

## FIFA and Gianni Infantino: Case Brief

### Case Synopsis

The moral challenge of the case of Gianni Infantino is characterized by the fact that he was involved in the shady deals in his days as a legal director of UEFA yet chose to apply for the position of the FIFA president after the corruption related scandal that has undermined the reputation of the association. As a result, it revolves around such moral values as justice (i.e. the one's willingness to act in accordance with the rules and norms) and loyalty (i.e. a correct and trustworthy relationship with the organization). Moreover, currently, the resolution of the presented case largely depends on Mr. Infantino's judgment as he is to make a choice between defending himself from the accusations and leaving the position of the FIFA president he has occupied recently. The importance of the reviewed case is manifested in the fact that the unjust actions of a single person can bring an organization operation on a global scale on a brink of destruction, which emphasized the central role of ethics and moral norms in business relationships.

### Key Facts

To understand the situation, it is required to retrieve the relevant evidence about the case, which will provide insight into its key events described below. In 2016, Gianni Infantino was elected as a new president of FIFA. However, the U.S. prosecutors alleged that the owners of the company named Cross Trading have paid millions of dollars in bribes to football functionaries in South America to get the rights to broadcast a number of football tournaments and then resell them for a large profit. The name of Gianni Infantino appears on the contracts with Cross Trading of the rights to broadcast the matches, namely the ones of the Champions League, in Ecuador, in the period between the years 2003 and 2009 (Ruiz, 2016). According to them, Cross Trading, an enterprise registered in Niue, has paid \$111,000 for these rights. Then, according to the so-called Panama papers, it sold them to the Teleamazonas, a broadcast company from Ecuador, for \$311,170, i.e. three times their original price (Gibson, 2016). The similar situation has occurred with the rights to broadcast the UEFA Super Cup. At the same time, there was no indication that Infantino received bribes in connection with a contract with Cross Trading, as well as that Teleamazonas was performing illegal acts while Infantino served as head of the legal department of the UEFA (Ruiz, 2016).

Moreover, there is a need for the information about the state of events at the FIFA prior to Mr. Infantino's appointment, namely the cases of corruption that were uncovered in 2015. These facts are required to obtain a complete picture of the analyzed situation. In particular, it was deducted that several high-ranking figures of the association, received bribes. The goals of corrupt acts within FIFA included the distribution of seats of the World Championships, as well as the rights to broadcast the matches. The investigation included the assumption of bribery in the appointment of the World Cup in several countries. In turn, the Extraordinary FIFA Congress was held in Zurich, Switzerland, during which the association adopted a reform package, as well as elected the new president after Joseph Blatter left his position under the influence of the corruption scandal (Gibson, 2016).

Additionally, the analysis of the case requires the contextual and technical knowledge regarding the moral values and norms that are relevant to the case, as well as the wisdom tradition that defines one's spirituality. As a result, the case must be supported by a wide array of sources, including the online periodicals, namely *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*, as

well as the scholarly sources (i.e. books, articles, etc.). The reasons for their reliability vary depending on their type. For example, in the case of the media, the provided information can be considered reliable due to the fact that the listed periodicals are not the stakeholders of the case. In other words, the facts they provide are objective and unbiased, making them suitable for the impartial analysis of the situation. On the other hand, the reliability of the scholarly sources is unquestionable as they are written by the people that are experts in their fields of activity.

### **Moral Analysis**

The primary moral issue of the presented case is Gianni Infantino's registration as a candidate for the post of the head of FIFA despite the fact that he was involved in the questionable deals with the offenders. Moreover, he made this decision after the organization has attracted the attention of the global society due to the overwhelming corruption of its members. As it was mentioned before, the FIFA officials were accused of receiving bribes during the appointment of the World Cup in several countries. Naturally, this information had a significant effect on the reputation of the association, as well as the attitude of the global sports community towards it, forcing FIFA to start its activities from a clean slate. In particular, it was announced that FIFA requires a leader that has no connection to any sort of illegal deals (Ruiz, 2016). In this regard, Mr. Infantino's involvement in an unfair deal may have a devastating effect on the organization in the long-term perspective. At the same time, he continues to deny the accusations since there is no evidence of him receiving bribes and intends to remain at the position of a president (Ruiz, 2016). Under such conditions, it is clear that the future of FIFA as a whole is at stake. Thus, it is possible to say that Gianni Infantino is the key moral actor of the case, with his actions and decisions having a direct effect on the resolution of the issue. In particular, should he decide to leave the post, the organization may yet have the chance to redeem itself in the eyes of the global society.

By considering the facts presented above, it is possible to provide a personal intuitive moral judgment of the case. In this regard, Mr. Infantino should not have proposed his candidature for the position of the president of FIFA in the first place due to his history with the illegal deals. Given the fact that the association has just started restoring its ruined reputation after the corruption scandal, any push in the wrong direction may be fatal for it. As a result, the very fact that such a person remains at the helm of FIFA does not contribute to its credibility.

The presented statement can be supported by the moral values that are involved in the case, being violated by Mr. Infantino. The first of them is justice. In particular, it is clear that Mr. Infantino was aware that he dealt with an offshore company (i.e. the one that does not pay taxes) in the past, namely due to the fact that it was located on the island of Niue. Its territory is designated as an offshore financial center both by the International Monetary Fund and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Despite this information, he did not seem to question his decision to sell the rights to such customer. As a result, he has willingly committed an unjust act. The next moral value is loyalty since the case involved Mr. Infantino betraying the interests of the FIFA for the sake of a personal gain. Being aware of the situation the association is in, as well as of his involvement in the illegal deals, he still chose to apply for the position of its president without considering the consequences of his actions. At the same time, the presented moral judgment conflicts with the one's core values, namely the one regarding the presumption of innocence. According to it, a person is considered absolutely innocent until their guilt is proved legally. As it was mentioned before, there is currently no evidence that Mr. Infantino was bribed, meaning that his attempts to deny accusations are not

groundless. Nevertheless, the presented conflict is of a right/wrong nature, meaning that there is a single solution that aligns with the common moral values and norms (Perry, 2014).

Moreover, it is possible to consider several other moral perspectives for the better understanding of the issue. First of all, there are the six universal values – care (by denying the accusations, Mr. Infantino cares about his future, as well as that of his family), liberty (Mr. Infantino was unrestricted when it came down to making a choice regarding the deal with Cross Trading), fairness (the judgment of Mr. Infantino regarding the sale of the rights to Cross Trading was unaffected by the fact that it is an offshore company), loyalty (Mr. Infantino acted against the interests of the FIFA), and authority (currently, FIFA has to cope with the requirements presented by the investigators due to the scandal). Additionally, there are the ethical standpoints of the common humanity and character – justice (the principle violated by Mr. Infantino), duty and principle (the money received from the sale of rights still went to the respective organization). Finally, there are the consequences of Mr. Infantino's actions. Despite the fact that he made an attempt to benefit the association through the sale of rights and achieved this goal in the short-term perspective, he destroyed FIFA's progress in the terms of clearing its name in the long term (Ruiz, 2016).

The primary value of one's code of wisdom tradition is honesty and duty, meaning that its application to the case allows one to say that on the one hand, Mr. Infantino was carrying out his duties as a representative of the association, which is not blameworthy. However, his inability (or unwillingness) to forecast the consequences of his actions has become the stimulus for his dishonest behavior in 2015. Naturally, such indifferent attitude towards the association conflicts with the core values of one's wisdom tradition, namely the rejection of selfishness. The conflict also arises in the case of wisdom traditions of stakeholders, namely FIFA, with its professional code of ethics, like that of any organization, forbidding any activity that may be harmful to the association (Epps, 2012).

### **Stakeholder Analysis**

The presented case involves several major stakeholders. The most significant of them is FIFA, as the moral issue described above may have a significant impact on the future of this organization. The core values and wisdom traditions of the association (loyalty to the society it serves, care for its members through the protection of the interests of the organization) dictate its claims. They are aimed at sending a signal to the community regarding its willingness to regain its credibility – even at the cost of reforms and changes in its top management. Another major stakeholder is Mr. Infantino himself as he is interested in remaining at the position of the FIFA president. It seems that such values and wisdom traditions as the care for the one's well-being determine the nature of his claims since he continues to deny the accusations. In this regard, it is possible to say that the claims of FIFA and Mr. Infantino are competing. However, out of the presented stakeholders, the FIFA has the upper hand due to the fact that its obligations before the global sports community are more significant than that of Mr. Infantino. Moreover, the needs of the organization as a whole outweigh those of a particular person, especially the one responsible for the current situation, meaning that the latter will have to step aside (Perry, 2014).

Additionally, the reviewed issue can be complemented with the one regarding Iraq War. In this case, false reports about stockpiles of weapons were examples of how dishonesty of the officials has entailed armed conflict, which could have been avoided (Harvey, 2011). Of course, the scale of events is incomparable, but the message remains the same – most cases of human vices and social disadvantage are generated and fueled by a lie. Many forms of betrayal,

financial fraud, government corruption, murder, and even genocide – all of them imply the presence of such moral defect as dishonesty in humans.

### **Option Analysis**

Currently, there are two feasible ways to resolve the presented moral issue. The first of them involves Mr. Infantino defending himself against the accusation with the help of the ethics committee of the FIFA. In this case, justice becomes the guiding moral principle as there is no evidence that Mr. Infantino was bribed by the representatives of Cross Trading. As a result, he cannot be deemed guilty in accordance with the principle of presumption of innocence. Moreover, such actions will demonstrate his adherence to both personal and professional principles, which will provide a significant moral ground to him. Another option involves Mr. Infantino leaving the post of the president to prevent further damage to FIFA's reputation. In this case, the moral standpoints of virtue and loyalty provide the necessary justification. He will demonstrate his willingness to correct the mistakes of the past and help FIFA to get back on its feet by acting as its primary representative. As a result, the association will receive the necessary support from the community, allowing it to restore its damaged reputation.

### **Decision**

By taking into account all the provided information, it is possible to make the final decision regarding the resolution of the reviewed case. Gianni Infantino must leave the position of the president of FIFA voluntarily. This statement can be justified by the following facts. First of all, by doing so, he will act in accordance with the moral principle of loyalty, placing the interests of FIFA above his own. In the conditions of the insufficient evidence regarding his illegal activity, this action may be perceived as a goodwill gesture (Epps, 2012), improving the image of both Mr. Infantino and FIFA in the eyes of the community. Moreover, in this case, he will be able to leave with dignity, which will be perceived as a powerful signal to the authorities and the society, demonstrating that FIFA is willing and able to change its ways.

It should be noted that this action expresses one's core values in the following way. First of all the principle of rejection of selfishness can be easily applied to the decision as Mr. Infantino will act to save FIFA rather than ensure his personal well-being. The same can be said about the value of justice – being a person that provoked the current situation, Mr. Infantino will have to take responsibility. Finally, there is the value of honesty as Mr. Infantino will acknowledge his wrongdoings by himself rather than under the pressure of the authorities.

### **Summary Argument**

The ability to acknowledge one's mistakes and act accordingly is a sign of a moral person that will always find its place in life.