

Blogue Fragmentos do Caos



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Portugal - The Republic of the Shortcut: An Incendiary Chronicle of Corruption Without a Mask

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“exceptions”, and bureaucratic language.

- **Public procurement** is the favourite stage: direct awards, sliced-up contracts, eternal “urgencies”, amendments without a conscience.
- **The Court of Auditors** writes in dry prose: it recommends, flags weaknesses, establishes responsibilities — and leaves a trail of clues.
- **The deeper problem** is cultural: national faith in “we’ll regularise it later”.

The Republic of the Shortcut: corruption without a mask

*Some countries have thieves on street corners. We sometimes have **street corners inside official letterheads**. And corruption here learns to speak like a memo: “exception granted, due to urgency”.*

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a folder in hand, pages numbered, signatures in triplicate, and a smile that says: “don’t worry, it’s procedure”.

On stage, the characters are old and faithful to the script. The audience already knows them — and perhaps that is why it no longer stands up. They enter one by one, like a revue, only without cheerful music: here the band plays in minor keys.

II — Mr Shortcut (a.k.a. Doctor Direct Award)

Mr Shortcut is elegant, fast, and always has an explanation ready: “it’s urgent”, “it’s highly specific”, “there is no alternative”. His gift is not to procure — it is to **avoid competition** without ever admitting he avoids it.

When a country grows used to the Shortcut, the main road is abandoned: open tenders take work, comparisons raise questions, transparency invites scrutiny. The Shortcut offers silence. And silence, my friend, is the best lubricant of the machine.

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the cake into thin slices, each one below the threshold that forces open doors and windows. “It’s just a part”, “it’s only this”, “it’s only that”. And when you look again, the sum of crumbs already pays for a banquet.

The Baron is patron saint of opportunistic arithmetic: mathematics that does not add — it disguises.

IV — Lady Urgency (who has lived here for twenty years)

Lady Urgency appears breathless, as if the world ends at six. But there is a curious detail: she has been “urgent” for **years**. An urgency with a lifetime lease.

In her name, prudence is suspended, deadlines shrink, comparisons are waived. And the country learns to live in a bureaucratic state of emergency, where the exceptional becomes habit — and habit becomes shield.

V — Engineer Exception and the High Priest of Amendments

There is always an Engineer Exception explaining why the project needs “extra works”. He speaks of “unforeseen

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And it is solved — for whoever receives. Solved for whoever signs. Solved for whoever gets used to it. For the taxpayer, it is “solved” the way cracks are solved with paint: covered, not cured.

VI — The Paper Choir: “We’ll Regularise It Later”

Amid it all, a choir sings softly: “we’ll regularise it later”. It is the unofficial anthem of comfortable irresponsibility. First we do it. Later we see. And when we see, it is already done. And once it is done, no one wants to undo it.

This apparently harmless phrase is a machine. Not of efficiency: of moral impunity.

VII — The Court of Auditors: a dry voice in the desert

And then the Court of Auditors enters — not as a caped hero, but as a **thermometer**. It points to where fever rises, where internal controls fail, where governance drifts. It writes without metaphors — and precisely for that reason, it frightens those who live by metaphors.

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Epilogue — Corruption as climate, citizenship as antidote

Corruption in a country is not only what sends people to prison. It is what breeds **discouragement**. It is the petty theft of hope: every “shortcut” that becomes rule, every “urgency” that becomes excuse, every “regularisation” that becomes ritual.

And then they ask why the young leave, why trust rots, why democracy feels like a room with closed windows. Because air that does not circulate always smells the same: **convenience**.

The antidote is not moralism. It is **light**: clear processes, real accountability, and citizenship that does not fall asleep at the first promise. Corruption fears one thing more than the law: an attentive people. Because an attentive people are not a crowd — they are living audit.

References and links (sources)

Public links to the **Portuguese Court of Auditors** and related sources, useful for contextualising recurring

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(central government)

- Collection page: Opinions on the State General Account (CGE)
- Opinion on the CGE 2023 (PDF)
- Opinion on the CGE 2022 (PDF) | Summary (2 pages)

Court of Auditors — Budget execution monitoring

- Budget Execution Monitoring Reports (AEO) — collection
- AEO — COVID-19 (2020) (PDF)

Court of Auditors — Audit reports (patterns and cases)

- Audit Reports — collection
- PPP management — road and rail concessions (2008) (PDF)
- Control of self-assessed VAT revenue (2013) (PDF)
- Control of tax revenue (2014) (PDF)
- Spending Review in Central Government (2024) (PDF)
- Public Finance Reform with PRR funding (2024) (PDF)

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- ARF 2024 — documents folder (file index)

Court of Auditors — scope and activity

- Activity Reports of the Court of Auditors — collection

Context — indicators and perception (corruption)

- Transparency International — Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)
- Transparência e Integridade (TI) — Portugal

Note: some Court of Auditors index pages may occasionally be temporarily unavailable (gateway errors). In that case, the annual “Documents/YYYY/” folders are often useful to locate PDFs by reference.

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