceiving someone in order to gain an unfair or illegal advantage (financial, political or other). Countries consider such offences to be criminal or a violation of civil law.</p>	<p>when alleged criminal offences committed involve a public official who obtained his/her position through a revolving-door situation;</p>	<p>Security, 5, 10, 12, 20, 40, 41, 55, 74, 76</p>
<p>Ghost worker Draws salary but does not work</p>	<p>cases linked to tailor-made laws⁵ 15</p>	<p>Local government 11, 63, 67</p>

⁵ Tailor-made laws are defined as legal acts that are enacted with the purpose of serving only the interests of a natural person, a legal person or a narrow group/network of connected persons and not the interest of other actors in a sector, group in society or the public interest. Such laws are typically approved without prior public consultation and are not based on substantive estimates on sustainable economic growth and development. The following questions should be asked in order to identify potentially tailor-made laws: who is behind the law? Were there any irregularities in the making or the approval of the law? Who benefited from the law or who are its victims? Regarding their purpose, we considered three types of tailor-made laws: 1) laws that seek to control a sector or industry or protect certain privileges; 2) laws that seek to remove or appoint un/wanted officials; 3) laws that seek to reduce an institution's power to conduct checks and balances by controlling personnel procedures, reducing the monitoring capacity of agencies or audits, preventing accountability, or weakening control by media and civil society organisations.

<p>Illicit (or non-authorized) fees Recurrent payments collected from parents by school principals or teachers for examination, sports, school development, boarding, etc., once or more per academic year. They can be illegal when clearly proscribed by law.</p>	<p>asymmetric control over the media and the financial sector,</p>	<p>Other sectors, 7, 9, 14, 24, 34, 37, 49, 51, 58, 65, 69</p>
<p>Informal payments Payments collected from parents by school principals or teachers whenever official permission, assistance, or other documentation is required.</p>	<p>asymmetric influence over domestic and foreign policy. 22</p>	
<p>Misallocation of resources Dubious or inappropriate spending of budget resources. School meals allocated to well-off families instead of poor families 38, 58, 59, 61, 67, 68, 74, 76, 77, 80</p>	<p>impunity by interfering directly with the justice system and stymieing enforcement in order to thwart being held to account. 17, 18, 19, 70, 75</p>	
<p>State capture grand corruption 8, 15, 17, 18, 19, 26, 46, 53, 54, 62, 70, 71, 75</p>	<p>Using the levers of state control, they may also suppress independent efforts by civil society and the media to investigate and expose corruption. 8, 53, 54, 62, 71</p>	

TASP applied for MKD case for Zaev 2 government

Type	Activities	Sectors
<p>Bribery offering, giving, receiving, or soliciting of any item of value to influence the actions of an official, or other person, in charge of a public or legal duty. 160, 309, 314, 315, 322</p>	<p>Appointing personnel 85, 98, 113, 114, 115, 120, 138, 141, 156, 158, 207, 213, 215, 227, 255, 308</p>	<p>Construction 86, 89, 99, 117, 164, 198, 265,</p>
<p>Extortion the practice of obtaining something, especially money, through force or threats. 83, 90, 125, 161, 227, 319</p>	<p>Buying things (Procurement) 88, 100, 106, 117, 121, 146, 147, 150, 168, 170, 172, 181, 197, 209, 218, 219, 224, 228, 230, 238, 245, 250, 276, 278, 280, 287, 295, 322, 323</p>	<p>Health 104, 116, 150, 158, 163, 168, 170, 172, 174, 219, 233, 264, 271, 272, 274, 283, 293,</p>

<p>Misappropriation (of funds) [t]he unauthorized, improper, or unlawful use of funds or other property for purposes other than that for which intended.” Embezzlement is misappropriation when the property or funds involved have been lawfully entrusted to the embezzler. In circumstances where the funds are accessible to, but not entrusted to, the perpetrator, it is not embezzlement but can still be considered larceny, misappropriation, misapplication, or some other similar term. 172, 175, 184, 187, 208, 212, 219, 228, 229, 233, 237, 287, 306, 317, 323,</p>	<p>Delivering programmes or services 86, 94, 95, 111, 132, 154, 174, 178, 192, 208, 212, 223, 229, 271, 276, 283</p>	<p>Tax administration</p>
<p>Self-dealing “a situation where one takes an action in an official capacity which involves dealing with oneself in a private capacity and which confers a benefit on oneself. Examples include “work[ing] for government and us[ing] your official position to secure a contract for a private consulting company you own” or “using your government position to get a summer job for your daughter.” 94, 95, 127, 132, 165, 174, 181, 277,</p>	<p>Making things (construction/manufacturing) 274</p>	<p>Energy 88, 100, 134, 226, 230, 238, 245, 284, 287, 295, 298, 302, 306,</p>
<p>Patronage (party favors) The appointment or hiring of a person to a government post on the basis of partisan loyalty. Recruitment of administrators based on their membership of a political party. 113, 115, 120, 156, 170, 205, 207, 213, 218, 231, 241, 255, 256, 259, 272, 276, 286, 302, 308</p>	<p>Rebuilding things (after a disaster)</p>	<p>Environment and water 255</p>
<p>Abuse of discretion It happens in the issuing of permits and licences, procurement, real estate development, and often in the judicial system in some countries. 89, 99, 119, 147, 148, 153, 159, 164, 177, 193, 196, 197, 209, 211, 221, 236, 251, 265, 266, 270, 282,</p>	<p>Controlling activities (licensing/ regulation/ issuing of permits) 89, 93, 96, 99, 109, 119, 148, 164, 189, 191, 193, 194, 196, 198, 205, 211, 217, 220, 235, 237, 260, 265, 266, 284, 293, 313, 315</p>	<p>Forestry 165</p>

<p>Misuse of information Breaching secret information(databases), in which case a person uses confidential information for personal advantage. Key motivations for improperly accessing confidential information from public sector databases include personal interest (curiosity), material benefit (such as a financial incentive), relationships (organised crime groups or calling on favours, threats) and personal circumstances (drug-related issues, anxiety, broken relationships). 93, 96, 105, 179, 198, 201, 202, 206,</p>	<p>Administering (justice for example) 84, 91, 102, 103, 107, 110, 112, 118, 123, 171, 180, 199, 206, 221, 236, 239, 251, 282, 319, 320,</p>	<p>Customs and Immigration 167, 177, 315, 318</p>
<p>Creating or exploiting conflict of interest a situation in which a person or organization is involved in multiple interests, financial or otherwise, and serving one interest could involve working against another. 135, 271, 284, 294,</p>	<p>Mismanagment of power for electoral gains- electoral fraud, 129, 162, 201, 202, 259, 288, 290, 291, 292, 309</p>	<p>Legal system/Judiciary 84, 91, 98, 102, 103, 105, 107, 110, 112, 115, 118, 124, 140, 142, 153, 159, 169, 171, 173, 180, 182, 186, 193, 199, 200, 203, 204, 206, 213, 221, 222, 225, 231, 234, 236, 239, 240, 241, 242, 247, 248, 251, 258, 262, 269, 270, 273, 275, 277, 300, 303, 305, 310, 311, 314, 316, 319, 320,</p>
<p>Nepotism, clientelism and favouritism (friends, family) Inclination to prefer acquaintances, friends and family over strangers. When public officials demonstrate favouritism to unfairly distribute positions and resources, they are guilty of cronyism or nepotism, depending on their relationship with the person who benefits. - 85, 98, 100, 109, 111, 117, 121, 141, 143, 145, 146, 157, 158, 167, 176, 178, 215, 223, 235, 238, 245, 261, 274, 276, 280, 293,</p>	<p>Mismanagment of security, 101, 131, 145, 166, 176, 179, 184, 187, 195, 264, 268, 270, 297,</p>	<p>Education 133, 144, 154, 212, 229</p>

<p>Embezzlement Illegally appropriates, uses or traffics the funds and goods they have been entrusted with for personal enrichment or other activities</p>	<p>General mismanagement of public resources and abuse of authority 87, 90, 97, 104, 105, 108, 116, 124, 125, 128, 127, 134, 135, 136, 137, 139, 140, 143, 144, 149, 152, 155, 157, 159, 161, 165, 167, 173, 175, 177, 185, 188, 190, 204, 214, 222, 226, 233, 243, 246, 252, 253, 254, 256, 257, 261, 262, 263, 267, 269, 272, 275, 279, 281, 285, 286, 294, 296, 298, 301, 302, 304, 306, 307, 310, 312, 314, 317, 318</p>	<p>Disaster relief 137, 192, 256</p>
<p>Capture (or leakage) Illegal use of public resources and therefore lack of resources for the intended purpose. Allocated spending used by public officials for purposes unrelated to education or captured for private gain (leakage). 87, 88, 116, 134, 137, 185, 250, 253, 254, 257, 267, 295, 298</p>	<p>when a member of parliament or official with law- or policy-making power is involved in criminal offences in such a capacity; 181, 316</p>	<p>Political System/ Elections 129, 201, 202, 224, 259, 278, 288, 290, 291, 292, 301, 304, 309</p>
<p>Facilitation payments Small bribe (also called a 'facilitating', 'speed' or 'grease' payment) made to secure or expedite the performance of a routine or necessary action to which the payer has legal or other entitlements.</p>	<p>when a top-level decision-maker of a regulatory body is involved in criminal offences in such a capacity; 83</p>	<p>Welfare</p>
<p>Fraud Offence of intentionally deceiving someone in order to gain an unfair or illegal advantage (financial, political or otherwise). Countries consider such offences to be criminal or a violation of civil law. - 188</p>	<p>when alleged criminal offences committed involve a public official who obtained his/her position through a revolving-door situation;</p>	<p>Security 92, 101, 131, 141, 145, 166, 176, 179, 181, 184, 187, 189, 191, 194, 195, 216, 217, 220, 268, 279, 282, 297, 312</p>

<p>Ghost worker Draws salary but does not work 114, 138, 296,</p>	<p>cases linked to tailor-made laws 163, 258, 273,</p>	<p>Local government 94, 106, 121, 128, 132, 138, 147, 148, 160, 162, 178, 185, 196, 205, 211, 218, 237, 250, 252, 260, 263, 266, 267, 276, 280, 281, 285, 286, 296, 308, 323</p>
<p>Illicit (or non-authorized) fees Recurrent payments collected from parents by school principals or teachers for examination, sports, school development, boarding, etc., once or more per academic year. They can be illegal when clearly proscribed by law.</p>	<p>asymmetric control over the media and the financial sector,</p>	<p>Other sectors, 83, 85, 87, 90, 93, 95, 96, 97, 108, 109, 111, 113, 114, 119, 120, 123, 125, 126, 127, 130, 135, 136, 139, 143, 146, 149, 151, 152, 155, 156, 157, 161, 175, 181, 188, 190, 197, 207, 208, 209, 210, 214, 215, 223, 227, 228, 232, 235, 243, 244, 246, 249, 253, 254, 257, 261, 289, 294, 299, 307, 313, 314, 317, 321, 322</p>
<p>Informal payments Payments collected from parents by school principals or teachers whenever official permission, assistance, or other documentation is required.</p>	<p>asymmetric influence over domestic and foreign policy. 133, 289,</p>	
<p>Misallocation of resources Dubious or inappropriate spending of budget resources. School meals allocated to well-off families instead of poor families 86, 104, 136, 139, 154, 163, 181, 192, 278, 281, 285,</p>	<p>impunity by interfering directly with the justice system and stymieing enforcement in order to thwart being held to account. 92, 142, 153, 182, 183, 186, 200, 203, 225, 234, 240, 241, 242, 248, 277</p>	

<p>State capture grand corruption 84, 91, 92, 97, 101, 102, 103, 106, 107, 108, 110, 112, 118, 123, 124, 126, 128, 129, 130, 131, 133, 140, 142, 144, 149, 150, 151, 152, 155, 162, 166, 168, 169, 171, 173, 180, 182, 183, 186, 189, 190, 191, 194, 195, 199, 200, 203, 204, 210, 214, 216, 217, 220, 222, 224, 225, 226, 230, 232, 234, 239, 240, 242, 243, 244, 246, 247, 248, 249, 252, 258, 260, 262, 263, 264, 268, 269, 273, 275, 279, 283, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 297, 299, 300, 301, 303, 304, 305, 307, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 316, 318, 320, 321</p>	<p>Using the levers of state control, they may also suppress independent efforts by civil society and the media to investigate and expose corruption. 126, 130, 151, 160, 169, 210, 216, 232, 244, 247, 249, 299, 300, 303, 305, 311, 321</p>	
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Annex 2: Data base of indications for Government Corruption in the period 1.6.2017-15.7.2020 (Zaev 1) and 16.7.2020-23.12.2021 (Zaev 2) governments¹

Indications for Government Corruption in the period 1.6.2017-15.7.2020

This document evidences cases of possible corruption and state capture gathered from the main Macedonian news aggregators www.time.mk, www.grid.mk and www.vesti.mk in the period from 31st of May 2017 when Zaev led government was inaugurated to 15.7.2020 when parliamentary elections were held.

There are 82 cases in total: 16 cases for 2017; 24 cases for 2018; 25 cases for 2019; 17 cases for 2020.

1.6.2017 – 31.12.2017

1. Management Boards (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
2. Scholarship for Dimitrov's daughter (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
3. Illegal operations of the SPO (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
4. Illegal dismissal of directors of inter-municipal centers for social work (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security, Labor and Social Policy)
5. Abuse of power and its use for personal purposes (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
6. Replacements and Chaos in the Health System (Healthcare)
7. Unlawful work of the Secretary General (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)

¹ Due to space limitations Annex 2 features only the short description of the studied cases arranged by date and enumerated as the numbers appear in the classification of cases in the upgraded TASP framework in Annex 1. The complete list with description of all the cases and links to news articles is available upon request at the BJEP editorial office.

8. Invasion in Unions (Labor and Social Policy)
9. Scandal with Secretary General Rashkovski's godfather (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
10. Abuse of authority and power (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
11. Abuse of authority and political revanchism (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
12. Abuse of authority, racketeering and crime (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
13. ELEM nepotism Angjushev
14. Illegal and party tenders for the purchase of vehicles (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
15. Scandals and affairs connected to Kocho Angjushev - Abolished duties for Brako (Economics and Finance)
16. Scandals and Affairs connected to Kocho Angjushev – HEC Topolka (Economics and Finance)

1.1.2018 – 31.12.2018

17. Captive judiciary under Zaev's dictatorship (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
18. Double standards in Zaev controlled judiciary (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
19. There is total chaos in the Ministry of Interior (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
20. An advisor in the Ministry of Interior shared confidential information (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
21. Zaev demanded a bribe from a businessman (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
22. Exploiting conflict of interest Angjushev sold the company to Greeks (Economics and Finance)
23. Rigged Tenders (Economics and Finance)
24. High level positions for terrorists (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
25. Concessions awarded to Zaevi clan firms (Economics and Finance)
26. The mayor of Novo Selo arrested for smuggling (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
27. Party tender distribution (Economics and Finance)
28. Threats from the SDSM mayor to the citizens about the referendum (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
29. Corrupt tenders awarded to blackmailed MPs (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security, Economics and Finance)
30. Bribery during a referendum (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
31. Abuse of power and nepotism (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
32. Call for bribery in the referendum campaign (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
33. Party Administration (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
34. Threats to people who reveal corruption in the work of Koco Angjushev's companies (Economics and Finance)
35. Corrupt tenders for government officials (Economics and Finance)
36. The criminal organization of the Zaev clan (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)

37. Scandals in the Fund for Technological and Industrial Development (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
38. Corrupt tenders in the healthcare system (Healthcare)
39. Corruption Scandals in the Healthcare system (Healthcare)
40. The Zaev family with its own paramilitary – Zaev’s body guards from “Code Security Group” are above the law (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
41. President Ivanov was also wiretapped (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)

1.1.2019 – 31.12.2019

42. Unlawful assignment of directors (Labor and Social Policy)
43. Nepotism and Party Employment 1 (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
44. Nepotism and Party Employment 2 (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
45. Criminal Tenders, No reactions from the Prosecution (Economy and Finance)
46. Crime in the Ministry of Interior (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
47. Pre-electoral bribes (Agriculture, Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
48. Threats before the second round of the Presidential Elections (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
49. The economy is shrinking, more advisors are coming in (Economy and Finance)
50. The General Secretary of the Government involved in tenders in the healthcare sector (Healthcare; Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
51. Revealed, Affair Leonardo, the General Secretary of the Government was fixing tenders (Economy and Finance, Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
52. Racket Affair (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
53. The plan to fight fake news is a plan for censorship (Media, Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
54. The anti-corruption institutions are not functioning (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
55. Partisanship of the security services, working contrary to the recommendation of the Priebe reports (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
56. The deputy health minister caught asking for bribes (Healthcare)
57. Katica Janeva received money directly from the government (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
58. SDSM is allowing and protecting hooliganism in the cultural institutions (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
59. Corruption in setting up an ambulance and helicopter rescue factory company (Healthcare, Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
60. New audio material leaked showing Zaev’s involvement in the Racket affair (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
61. Health scandals cannot be cured (Healthcare)

62. Threats from SDSM party officials to students protesting for fresh air (Ecology, Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
63. Corrupt tenders for SDSM officials (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
64. Corruption in the highest ranks of SDSM – Mila Carovska
65. Corruption in the highest circles of SDSM – Jani Makraduli
66. Nepotism and corruption in the Customs control administration
67. Corrupt tenders

1.1.2020 – 1.6.2020

68. A scandal in MTSP (Labor and Social Policy)
69. Partisanship of the administration and pressure on the administrative officials (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
70. The Justice controlled by SDS (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
71. Partisanship of institutions and pressures (Economy and Finance)
72. Corrupt tenders awarded to former Deputy Prime Minister Angjushev (Economy and Finance)
73. Elections bribe and pressure on voters (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
74. Corrupt tenders in the Ministry of Interior (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
75. The "Tras Tras" judiciary (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
76. Corrupt tenders in the Ministry of Defense (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
77. Where the corona money tests end up (Healthcare)
78. Corrupt tenders in the City of Skopje (Justice, Home Affairs, and Security)
79. Voter bribery during a state of emergency (Justice, Home Affairs, and Security)
80. A new scandal related to the purchase of respirators (Healthcare)
81. The resignation of the director of the Health Insurance Fund opened the Racket 2 affair and the racket of companies from the health sector (Healthcare, Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)
82. Contradictions of the prosecutor about who and when reported the racketeering case (Justice, Internal Affairs and Security)

16.7.2020- 23.12.2021

This document evidences cases of possible corruption and state capture gathered from the main Macedonian news aggregators www.time.mk, www.grid.mk and www.vesti.mk in the period from 16.7.2020 (one day after the parliamentary elections) to 23.12.2021.

There are 239 cases in total: 52 cases in 2020 in the period 16.7-31.12 2020; 187 cases in 2021 in the period 1.1.2021-23.12.2021.

Cases in July, 2020

83. Indications of corruption of members of the government in the Cases of “Extortion” and “International Alliance”
84. The case against Judge Panchevski
85. Nepotism and state capture (employment by party networks)

Cases in August 2020

86. Scandal with state aid: the company that got most monies from the state works on the construction of the highway Kichevo-Ohrid
87. VMRO-DPMNE accuses: Macedonia is about to be bankrupt, but Zaevs harvest profits
88. ESM controlled by SDSM, sells 100% instead of 75% of the electricity of EVN, allowing great profits for private persons
89. Links between construction mafia and institutions
90. Special Public Prosecutor as a part of organized criminal group
91. The case of bankruptcy of Eurostandard banka
92. The victim changes his statement
93. The case of bankruptcy of Eurostandard banka – Public officials of the ruling SDSM got hints to withdraw their savings before bankruptcy
94. Tenders for family businesses
95. New scandal of the Minister of Finance- she paid herself state aid
96. The case of Eurostandard Bank- Strumica companies close to Zaev withdrew their savings before bankruptcy was proclaimed
97. Fight against corruption- fight of the government against itself.

Cases in September 2020

98. Arsovski (VMRO-DPMNE spokesperson) How can Marichikj make reforms in the judiciary when his wife was Chief of Cabinet of the Minister of Justice and his father is Public Prosecutor
99. Corruption contracts with construction companies
100. Business-politics links, corruptive tenders
101. Protection of criminal
102. Political Revenge
103. Five years ago Zaev insisted the State Prosecutor to be appointed by the opposition, but now when he came into power he does not even consider this a possibility
104. Filipche (Minister of Health) implicated in a new scandal
105. Undeclared property of persons close to the prime minister
106. Crime and corruption sink the state
107. Political revenge and captured judiciary

Cases in October 2020

108. Audit report of Special Public Prosecutor (SJO) spending 4.6 million Euros was hidden in a drawer for six months so that the mafia does not suffer at the elections, claims Mickoski
109. Misuse of the State of Emergency for enrichment of businessman close to the prime minister
110. Captured judiciary and trade od influence
111. Corruption in granting project from the National Agency for European Education and Mobility
112. The case of Zoran Milevski Kicheec
113. Political influence on the Commission that has a dialogue with Bulgarian colleagues
114. The state has no money for inspector but for employment of party soldiers
115. The government does not give up on political influence on the work of independent bodies

Cases in November 2020

116. Fallen Health care System
117. Tender given to a member of a family of the responsible Minister
118. No faith in the judiciary due to party appointments of Judges, and party influence of the Constitutional Court
119. Eurostandard Case- money ended at firms close to Zoran Zaev, no reaction of institutions
120. Political influence on independent companies
121. The case of Bochvarski. His company won tenders in 2018
122. At times of crisis public funds are spent on unimportant items
123. Eurostandard bank case. Money ended up in firms of Zaev family

Cases in December 2020

124. President Pendarovski for TV 24 commented that organized crime exists as a problem for years and we have to comprehend it as a State problem
125. The Extortion Case- the real extortioners have been hidden
126. Media under pressure
127. Price formed by business interests and the government
128. Public enterprise named after a private firm of the mayor
129. Party pressure on voters at the snap elections for mayor of Shtip
130. Extortion case. Politically motivated torture of the accused
131. Detained for marijuana smuggling is a close relative of the deputy minister of Interior Nazim Bushi

132. Commission for Preventing Corruption notes illegal work in consultant Shilegov earning money from lawyer Shilegov
133. Politically motivated reforms with no consultations and under party directives
134. Misuse of the Parliament for business interests of government and firms close to the government officials
135. Zaev family invests in other countries while the economy of Macedonia in free fall

Cases in January 2021

136. Fire in an illegal building legalized by Zaev
137. The number of unemployed persons rose as a result of the inappropriate handling of the covid-19 crisis
138. Ghost workers in the government.
139. Preparations for a political census taking underway
140. Misuse of public institutions for political pressure of citizens
141. Party members in international organisations
142. Joint work of politicians and judiciary. Politically well connected persons do not have their cases finished at court
143. Party criteria for distribution of public funds
144. Protests of high school students against changes to the Law on Education
145. Party influenced security system
146. Party influenced tender granting
147. Criminal links between construction companies and public institutions
148. UNESCO status of Ohrid under threat due to links between the government and construction companies.
149. Corruption spreads everywhere in the system
150. State Capture, judiciary and prosecution under political rule
151. Political influence on media

Cases in February, 2021

152. State sinking with Criminal
153. Institutions do not function well, links between the government and the criminals
154. Ministry of Education and Science not working well with talented kids
155. Captured state. Party local sheriffs above the law
156. Party influence on cultural institutions
157. Corruption in public institutions not tackled by Ljupcho Nikolovski
158. Unlicensed doctors close to the ruling party keeps job
159. The word Macedonia in the name of an NGO is prohibited
160. An attempt at party influence over the media
161. Politically motivated trials against political dissidents

162. Illegal attempt to change street names.
163. New scandal of the Minister of Health. An attempt to pass a new law on building a clinical center. The Law is corruptive in its essence
164. Links between criminals and government. Failure to act on publicly disclosed affairs
165. Unequal rule of law for members of the SDS and DUI government
166. Political bargaining based on the inaction of the institutions after the escape (disappearance) of the former director of UBK. Pressure on the judiciary and the prosecution
167. A company close to the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of fighting corruption does not pay taxes and the institutions do not act
168. Vaccines procurement scandal. The Minister of Health tried to procure vaccines through a phantom company. The attempt was rejected by the Chinese authorities

Cases in March 2021

169. Party-motivated court cases. Coalition prosecution-government-protection of crime. Politically/party influenced institutions
170. New scandal of the Minister of Health. Corruptive tenders
171. Captive state. Party influence on the prosecution not to act on the new scandal
172. Documents were discovered about a phantom company through which the government wanted to procure vaccines at unrealistically high prices
173. Corruption in the highest levels of government. Silence from the institutions
174. Failure of institutions. Politics behind the case.
175. Institutions protect government crime
176. The Ministry of Interior and the Prosecutor's Office should not act under political pressure
177. Prime Minister Zaev exerts pressure on police officers by telephone
178. Awarding tenders to companies close to the Minister of Education
179. Leaked information about police action. The escaped drug lords have photos with the prime minister and interior minister
180. False testimony, pressure from the prosecution to protect the elite in the Racket scandal
181. New scandal for Dragi Rashkovski. Institutions illegally purchased software invented by the Secretary-General of the Government
182. The government and the institutions do not conduct investigations into the published affairs for smuggling of excise goods

Cases in April 2021

183. Pressure on the judiciary and journalists confirm State Department reports
184. Scandal using public resources

185. Confirmed illegal decision-making for party purposes by Mayor Shilegov
186. Politically motivated opened cases
187. The Prosecution suspects that the action was breached by the Ministry of Interior. Mafia-police links.
188. The case of Eurostandard Bank. Businessmen close to SDS took loans on behalf of illiquid companies and did not repay them, NBRM involved
189. Passport scandal for world mobsters. The Ministry of Interior issued passports to internationally wanted criminals
190. Coalition of the Ministry of Interior - organized crime. US DEA catches relatives, loved ones at top of SDS in international marijuana smuggling
191. Passport Issuance Scandal 2. Top Government and MOI Related to Arrestees for Issuing Passports to International Criminals
192. State resources are used only for the needs of the governing structure. System malfunction. Captive state
193. On the issued passports affair. SDS government secures police security for prominent Turkish mobster on international warrant
194. Italian drug lord with a Macedonian passport under a false name.
195. Passports for ISIS members
196. Shilegov's political pressures on the judiciary. Attempt to illegally demolish a private building
197. Scandal with the procurement of malfunctioning software 2. The top of the SDS protects the top of the criminal group
198. Power-construction alliance. System failure and a series of vulnerabilities
199. Suspicions of political influence on the work of law enforcement agencies
200. Illegal links between the judiciary-government. Politically charged cases
201. Captive state. Suspicion of rigging elections
202. Captive state. Abuse of institutions for political purposes
203. Party influence on the work of the judiciary and the police
204. Marijuana trafficking by people close to and under the protection of the SDS
205. Public procurement awarded to party loyalists
206. The government in protection of the criminal group that issued passports to world criminals
207. Dismissal of the director of the State Market Inspectorate because he does not want to listen to party directives for employment of party staff as inspectors
208. Scandal with the software for conducting testing in the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors. Party influence on the election of judges and public prosecutors
209. A new scandal by Rashkovski. New companies have been found that won state tenders and are related to the Secretary General of the Government Rashkovski
210. Pressure on the media. Media darkness and censorship
211. Political influence on the adoption of the detailed urban plan
212. Education reform with a political background to pump 120m euros from the budget

- 213. Party appointments in the judiciary. Appointed involved in financial crime with Eurostandard Bank
- 214. The link between crime and the SDS top confirmed in another GRECO international report

Cases in May 2021

- 215. Anticorruption Commission concerned about political influence and clientelism in appointing officials
- 216. International monitoring of a politically motivated case against a businessman to happen
- 217. The institutions do not react to the connection of senior SDS officials with an international organized crime group
- 218. Awarding tenders to party companies for higher prices than the real ones
- 219. The suspicions that an advance payment for the purchase of more expensive vaccines through a phantom company were confirmed
- 220. The meeting of the Prime Minister with Packer, sought by international police, and a person who also possessed a fake Macedonian passport issued by MOI, confirmed.
- 221. Political influence on the judiciary
- 222. Construction Mafia Coalition with SDSM
- 223. Attempts to pass a law by which people close to the government will receive state land for very cheap money
- 224. State tenders for political influence before elections
- 225. Party influence on Judiciary. Court rejects legal evidence that PM was involved in a racketeering scandal called Raket
- 226. Criminal conspiracy on the business with fuel oil. Failure of the institutions to act for political purposesцели
- 227. New report on corrupt acts of Rashkovski
- 228. New abuses of Rashkovski revealed. The institutions are silent
- 229. Party pressure to stifle high school students' protest against textbook digitization project
- 230. Documents for criminal tenders in REK Bitola
- 231. Party influence on the Constitutional Court
- 232. Party pressure on the media for revealing criminal links between the government and the crime of importing fuel oil
- 233. Spending budget funds for personal gain
- 234. Institutional silence on government crime. Captive institutions
- 235. Government decisions in favor of the business of the Prime Minister's family

Cases in June 2021

- 236. Coalition government-judiciary. Institutions under party influence
- 237. Captive state. Partisan institutions in the protection of the construction mafia
- 238. Criminal tenders of a company of the Prime Minister's family
- 239. For three months the state did not catch "big fish" from the network with fake passports. Expressly closed case. International incident surrounding the wanted Packer
- 240. Political agreements in the background of court-prosecutor decisions in high-profile cases
- 241. Party influence on public institutions- judiciary
- 242. Partisan judiciary. Party jurors in high-profile cases against the opposition
- 243. Captive state. Failure of institutions to protect political interests
- 244. Endangered media freedoms. Party influence on the media
- 245. Awarding state tenders to companies close to the SDS in the weeks before the elections

Cases July 2021

- 246. The State Department found corruption in the highest echelons of government
- 247. Political persecution. Detention as a tool for political influence
- 248. A new case of a politically influenced case and the impact of politics on the judiciary
- 249. A new case of pressure on the media
- 250. Sale of state land for small money. Coalition power / politics-construction mafia
- 251. Political influence on the judiciary in high-profile cases of the ruling party
- 252. Putting the ruling party mayors above the law. Criminal charges filed. There is no reaction from the institutions

Cases in August 2021

- 253. Failure of state institutions to act. Endangered lives in a fire in Kochani
- 254. Luxury money is spent while fire protection aircraft are not serviced
- 255. State institutions under party influence
- 256. Non-functional institutions under party cadres
- 257. Purchased fuel for non-functional aircraft. DZS scandal
- 258. Captive state. Abuse of the European flag in the Parliament for the law on legalization of marijuana
- 259. Party employment, clientelism of the administration
- 260. DUP tailored to the ruling party. Coalition construction mafia-local government власт
- 261. Silence of the institutions for suspicious marijuana business of companies close to the Prime Minister's family

- 262. Violated rule of law
- 263. Enormous increase in the property of the Mayor of the City of Skopje
- 264. Failure of the institutions to act. Captive institutions
- 265. New IRL survey on illegal construction in Cair. The institutions are silent and do not act. Captive institutions under political influence

Cases in September 2021

- 266. Mayor Shilegov is building an illegal building in the middle of Skopje
- 267. Mayor Shilegov also owns a luxury villa in Mavrovo
- 268. Diplomatic scandal with the extraction of a high-profile political criminal from Armenia
- 269. A link between crime and power. Convicts who should be in prison cause a car accident with injuries
- 270. Political persecution and police-intelligence political setups
- 271. No one feels responsible for the horror of the fire in the Tetovo modular hospital in which 14 people died. The modular hospital was built by the firm of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs in Zaev's government
- 272. President Pendarovski claims moral responsibility is with the Minister of Health
- 273. Captive institutions. Laws tailored to the ruling family. Abuse of the so-called European flag procedure in the Parliament
- 274. Weak reaction of the institutions regarding the fire at the modular hospital in Tetovo. The company that built the hospital is being protected
- 275. Coalition of judiciary-government-criminals in the case of Zaev's friend and Secretary General of the government Rashkovski
- 276. Crime tenders through public enterprises against the law
- 277. Covering up the scandal with the modular hospital
- 278. Corruption in the background of public opinion research
- 279. Drug trafficking with official vehicles of the Ministry of Interior
- 280. Silence of the institutions for the crime of the mayors from SDS
- 281. Scandal with financing of a controversial project through the City of Skopje
- 282. Silence of the institutions for shooting with firearms in front of the Deputy Minister of Interior at a rally of the ruling party DUI

Cases in October 2021

- 283. Silence from the institutions for the fire in Tetovo. The culprit for 14 victims has been found
- 284. Director of the Regulatory Commission attacked by the son of a senior DUI official involved in the electricity business
- 285. Silence about the crime of Mayor Shilegov

- 286. Partisan institutions. Political action of directors of public institutions
- 287. Crisis in sight. Criminal tenders to the detriment of citizens. Energy infrastructure before collapse
- 288. Electoral silence is broken by the ruling parties. The institutions are silent
- 289. Political pressure on an independent commission of experts
- 290. Organized group of police officers found abusing their official position and putting pressure on voters
- 291. OSCE / ODIHR Recommendations for Free and Democratic Elections Remain Unfulfilled
- 292. Brutal political showdown with dissidents by the government
- 293. Silence of the institutions for the fire in the modular hospital in Tetovo
- 294. Doubts about the impact of politics on business

Cases in November 2021

- 295. Criminal tenders, wasteful and non-domestic operations. Business-criminals-government links
- 296. Partisan municipality of Tetovo. Detected employees who did not come to work
- 297. Scandal of a government official. It calls for war, silence from the authorities
- 298. Party influenced employment of staff, unprofessional work, cause consequences for the vital energy infrastructure
- 299. Pressure on the media, endangered media freedom
- 300. Political protection of false witnesses in a politically fabricated case who have committed a crime
- 301. Political tensions and the disappearance of an MP on the day of the vote of no confidence in the government. The no-confidence motion against the government failed
- 302. The incompetence of party cadres is the direct culprit for the energy crisis
- 303. Political-Judicial Coalition. Political influence in the election of a court president
- 304. Political pressures of the government on the opposition
- 305. Silence of institutions under political influence
- 306. Crime caught stealing electricity and digging cryptocurrencies in GTC under SDS control
- 307. Partisan state. Ruling party cadres protect crime from their financiers
- 308. Partisan state. Dismissal due to political affiliation

Cases in December 2021

- 309. Suitcases full of money for opposition MPs to cross over to the government were offered by the Prime Minister
- 310. Partisan and inert judiciary

311. Partisan judiciary noted by four MEPs
312. Interrupted international drug channel involving government officials
313. Crime linked to business power. A number of vulnerabilities in the Besa Trans bus accident system have been identified
314. Impunity and partisanship - the main culprits for the spread of corruption
315. Institutional inaction is a signal of deep corruption in the Besa trans case
316. Pressure on the court by the Minister of Justice
317. Scandal with the sale of state property for an unrealistic amount to businessmen close to SDS and DUI
318. An international drug trafficking channel involving pro-government police and customs officers stopped
319. Political pressure on a businessman who reveals the racketeering scheme of the government
320. Trial against a company close to DUI stuck in court labyrinths. Links between businesses and judiciary
321. Coalition of power-media and power-judiciary revealed through a letter to Prime Minister Zaev
322. The detected illegal actions of the Secretary General of the Government close to Zaev are increasing. The institutions are silent
323. Illegal work of city institutions by order of Shilegov