Unpredictable and intertwined

Since corruption is a holistic concept different parts of a corrupt system cannot be taken apart, "fixed", assembled and managed in a linear, step-by-step or systematic approach.

To use the metaphor of a vehicle, the engine, gearbox and electrical system can be taken apart, overhauled and assembled so that the vehicle can operate more efficiently. However, a country's corrupt system(s) cannot be analysed individually, improved upon and assembled to operate more efficiently.

The individual parts impact on each other. No one part can function independently on its own and each part impacts on all other parts. For example, a change in politics impacts or influences economics and science, technology and knowledge. In addition, no one part has an independent impact on its own.

Millions of parts

The above description of corruption as a system with different interdependent and interrelated parts, corresponds with one by Ackoff, which is probably the most precise and described a system as: " . . . a whole defined by one or more functions, that consists of two or more essential parts", that satisfy

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the following conditions: "Each of these parts can affect the behaviour or properties of the whole; none of these parts has an independent effect on the whole; the way an essential part affects the whole depends on what other parts are doing; and every possible subset of the essential parts can affect the behaviour or properties of the whole but none can do so independently of the others".

From the above definition, it is clear why corruption is an unpredictable system that cannot be managed in a predictable and systematic approach where cause and effect are related. Corruption consists of millions of parts that cannot all be taken into consideration in the best computer modelling, similar to the economy and climate.

• References
Ackoff, R.L. (2009). A Systemic View of Transformational Leadership.

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