

Accomplishing Anticorruption: Propositions & Methods

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Abstract: The insidious practice of corruption cripples institutions, consumes communities, and cuts deeply into the very structure of people's lives. It destroys nations and saps their moral fiber. Corruption is invasive and unforgiving, degrading governance, distorting and criminalizing national priorities, and privileging acquisitive rent-seeking, patrimonial theft, and personal gains over concern for the commonweal. It also costs an estimated \$1 trillion annually – roughly a loss of 2 percent of global GDP – and disproportionately affects the most needy countries and their peoples. This opening essay shows that these baleful results need not occur: the battle against corrupt practices can be won, as it has been in several contemporary countries and throughout history. Ethical universalism can replace particularism. Since collective behavioral patterns and existing forms of political culture need to be altered, anticorruption endeavors must be guided from the apex of society. Consummate political will makes a critical difference. Anticorruption successes are hard-won and difficult to sustain. This essay and this special issue show what can and must be done.

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Confronting and curbing corruption are not impossible. We now know how to transform wildly corrupt countries into largely graft-free polities. We know what works reliably, what works occasionally, and what works only under optimal conditions. We know that talented political will is essential. But we also know that altering corrupting incentives for individuals is less powerful than shifting the contours of behavior collectively.¹

Corruption is a systemic malady, emerging from the top down rather than the bottom up.² That is, the stain of corruption spreads from the attitudes and permissive policies of persons at the top of political and corporate entities downward. Leaders set the tone; misconduct at one level of authority implicitly authorizes the next. Integrity or its absence therefore seeps into the collective societal consciousness: either to make corruption an ongoing social practice and an essential (even if de jure forbidden)

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component of a governing political culture; or more rarely, to accomplish the reverse, creating legal and normative barriers to wholesale approval of corrupt practices.

We know that corruption can be reduced or even nearly extirpated at the national level because a number of nation-states (most of them small and tightly controlled) have in modern times succeeded in transitioning from wholesale corruption to the pursuit of a fully ethical system. One or two small, fully democratic states have also managed to develop successfully without enduring any periods of corruption, in part by introducing widespread changes in their peoples' understandings of corruption. In China, the world's most populous nation, President Xi Jinping's lengthy and aggressive anticorruption campaign may result in the diminution of many enduring corrupt endeavors, even if his foremost goals for the campaign are doubtless political.

Fortunately, to buttress what we have learned from the contemporary experience of those democratic and quasi-democratic entities that have beaten back corruption and effectively altered their prevailing political cultures, we also now understand that today's least corrupt countries were once themselves promiscuously crooked, but shifted incrementally over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from having widespread to very limited tolerance of corruption. These changes took place thanks to gifted leadership, the influence of the Enlightenment, the spread of mass education, the emergence of autochthonous churches, and the rise of merit-based bureaucratic systems. Bo Rothstein's essay in this volume emphasizes the role of education: "With the introduction of free public education," he writes, "citizens got a stake in a well-functioning public sector and thus found a reason to oppose corruption."³ Education also engendered loyalty to the state and an embryonic sense of nationality.

Effectively, these peoples – mostly European, followed in the twentieth century by a few Asian and African populations – moved away from particularism, wherein "individuals [are] treated differently according to status," to what Alina Mungiu-Pippidi and others call ethical universalism, or the equal treatment of all in the delivery of government services and opportunities. As Mungiu-Pippidi asserts in this volume,

Particularism, rather than ethical universalism, is closer to the state of nature (or the default social organization) and...its opposite, a norm of open and equal access or public integrity, is by no means guaranteed by political evolution.⁴

But when a society does reach that point, acculturative anticorruption efforts have been internalized by the political culture and the body politic. In other words, ethical universalism (hardly a utopian concept) replaces corruption and patrimonialism – malign allocational norms – with public-spiritedness and fairness in governance and politics, corporate behavior, and daily life. Ethical universalism "presumes that all inhabitants of a jurisdiction will be treated fairly, equally, and tolerantly – that minorities are entitled to the same privileges and opportunities as majorities, and that groups large and small can anticipate receiving similar rights and privileges."⁵

In the Nordics, elsewhere in Northern Europe, and even in the Antipodes, there has been a major and profound shift from the societal expectation that position, fortune, and licenses are obtained primarily by buying influence and access from rulers and their bureaucrats to a presumption that such goods can be attained through personal achievement and merit. Collective behavioral responses have evolved toward an anticorrupt norm. In other words, elites, and later entire populations, first in Prussia and the Nordic nations and then

in the Netherlands, Britain, New Zealand, and Canada, gradually discovered that their political and corporate endeavors could succeed optimally only if the temptation to gain power and preferment by virtue of corrupt transactions and influence were reduced as much as possible.

These ineluctable advances in the functioning of these relatively small societies constituted a virtuous circle: empowerment encouraged institutions to function and citizens to use them well. Citizen participation in turn strengthened political institutions. As Matthew Taylor puts it: “In a word, Denmark.”⁶

Elsewhere, by contrast, regional corruption remains. For example, although Chileans’ interactions with their police forces and bureaucrats are free of petty corruption, in nearby Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, and Brazil, that is not always the case. And in all of those South American countries, among others, grand corruption still flourishes, as clearly demonstrated by Brazil’s Odebrecht corporate bribing scandal and the ongoing *Lava Jato* investigation and prosecution of intertwining corrupt Petrobras, Odebrecht, and government officials. (Judge Sérgio Fernando Moro, who presides over the *Lava Jato* cases, writes in his essay in this volume about how today’s Brazilian corruption is being prosecuted and tried.)⁷

Africa, too, has seen mixed success on corruption, with a tiny handful of exemplary anticorruption efforts. There may be residual corruption in Botswana, but its citizens do not anticipate being fleeced at police roadblocks or told that marriage and driving licenses are only available for an extra fee, paid under the counter. In contrast, neighboring Zimbabwe was awash until 2018 with roadblocks manned by machine gun-toting, woefully underpaid policemen; permits were only procured by bribes; and electricity or water only arrived at households by special ar-

rangement.⁸ One expects to be extorted in Kenya, Nigeria, or Zambia; but not in Botswana or Mauritius; and less often nowadays in Benin and Ghana. The striking differences in attitudes in those less corrupt polities come after decades of leader-induced revampings of “standard operating procedures.”

The less corrupt African societies, and those in Europe, Asia, and Australasia, are separated from the run of their peers by critical shifts in prevailing political cultures that took place during the last sixty years, that were engineered from above, and that were orchestrated largely by example and with an emphasis on integrity. Taylor, in his essay in this volume, calls these striking anticorruption improvements “positive equilibrium shifts.” In earlier centuries, the Nordics and other peoples achieved the same radical enhancements in expectations, but over much longer periods and much more gradually. Rothstein’s essay in this collection emphasizes that the Nordic transformation was largely driven “indirectly” (that is, anticorruption was a by-product of robust reforms universalizing public goods), a strategy that Rothstein also recommends to advocates and implementers of twenty-first-century anticorruption efforts.⁹

Canada provides another example of incremental institutional changes to corruption norms. Canada’s first prime minister openly took bribes in exchange for authorizing railway and construction contracts. By the end of the nineteenth century, politicians still profited from their positions at the provincial level, but hardly ever federally. By the post-World War II period, Canadians had ceased to tolerate even most provincial chicanery, which was targeted by major prosecutions. But only in the twenty-first century have Canadians collectively embraced what we might call an absolute intolerance of rent-seeking, in-

fluence peddling, political and official advantage-taking, and overall sleaze in both public and private spheres of endeavor (not that rule-breaking does not here and there persist).

According to Transparency International's most recent Corruption Perceptions Index, Canada is the eighth-ranking least corrupt nation-state, following New Zealand, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Switzerland, Singapore, and Sweden. Tied with Canada are the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and the United Kingdom. Australia and the United States rank as somewhat more corrupt than Canada, according to recent iterations of this well-respected index.¹⁰

We know how to reform societies and eliminate the types of graft that erode society's fabric and impede economic growth. We even know – because British governor of Hong Kong Sir Murray MacLehose, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, and President Paul Kagame of Rwanda showed the way – that the inhabitants of city-states up through medium-sized nations can be retrained or resocialized relatively quickly to shun corrupt temptations. President Sir Seretse Khama of Botswana also demonstrated how a thoroughly democratic, tolerant, honest, political leader could encourage his associates, his followers, and the general population to refrain from the common regional acceptance of corruption as a way of life. Whereas Lee and Kagame led by example but also used coercion, Khama socialized his citizens within a totally democratic environment, and so taught them to operate very differently from their peers in neighboring states. So did Prime Minister Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam and his successors in Mauritius. They accomplished in modern times what the kings of Denmark and leaders in Sweden, Norway, and Finland managed to do, using a combination of coercive and social-shaming methods, from the late eighteenth century onward. In mod-

ern Europe, Estonia and Georgia have more or less followed the Botswanan and Hong Kong models in their shift from Soviet-style criminalized corruption to Nordic-like paradigms. So have Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Slovenia.

The anticorruption ideal is common to all nations, all traditional cultures. There is very little evidence that the nature and practices of corruption vary from culture to culture or that the corrupt act itself is viewed more permissively in some societies than in others. Nor is there any evidence that the presence of everyday grand or petty corruption helps a modern nation to function effectively; there is no evidence that corruption somehow appropriately greases the wheels of commerce, improves official service delivery, and incorporates outgroups into a political, social, or economic environment from which they would otherwise be excluded. Systematically cleansing an infected country of small-scale extortions helps just as much as jailing venal offenders to demonstrate that corruption is dysfunctional and an impediment to economic and social growth.

In the twenty-first century, in the “global village,” no nation-state permits bribery, graft, and extortion; a diverse collection of states legally defines private, public, and overall abuse congruently; and, most important of all, their diverse citizenries have no difficulty knowing the many ways in which their rulers, as well as the minor officials with whom they deal day-to-day, are corrupt. Even kleptocracies and other excessively corrupt regimes – the largely criminalized states at the bottom end of the Corruption Perceptions Index – all publicly hold that they prohibit and abhor corrupt behavior.

In 2018, no group of citizens anywhere is demanding more corruption, less transparency and accountability, or more compromised service delivery. Only multinational corporations with their eyes on a

resource prize or wealthy, small countries seeking to host a global sporting championship favor outright covert bidding for services or results that (in theory) should be provided on the basis of merit. If at one time the distinctions between corrupt bids and honest competition, or between a bribe and a gift, were poorly illuminated, this demarcation is now increasingly appreciated in urban and middle-class Africa, Asia, and the Americas, even if it is adhered to only indifferently.¹¹

In spite of increasing consensus on the illegitimacy of corrupt principles of allocation, the long hand of corruption nonetheless extends across borders. Louise Shelley's essay demonstrates how it takes both corrupt national officials and low-level professionals – operating not only in developing states or conflict zones but in free trade zones and corporate offices – to facilitate the wholesale pilfering and devastation of illicit trading schemes. Shelley recounts the huge sums of money involved in the smuggling of guns, drugs, and people within and across national borders. But she also makes clear that the trade in rare environmental resources, including ivory and rhino horn provided by poachers and timber harvested from old-growth rain forests, can only flourish because of high- and low-level corruption. Gatekeepers such as customs agents and airport personnel are rewarded when they facilitate the movement of contraband cigarettes, illegally harvested timber, precursor chemicals for synthetic drug fabrication, and all manner of counterfeit goods (including those sold on the Internet or Darknet).

Criminalized syndicates reach high into many governments; corrupt kleptocrats and insurgent groups like Boko Haram and Al Shabaab find funding through such high-level contacts. Unfortunately, as important as stanching the flow of trafficked goods and persons is for national governments, their poor citizens, the tourism in-

dustry, and ultimately the environmental sustainability of the planet, there exist few proven anticorruption initiatives capable of dealing effectively with illicit trade. An International Anti-Corruption Court, perhaps organized analogously to the International Criminal Court, as Judge Mark Wolf proposes in his essay, could help. So could globally exposing money-laundering and cross-border currency movements and the shuttering of those places where ill-gotten gains are stashed, including offshore tax havens.

These transnational flows complement the use of corrupt extractive techniques within individual countries. The most egregiously corrupt are also thoroughly criminalized and, usually, repressive. In the many nations in which leaders prey on their citizens by purloining much of their wealth (including many post-Soviet and African nations), anticorruption efforts are much harder to imagine, and their successful outcomes rare or nonexistent. These are the criminalized or criminal states, where the entire point of a presidency is not to rule for the people, but for oneself, one's family, and one's cronies. These are extractive enterprises where we cannot expect bad rulers to be voted out (although the Gambia is an unusual exception and President Robert Mugabe's removal from Zimbabwe's presidency by a gentle coup may prove positive) or well-meaning foreign donors to have influence. They are family concerns or, as in Afghanistan, fiefdoms arrayed against one another, each to benefit its own followers.¹²

What can be done to pry populations from under the heel of such corrupt despots? World order, in the form of kinetic exercises of power and United Nations Security Council sanctions, can make money laundering and banking difficult, or in some cases impossible, for criminalized states. World powers can place embargoes on imports and exports, seal bank accounts,

and hinder the travel of autocrats outside of their home states. Democratic neighboring entities can shun those who hold illegitimate power, refusing diplomatic dealings or otherwise recognizing them as leaders. The aforementioned International Anti-Corruption Court could also bring the criminally corrupt before a globally legitimated bar of justice. Such a new court would subject those who are above law in their own countries to what the rule of law imposes in most democratic states. An International Anti-Corruption Court could also trace and help to contain the movement abroad of ill-gotten personal wealth and the proceeds of corrupt transactions.

There are a number of conceptual approaches that, if honored and developed, can reduce corruption within nation-states. Foremost is the full functioning of the rule of law. Moro, in his essay in this volume, reiterates that strong laws against corruption are necessary to authorize and propel effective anticorruption actions. He writes:

Better laws can improve the efficiency of the criminal justice system and increase the transparency and predictability of relations between the public and private sectors, reducing incentives and opportunities for corrupt practices.¹³

But reasonable laws are in no way sufficient on their own. Those legal strictures need to apply to everyone, not just the poor and powerless. If not, a country risks “a progressive erosion of trust.”

For many decades, politicians and powerful businessmen were largely immune from effective prosecution for corruption in Brazil, as in so many other seriously corrupt nations. In Brazil, grand corruption was systemic; it had become a “standard operating procedure” at the state and national political and corporate levels. But gradual changes in the law, as well as growing pressure for more effective judicial ac-

tion, culminated in the first conviction of a sitting federal politician in 2012, followed by a number of high-profile corruption sentences in subsequent years. Congress also authorized the use of plea bargains to obtain evidence of corruption, and of pretrial detention to prevent new offenses. These rule-of-law reforms enabled Brazilian prosecutors and Moro and his fellow judges to pursue charges of corruption against individual politicians, political parties, and corporations, strengthening the rule of law in Brazil and helping to bring the impunity that politicians had long enjoyed to an unceremonious end.

These are among the important lessons for anticorruption efforts everywhere, not just Brazil. Furthermore, whereas the United States has recently retreated from its long prohibition against lavish corporate contributions to domestic politicians’ electoral efforts, Brazil’s Supreme Court, recognizing the pernicious role of unlimited monies in elections, has now outlawed corporate transfers of cash to political forces until Brazil’s troubled legislative and executive branches can set reasonable limits.¹⁴

Singapore long ago severely restricted electoral campaign expenditures, thus theoretically obviating the need for politicians to seek help in paying for such costs. European and South American nations do the same and, like Singapore and many other parliamentary systems, permit only abbreviated preelection periods of vote solicitation. Greatly curtailing the amount of money needed to win a legislative seat turns out to be a powerful anticorruption tool, as Lee Kuan Yew presumed. In his contribution to this volume, Rotimi Suberu writes, also, of how significant electoral institutional reforms can contribute to a reduction of Nigeria’s predilection toward corrupt behavior.

Creating special anticorruption commissions or agencies to investigate and com-

bat corrupt activities within specific political jurisdictions was an institutional invention of the 1950s and 1970s. Implicitly using a principal-agent model of how corruption worked, political executives and legislatures may have thought that the existence of such commissions would lead, after hard forensic investigation of crooks in governmental or paragonovernmental activities, to the prosecution and elimination of much corruption. But, as we now know, only when such a new institution is backed by abundant political will can it succeed in accomplishing its mandated task.

Jon S.T. Quah's essay reviews how the Singapore and Hong Kong anticorruption commissions – the most successful in history – helped to carry out the mandates of hard-charging executives who were determined to break corrupt practices within their city-states. Their regimes provided sufficient funding and manpower to make the commissions powerful. They also gave them independence and protected them from political and gangster pushback (unlike the comparable body established in Indonesia in 2002). In other words, an abundance of political will contributed to their efficacy.

Quah contrasts successes in those two jurisdictions with the failure of the commission model to bolster anticorruption efforts in the Philippines (even before the presidency of Rodrigo Duterte) and India. I indicate elsewhere, too, that of the fifty or so anticorruption commissions established in Africa and Asia, only a handful proved effective. Most were led by well-intentioned judges or prosecutors, but only in Botswana and Mauritius, and for a time in Zambia and Nigeria, were these commissions permitted to act in an unfettered manner. Unlike the commissions in Singapore and Hong Kong, their investigations were often negated by attorneys-general or by heads of state. Some culprits were just too powerful (as in Brazil, which had no such commissions before

2012) to be taken to court and punished; ironically, some of the accused were able to buy their way out of investigation. And in a few places (such as Malawi and Zambia in this century), heads of state naturally refused to permit anticorruption commissions to investigate their own persons. As a result, most of the African commissions ended up concerning themselves with the small fry, not major embezzlers, as Namibia's anticorruption commission is currently doing.¹⁵ Rothstein's Quality of Government Institute at the University of Gothenburg concluded after extensive survey research (cited in Rothstein's essay in this volume) that the establishment of special institutional anticorruption arrangements have proved effective anticorruption instruments only in special cases. Mungiu-Pippidi advances additional evidence that

countries that adopt autonomous anticorruption agencies, restrictive party finance legislation, or whistleblower protection acts make no more progress on corruption than countries that do not.¹⁶

For these reasons, Suberu's anticorruption recipe emphasizes the enhanced autonomy of critical Nigerian federal oversight bodies and offices and would devolve authority (and power) to subfederal entities. To some extent, what Suberu advocates resonates with Paul Heywood's plea for the disaggregation of corruption statistics and awareness: he cautions us against regarding corruption as only a nation-based problem, rather than one that also infects subsidiary regions and operates transnationally.¹⁷

Holding rule-makers and government actors accountable is also essential: accountability is the rubric under which Matthew Taylor and others wish to place the equilibrium-shifting activities that will bring about meaningful anticorruption advances. For Taylor, accountability encompasses oversight and sanctions.

With respect to transparency – widespread information sharing – Taylor applauds the reforms in Georgia that made governmental functions less opaque, civil-service examinations competitive, university entrance tests truly fair, and interactions with bureaucrats more automated.¹⁸ As Moro states in his essay, making the evidence and procedure of the courts in the Lava Jato corruption cases fully public produced “the popular support necessary for the enforcement of the law.” It also hindered the obstruction of justice by “powerful defendants.”¹⁹

Moro also reveals that oversight – the evaluation of a government’s performance by publics and special auditors – was enhanced in Brazil by greater monitoring of local government functioning and by improved municipal auditing mechanisms. In South Africa, where the state (as Sarah Bracking’s essay discloses) was captured by corrupt entrepreneurs in cahoots with the chief executive, critical oversight was advanced by the public prosecutor (an ombudsperson), a free media, and unfettered political opposition.

Sanctions – the demonstration that societal norms work – included the sacking of vast numbers of official offenders and thousands of presumably corrupt policemen. Sanctions of this kind enhance social trust, their most important contribution to the anticorruption endeavor.

All of these management enhancements led in Georgia to greater institutional effectiveness – enhanced bureaucratic capacity combined with broad engagement by citizens – and, importantly, improved tax-collection abilities. They also included the creation of several anticorruption agencies to prosecute further the war against prevailing (inherited from Soviet times) corrupt practices. In Georgia, however, these “accountability” reforms also led to the kinds of regime domination and “hyper-centralization” that eventually worked against the

completion and sustainability of Georgia’s anticorruption drive. Elsewhere, “accountability” has advanced according to Taylor’s formula without the loss of momentum and the ultimate equilibrium-shift failure (abbreviated or aborted acculturation) that he describes.

Strengthened rule-of-law regimes and improvements to accountability theory and mechanisms depend on active political will. Rarely do effective, sustainable, remedial actions against the scourge of corruption occur without the exercise of consummate political will on the part of a national or regional political chief executive. As Quah’s essay indicates (and other literature supports), successful anticorruption endeavors depend on transformative leaders and civil-society reformers working separately or together to establish or reconfigure existing political cultures. That is what happened in Botswana, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Rwanda. This is what Xi Jinping in China and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Saudi Arabia may also be trying to do.

Minxin Pei doubts very much that Xi wants or can accomplish such an objective:

Xi’s anticorruption crackdown is less unusual than it appears. What separates it is its ferocity and length, which are largely the result of Xi’s political motivation of conducting a de facto and full-scale purge under the guise of an anticorruption drive.²⁰

If Xi really wanted to reduce Chinese corruption, Pei reminds us, he would empower civil society and the media, two customary watchdogs, and not crack down harshly as he has on nearly all free expression and criticism of the state.

Exercising political will means leadership from the front, not from behind; it means diagnosing societal ills and articulating solutions that, after careful analysis and broad explanation, can be sold to

skeptical publics and opponents. Political will is active, not passive, leadership. Often it is bold and courageous, politically risky. It puts a leader at any level squarely behind public policy choices that may not immediately be popular, may be difficult to accomplish, and may ultimately fail. Exercising political will exposes vulnerabilities. Political will means that a leader sets integrity standards, adheres to them, and attempts by a variety of mostly democratic means to overcome opposition. But what does *integrity*, often positioned as the force opposing corruption, contribute? In his essay, Heywood writes at length about the meaning of integrity and what it contributes to the anticorruption endeavor.

To enunciate a novel policy direction for a state or a region is one thing. But to put the full weight of high public office or to stake the legitimacy of a presidency or premiership on an unproven proposition for societal reconfiguration, and to threaten established interest groups and criminalized elites, constitutes the essence of political will. Additionally, political will encompasses resolve. Expressing political will is never enough, however; no amount of bluster and exhortation can translate a change agenda into an acceptable and functional national program. The goals of an energetic political will are only achieved as a result of deep teaching, committed persuasion, and the effective mobilization of large arrays of peoples behind a clearly defined and intelligible project attractive to whole communities and legions of voters. This is the essence of the anticorruption agenda in polities, contemporary or historical, that have been shifted by leadership action from a deep acceptance of corrupt behavior toward a robust approval of new noncorrupt norms.²¹

In addition to these relatively large-scale attitudinal changes that are fundamental to any anticorruption campaign, now there are a number of ways in which em-

ploying modern technology can assist battles against the corruption scourge.

Alongside committed political will, technological innovations can be effective in tackling grand corruption, but they are best positioned to assist efforts to minimize corruption at the petty level.²² Indeed, in many corrupt settings, the ubiquitous smartphone enables even the least privileged to access rules and regulations and thus to match wits and knowledge, for the first time, with bureaucratic insiders. Needing to bribe for services that are a citizen's by right, not favor, could in this manner become an impost of the past.

Putting nearly all licensing or permitting operations online is the simplest and most direct use of modern technology to moderate or defeat petty corruption. If interactions are completed online via user-friendly interfaces (preferably on a mobile telephone), a client can obtain birth certificates, marriage licenses, and all kinds of documents from what in India is called the permitting Raj without being hit up for bribes or "tea money." In theory, all supplicants seeking a bureaucratic transaction would be treated equally, by an algorithm or a computer. Because none could be favored, no application process could be expedited or slowed down without direct interference with the program. Applicants could also file for a permit using a number, rather than their names, which would mean that it would be even harder to discriminate for or against a particular person or group. This is the method that post-Soviet Georgia employed to end bribery and favoritism in university entrance examinations.

When routine bureaucratic interactions are automated and human oversight is reduced or eliminated, corruption recedes. This new method of limiting and enhancing a state's dealings with its citizens and clients could also be extended to immigration services and customs halls; there, processes of naturalizing citizens or im-

porting goods might be treated with more impartiality by nonhuman-mediated interactions. Advanced, algorithmically driven computer programs can limit the very discretion that has long enabled corrupt practices to flourish.

Extortionate efforts – by hospital clerks to admit an injured person, a principal to permit a pupil to enroll, or a policeman to wave a car with bald tires through a barrier, all for a fee – might also, with some clever technological adaptations, be reduced, if not eliminated, given sufficient political will from above. Petty corruption could be overwhelmed or greatly reduced if available modern technological resources were employed to substitute for face-to-face encounters (especially if they are in user-friendly formats such as smartphone apps).

Handheld devices and webcams can also permit citizens to gather audiovisual evidence of attempts at extortion by officials, by policemen at roadblocks, or by physicians and nurses in government hospitals selling medicines and supplies to patients. If a high- or low-ranking official asks for a bribe, a citizen can surreptitiously record the incident. Indeed, the very act of capturing these illegal but common abuses of authority can empower citizens and change their political consciousness even if the process only rarely leads to punishment.

Even though NGOs and civil society, working on behalf of citizens, do not always know exactly how to translate this sort of documentation into reform, it has helped to make parts of South and Central Asia and sections of sub-Saharan Africa more corruption-free than before. Mobile-telephone services such as Ushahidi (“Testimony”; a mobile data-gathering app used in nine countries) and Frontline SMS give local citizens the ability to track human rights violations and violators, note violent acts in real time, and reveal security breaches. Bribespot.com (which originated in Estonia) allows users to send anon-

ymous texts reporting bribes in eight languages, with compatibility for additional languages and nations coming soon. Ipaidabribe.com is well-used in India.

In future years, governments and civil-society operatives will increasingly utilize handheld devices to empower anticorruption endeavors. (Pakistan is a pioneer already.) As smartphones get smarter and as 4G and 5G (and perhaps one day 6G) wireless networks are extended, those technological advances will become less expensive and more accessible. The hope, therefore, is that their deployment will make it possible to disseminate information about corruption widely and to collect hard data about corruption and corrupt acts almost instantaneously. In Afghanistan, for example, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has sponsored an extensive scheme to track and monitor governmental financial transactions via mobile technology in an effort to deter officials from the wildly corrupt dealings that are otherwise common there.

When official data of all kinds are made accessible, astute civil-society actors can also uncover previously unknown corruption trends via data analysis. In Mexico, for example, a think tank examined the rolls of the public educational system and discovered more than 1,400 teachers who had allegedly been born on the same day in a single year. The ghost teachers were then purged from the rolls, depriving officials who had been pocketing their pay of easy money. Similarly, in Nigeria, investigators discovered evidence of serious money laundering by poring over property and company registers. Tax authorities in many countries are able to discover the real owners of more than eighty-five million companies worldwide by searching OpenCorporates, a British-founded web compendium of property registers from more than one hundred nations and political entities. The more data appear online, the more they

can be analyzed to expose – and hopefully to end – corrupt practices. (See the Panama and Paradise Papers, for example.) As Mungiu-Pippidi suggests, civil-society organizations and others can then monitor “how many public contracts go to companies belonging to officials or how many people put their relatives on public payrolls.”²³ Making data sources like these open and universally accessible through public or semipublic entities (such as governments or registers of commerce) always helps.

The use of modern opinion-polling methods can reveal how citizens evaluate local corruption and whether they see progress being made in reducing it. Transparency International’s Global Corruption Barometer Survey performs this function in a number of countries. The Latinobarometro and Afrobarometer instruments both also assess citizens’ views of graft on their continents. The Gilani Research Foundation does the same in Pakistan. More specialized surveys, such as Cyprus’s bribery survey, provide information that assists civil societies, governments, and donors in assessing the extent and varieties of corrupt behavior in a particular political jurisdiction. The international charity Oxfam provides trusted surveys about public services that help deter the proliferation of corrupt practices.

There is no end to the relevant and helpful data that can be accumulated through judicious polling of mobile-telephone subscribers, pedestrians on the street, shoppers in a market, and people gathered around a village water pipe. In one context after another, such data provide abundant evidence of public discontent with the corrupt practices of those who rule over societies and citizens smothered by the sleaze and alarmed by the stench of corruption. The question for civil-society and political reformers in each of those affected nation-states thus quickly becomes how best to transform mass resentment and mass

resignation (or resilience) into anticorruption energy that will bring about meaningful change for the better.²⁴

Most of the anticorruption initiatives discussed in this issue of *Dædalus*, and in the many books and articles previously published by its contributors, focus on the public and political spheres, in which private profiteering from official positions is both illegal and everywhere frowned upon culturally. For a long time, the academic discussion of corruption and anticorruption, where it existed at all, accordingly focused primarily on that public sphere. So did the international lending institutions and most foreign aid donors. More recently, however, both scholars and practitioners have come to realize that private corruption (primarily corporate corruption, but also corruption in quasi-public bodies such as the key athletic federations like FIFA and the International Olympic Committee) is as pernicious and destructive to citizen rights as purely state-based corruption. Impartiality – often honored only in the breach – is important in all of those spheres. Transparency International, in its definition of corruption, rightly refers to abuses of entrusted power rather than abuses only by persons in public positions.

Susan Rose-Ackerman’s essay in this volume seeks to distinguish between behavior that is unproblematically “corrupt” – petty payoffs, massive kickbacks, vote buying – and a host of other situations in which private wealth influences public (and private) choices. “I reject,” she writes,

an expansive notion of corruption that covers all cases in which private wealth affects public choices, either directly or indirectly. That is an impossibly broad definition.²⁵

She also notes that private wealth “distorts the exercise of public power, directing it away from majoritarian preferenc-

es and values.” But, she continues, labeling all such “distortions” as corrupt “sets an idealized standard of purity, implying that virtually all politicians and officials are guilty of corruption.”²⁶

Zephyr Teachout, by contrast, builds a much more expansive and critical argument. Her essay regards the largest multinational global corporate entities – such as Amazon, Google, and Facebook – as inherently monopolistic, and therefore corrupt because of the baleful influence that they and their vast wealth can exert on the actions and policies of nation-states. (Smaller corporations simply do not have the capacity for such corrupting influence.) Teachout argues forcefully for limiting the monopolistic power of those twenty-first-century trusts, at a minimum shielding the body politic from the untrammelled power of such behemoths. Amazon and Apple should be limited, she argues, in their ability to drive market prices lower or unfairly to prioritize search results. Comcast and Monsanto should be broken up. For Teachout, being monopolistic means being corrupt, since distorting public goods is often in the best interest of corporate expansion. “Corporate monopolies are a result,” Teachout explains,

of legal frameworks that enable excessive concentration of private power, limit the freedom to engage in moral action by officers and directors, and create overwhelming incentives to bend public power to selfish ends. . . . Multinational corporations, at a certain size and with enough power, are built to corrupt.²⁷

At a lesser scale, the acknowledgement of harm from business-to-business corruption, and its early curbing, flowed from Governor Sir Murray MacLehose’s reform efforts in Hong Kong in the 1970s. His pathbreaking Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) was established to rid the then-British colony of graft, to end official and police collu-

sion with Chinese criminal gangs, and to destroy both tender and permit fraud. But MacLehose and his associates also realized that what happened within the corporate sector – within law firms and manufacturing and service enterprises – was equally destructive of the public trust. For those reasons, the ICAC was instructed to investigate both forms of venality equally. In an additional breakthrough innovation by MacLehose, the ICAC was given a mandate to educate businessmen, officials, and schoolchildren about the varieties and dangers of corruption. Quah’s essay develops that theme well. Heywood, in another geographical setting, emphasizes the importance of preventing corruption well before it emerges. Pei reminds us, too, that Xi’s campaign against corruption focuses exclusively on punishment, not on prevention; Xi need not learn from Hong Kong because he has other, not necessarily anticorruption, goals in mind.

It is obvious that multinational companies are also among the biggest bribe payers globally. The U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act; the British, Canadian, Dutch, and French antibribery acts; and the OECD Convention Against Corruption curtail and catch some of this supply-side graft. The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, a global initiative to make foreign corporate payments to governments in the mining and petroleum and gas exploitation arenas open to inspection, tries to expose as much influence and concession buying as possible. As Moro’s essay makes clear, joining Teachout’s admonitions:

Companies must therefore do their homework, denouncing requests or demands for bribes, as well as implementing mechanisms of internal control and accountability that make it difficult or impossible to pay or receive them. It is also important for private-sector actors to work collectively so that

companies involved in corrupt practices are identified and isolated from the market and not allowed to assume a preeminent position.²⁸

The contributors to this issue of *Dædalus* do not uniformly embrace all of the above-mentioned frameworks or ingredients of anticorruption success. Indeed there is some spirited disagreement between authors, nearly all of whom are acknowledged and well-published authorities in the study of corruption as a phenomenon, regarding corruption as a social malady, as a weighty drag on development, and as a major contributor to the societal ills suffered by millions of the world's most impoverished peoples. Despite their different approaches to combating corruption, debates about the best way of effecting real improvements in corrupt nations, and concerns that prescribing exact curing remedies is premature, most of our writers consider a number of the factors already discussed in this essay as necessary, if not

sufficient, for the pursuit of an efficacious and responsible anticorruption program.

Robert I.
Rotberg

In addition to agreeing on some basic principles, our authors also suggest imaginative ways of advancing the anticorruption agenda. Rothstein prefers to make “war” on corruption and to let game and strategic military theory guide our efforts. Michael Johnston favors “deep democratization” – involving citizens fully in governing themselves – as the only path to defeating corruption. Mungiu-Pippidi wants international donors to contribute to the anticorruption project by imposing conditionality measures on their clients (such as compelling recipients to reveal the names and amounts of all procurement beneficiaries).

Overall, our authors combine theory and practice in order to offer a multifaceted anticorruption agenda of unparalleled ingenuity and promise that, when realized, could help to provide better social and economic outcomes to the many millions of people who live in deeply corrupt societies.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ For a discussion of corruption as a collective action problem, see Bo Rothstein, “Fighting Systemic Corruption: The Indirect Strategy,” *Dædalus* 147 (3) (Summer 2018): 35–49.
- ² For a good explanation of what systemic corruption entails, see Sérgio Fernando Moro, “Preventing Systemic Corruption in Brazil,” *Dædalus* 147 (3) (Summer 2018): 157–168.
- ³ Rothstein, “Fighting Systemic Corruption,” 45.
- ⁴ Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, “Seven Steps to Control of Corruption: The Road Map,” *Dædalus* 147 (3) (Summer 2018): 23.
- ⁵ Robert I. Rotberg, *The Corruption Cure: How Citizens and Leaders Can Combat Graft* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2017), 37.
- ⁶ This is Matthew Taylor's formulation in his essay in this volume. He draws on Bo Rothstein, Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, and Francis Fukuyama, among others. See Matthew Taylor, “Getting

- to Accountability: A Framework for Planning & Implementing Anticorruption Strategies,” *Dædalus* 147 (3) (Summer 2018): 66.
- ⁷ Moro, “Preventing Systemic Corruption in Brazil.”
- ⁸ Robert I. Rotberg, “Roadblocks and Bribes: Zimbabwe is Africa’s Shakedown State,” *Globe and Mail*, October 19, 2017, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/roadblocks-and-bribes-zimbabwe-is-africas-shakedown-state/article36657279/>.
- ⁹ Rothstein, “Fighting Systemic Corruption.”
- ¹⁰ Despite its high rating by the CPI and other indexes, Canada still suffers from various kinds of corruption. For the details, see Robert I. Rotberg and David Carment, eds., *Canada’s Corruption: At Home and Abroad* (London: Routledge, 2018). For the Corruption Perceptions Index, see www.transparency.org/.
- ¹¹ This paragraph draws on Rotberg, *The Corruption Cure*, 27 – 28.
- ¹² The phenomenon is well described in Sarah Chayes, *Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2015).
- ¹³ Moro, “Preventing Systemic Corruption in Brazil,” 162 – 163.
- ¹⁴ Susan Rose-Ackerman discusses corruption and electoral contributions trenchantly in her essay in this volume. See Susan Rose-Ackerman, “Corruption & Purity,” *Dædalus* 147 (3) (Summer 2018): 98 – 110.
- ¹⁵ Rotberg, *The Corruption Cure*, 109 – 175.
- ¹⁶ Mungiu-Pippidi, “Seven Steps to Control of Corruption,” 30.
- ¹⁷ Paul M. Heywood, “Combating Corruption in the Twenty-First Century: New Approaches,” *Dædalus* 147 (3) (Summer 2018): 83 – 97.
- ¹⁸ In his contribution to this volume, Michael Johnston is skeptical of transparency as an effective anticorruption strategy. See Michael Johnston, “Reforming Reform: Revising the Anti-corruption Playbook,” *Dædalus* 147 (3) (Summer 2018): 50 – 62.
- ¹⁹ Moro, “Preventing Systemic Corruption in Brazil,” 163.
- ²⁰ Minxin Pei, “How Not to Fight Corruption: Lessons from China,” *Dædalus* 147 (3) (Summer 2018): 225.
- ²¹ Rotberg, *The Corruption Cure*, 45 – 49. Johnston is again skeptical regarding the value of emphasizing political will in combating corruption. See Johnston, “Reforming Reform.”
- ²² Johnston and Mungiu-Pippidi argue against the utility of distinguishing or separating petty from grand corruption. See Johnston, “Reforming Reform;” and Mungiu-Pippidi, “Seven Steps to Control of Corruption.”
- ²³ Mungiu-Pippidi, “Seven Steps to Control of Corruption,” 28.
- ²⁴ This section draws, in part, on Rotberg, *The Corruption Cure*, 272 – 284.
- ²⁵ Rose-Ackerman, “Corruption & Purity,” 103.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ Zephyr Teachout, “The Problem of Monopolies & Corporate Public Corruption,” *Dædalus* 147 (3) (Summer 2018): 112.
- ²⁸ Moro, “Preventing Systemic Corruption in Brazil,” 163.