

Dominican Republic: Corruption, Social Risk, & Security

Public and Private Sector's Role in Social Risk Mitigation



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“Heightened social tensions over corruption, impunity, and security are rapidly increasing Social Risk in the Dominican Republic.”

Overview:

The Odebrecht scandal revealed the extent of corruption in the Dominican Republic and other Latin America Countries. It exposed efforts to seize control of democratic and economic institutions, weaken the rule of law, distort trade agreements, and misappropriate billions of dollars to benefit a handful of elite. It also exposed the depth of systemic corruption entrenched within the highest echelons of government, congress, the judiciary, and the political party system. The private sector has remained mostly silent to avoid retaliation. However, a few institutions openly support social movements to end impunity. Pervasive corruption has exacerbated social tensions, crime, narco-trafficking, and Social Risk within Dominican society. If unaddressed, Social Risk will lead to intense public scrutiny, increased civil unrest, deteriorating security conditions, economic malaise, and potential political upheavals.

Problem:

Social Risk is on the rise in the Dominican Republic. Increased public unrest is manifesting through negative online sentiment concerning corruption, impunity, and lack of security. Large-scale protests in major cities across the country demonstrate its momentum. Government and commercial institutions are ill-prepared to manage today’s Social Risk. Traditional security techniques focus on physical security, which rely on the “use of force,” or communication strategies that play upon “nationalistic” sentiment, influence media outlets, or leverage “the power of the political and social elite” to prevent unrest. Recent events in Paraguay, Venezuela, and Brazil demonstrate how ineffective these techniques are against a mobilized society and illustrate the inability and reactive nature of traditional risk index and methods to diagnose and mitigate social risk. They also provide ample warning of the lasting negative effects on a country’s political and socioeconomic conditions, when Social Risk is not addressed.

Key Findings:

- Corruption in the Dominican Republic is no longer viewed solely as a political, legal, or economic problem. It has become a human rights issue.
- Public sentiment regarding corruption encompasses broader public concerns, which impact Dominican citizens’ identities.
- Public sentiment connects corruption to an assault on social identity, values, and the individual rights and freedom of Dominican Republic citizens.
- Online narratives link corruption and impunity directly to President Medina, the Partido de la Liberación Dominicana (PLD), and sectors of the economy.

“Corruption is no longer being viewed as a political, legal, or financial problem.”

- Government actions that block Twitter accounts and counter protests are widely viewed as attacks on individual rights and freedom.
- Social Risk within the Dominican Republic is growing and it poses a real threat to citizen security, and the political and economic stability of the nation.

Specialized Analysis:

Overview

ENODO Global conducted an examination of public perception within the Dominican Republic to discover how the country’s citizens perceive and discuss the Odebrecht scandal and corruption in general. Our investigation analyzed nearly 90,000 Twitter posts, reviewed open source news outlets, and consulted local on-the-ground sources from March 1 to March 30, 2017. The analysis focused on activist and protestor sentiment to identify key discussion topics and measure public opinion. Our analysis expanded beyond its initial focus on the anti-corruption movement to uncover wider social trends that are shaping broader Social Risk factors, which have the potential to cause severe political, economic, and social harm.

Section 1: Anti-Corruption Activists and Protests

Our analysis initially focused on prominent anti-corruption activists and specific events to determine how key influencers perceived and talked about the corruption scandal. We analyzed the Twitter accounts of 15 widely followed anti-corruption activist’s and hashtags linked to anti-corruption demonstrations illustrated in Table 1.

Accounts of Anti-Corruption Activists	Hashtags of Associated with Key Events
@altagraciasa @CerolImpunidadRD	#AlertaVerde, #MarchaVerde, #DíaVerde
@CRubioMartinez @josehoepelman	#SantiagoMarcha, #CibaoMarcha, #Yovoypalamarcha
@RDSomosPueblo @samy_cho	#FindelaImpunidad, #llamaverde #encuentraunlider

Table 1.

Next, we downloaded a random sample of approximately 35,000 tweets mentioning these terms and applied our customized topic filters to uncover the grievances and narratives that most influenced the anti-corruption movement.

One of the central topics that emerged from our analysis involved “dignidad” or “dignity.” People associated with protests view public corruption as an assault on their individual rights and freedoms. Another topic that emerged, which reinforced the assault on the individual rights narrative, centered on the blockage, suspension, or removal of Twitter accounts. Government



“Online narratives link corruption directly to key political officials, the PLD, and sectors of the economy.”

actions to block or remove twitter accounts were widely viewed as attacks on personal rights and freedoms. Narratives and social demands associated with the dignity and removal of accounts exposed deeper and more emotional issues than just the costs of corruption or political affiliation. They are connected to individual identities and the Dominican social fabric that trigger strong emotions and actions when threatened.

Section 2: Online Narratives in Dominican Society

With a deeper understanding of public sentiment regarding major topics of concern, we next examined how the broader public perceived corruption. In particular, we examined how corruption shaped the social media discussion surrounding important political and economic institutions. To complete this broader analysis, we downloaded approximately 55,000 tweets, this time drawn randomly across all segments of Dominican society.

Our topic models revealed that the Partido de la Liberación Dominicana (PLD) and individuals like President Danilo Medina were the defining entities related to corruption discussions. In other words, when people talk about corruption in Dominican society, they are predominantly talking about the ruling PLD and President Medina. The next most common topic associated with Odebrecht and PLD officials was tourism, which links the Dominican Republic’s most important industry to corruption. Rather than discussing locations, events, and services associated with this vital service industry, the primary narrative associated with tourism has been hijacked by concerns about corruption, impunity and politics. Table 2 illustrates how key words associated with corruption link to the President and PLD and how tourism is now associated with Odebrecht and the President.

Key Words Associated with “Corrupción”	Entities Most Related to Discussions of “Turismo”
“Odebrecht”, “impunidad”, “justicia”	“Odebrecht”
“presidente”, “Medina”, “gobierno”	“Presidente Danilo Medina”

Table 2.

Section 3: Social Risk Implications

Section three combines findings from the previous sections with ENODO’s population-centric methodology to understand Social Risk factors within Dominican society. Our analysis uncovers how increased Social Risk breaks the equilibrium that holds dormant social tensions in check. Active social tensions reinforced by Identity Conflict—the source of most contemporary conflicts—increase an individual’s willingness to challenge authority and act on their beliefs. It also creates opportunities for criminal organizations, narco-traffickers, or radicals to hijack legitimate public narratives against government institutions and corporations. When combined with growing negative sentiment, Social Risk Factors create the conditions that lead to a cycle of provocation, which has the potential to destabilize established political and social structures.



Government actions, which attempt to quell public dissent exacerbate negative sentiment, heighten social tension, and will lead to civil unrest and violence.

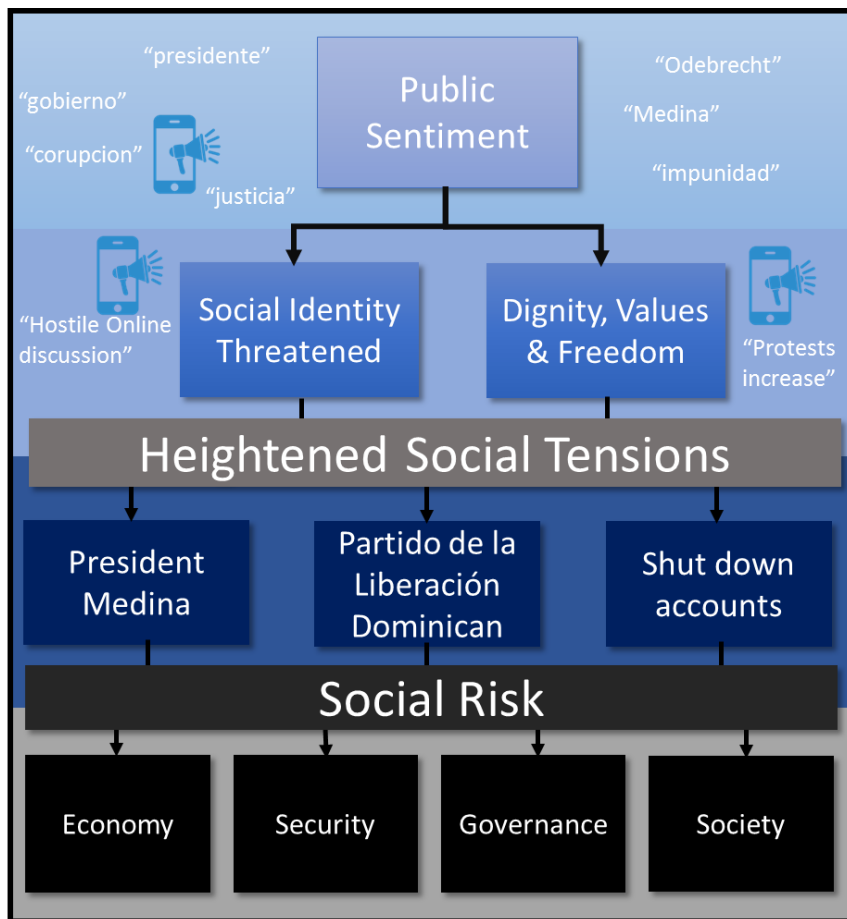


Figure 1 captures the findings of our analysis to illustrate how social conditions in the Dominican Republic are manifesting. It portrays the changes in online narratives, their impact on public sentiment, and heightened social tensions based upon recent activity and events. It also depicts sentiment that links corruption to President Medina, the PLD, and the tourism industry. Most importantly, it provides a roadmap for political and industry leaders to understand the current state of Social Risk within the Dominican Republic and its potential impacts.

Figure 1

Conclusion:

Confessions of large bribes paid to government officials to finance elections and secure public contracts to Odebrecht triggered Social Risk within the Dominican Republic. It transformed unaddressed social tensions and underlying grievances against the government into hostile online discussions and protests. It mobilized individuals, social networks, activist groups, and large segments of the population into action like never before. Moreover, it empowered citizens to change their perception of corruption and impunity, weakened the fairness and competence of public procurement, and credibility of the political party system. What was once viewed as a way of life and understood as part of the culture is now being perceived as an attack on fundamental rights, principles, and dignity.

Social Risk poses a real threat to formal and informal social structures, government and political institutions, security, and the economy. It erodes individual's beliefs in the government's legitimacy and generates profound disenchantment in the very fabric of society—with



unpredictable social consequences. It will not abate and any government actions that attempt to quell public dissent regarding corruption will only exacerbate negative sentiment, heighten social tensions, and result in continued civil unrest and violence.

Recommendations:

Further Social Risk Analysis to:

- Develop in-depth understanding to diagnose Social Risk factors
- Rapidly design strategies to prevent Social Risk from transforming into civil unrest
- Provide public and private sector leaders with tools and training to reduce Social Risk
- Strengthen the anti-corruption agenda and political party system in the Dominican Republic





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