

Towards Understanding Corruption in Business and Politics A Conceptual Analysis

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Abstract

This article analyses policy and the theoretical and practical perspectives/sides of corruption as a growing tendency in politics and business since traditional times. From a social science perspective, it advances a thesis that is premised on the observation that much of traditional manners of behaviour come close to what is termed “corruption”. The challenge, however, is on setting limits as to how much corruption can be tolerated. In our analysis, these limits are arbitrary but necessary in such areas as how much help one can give family members within one’s own business organization, what is the dividing line between a “gift” and a “bribe”, how much “moonlighting” can an institution or institutions tolerate from their members, etc.

Keywords: Corruption, theoretical context, “gifts”, “bribes”, “moonlighting”, governments, bureaucratic corruption, Weber, economic history, African history

I. Introduction

This article surveys social science literature and makes a methodological and conceptual analysis to understand corruption as a topical issue in politics and business in global regions. Besides providing a review of the literature, it joins scholarly debates and conversations on corruption as an endemic vice in Africa and the world. The article analyses the theoretical and practical perspectives/sides of corruption as a growing tendency in politics and business since traditional times. It advances a thesis that is premised on the observation that much of traditional manners of behaviour come close to what is termed “corruption.” The challenge, however, is on setting limits as to how much corruption can be tolerated. In our analysis, these limits are arbitrary but necessary in such areas as how much help one can give family members within one’s own organization, what is the dividing line between a “gift” and a bribe, how much “moonlighting” can an institution or institutions tolerate from their members, and so on.

II. Understanding corruption: A conceptual analysis

Bribes exist in a variety of forms, but society can cut down the incidence of bribery. There are different kinds of bribes; among them are “gifts” that people often have to give to get what they are legally entitled to – this is known in certain literature as “harassment bribes” (Basu, 2011). As observed by Nyandoro (2020), corruption exists almost everywhere in some form or other, but it is deeply entrenched and widespread in developing countries. This resonates with studies by Hatti and Hoadley on India and Indonesia where elements of traditional public behaviour tend to fall precariously close to what in Western/Weberian terms are perceived as corrupt practices (Hatti & Hoadley, 2012, 2015, 2016, 2018).

Interesting academic and lay scholarship exists on the broad theme of corruption in both the developed and developing regions of the world. The growing interest in the topic by economic

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historians and development practitioners demonstrates wide concern about a global phenomenon that is threatening the sustainability not only of poor and small but big and wealthy economies. In this article, we contribute to the discussion on corruption and its multiple international/global dimensions by analyzing the phenomenon in a diverse world as we also attempt to suggest solutions to the scourge from a humanities or social science perspective. The nature and extent of corruption in the public, private, financial and non-governmental sectors have been widely discussed. Nevertheless, more needs to be done to emphasize the wide-ranging economic, financial, socio-political and humanitarian implications of corruption.

It is imperative that future generations should inherit a world with limits to corruption. If this is not done, economic and social development, particularly in the “third world”, will be forever compromised. In fact, increased “whistle blowing” through academic research, though not the only answer will have likely positive impact on policy formulation and help in the revitalization of the legislative framework designed not only to criminalize state capture or corruption for example, but also to prosecute people involved in it without fear or favour.

Since ancient times to date, corruption has come to be accepted as a universal phenomenon not easy to define. For Albanese et al. (2019), corruption and obscenity pose similar problems: you know them when you see them. Its causes are as varied as its consequences and for which remedies are numerous. In some circles, corruption is associated with situations when citizens do not have alternative means of securing what they want and therefore the only outlet for such citizens is seeking state officials’ help to secure what they need. One villager in Kazakhstan (Asia), for instance, sheds light on this kind of corruption by saying: “I do not like to give bribes.” She explained why and how she avoided seeking assistance from government officials to get things that apparently were beyond her reach. Instead of approaching government bureaucrats, when she needed money, credit, or employment, she in fact relied on her relative who was a successful private farmer (McMann, 2014).

Her experience illustrates a fundamental point about corruption, that is, individuals contemplate alternatives before deciding to engage in corrupt behaviours. Government officials’ demands, cultural norms, or economic needs do not automatically propel ordinary citizens into illicit exchanges with officials, as studies of corruption have implied. Rather, citizens consider whether relatives, groups in society, the market, or formal government programs can provide them with the resources they need (McMann, 2014). From this insight about alternatives to corruption, it is possible to make two arguments about the causes of corruption. First, when essential goods and services are not available from alternative sources, individuals engage in corrupt behaviour to try to acquire what they need from government officials. Second, market reforms (such as policies to decrease state economic intervention) can limit these alternatives and thus encourage corruption (McMann, 2014). The first argument reveals the absence of alternative goods and services as a cause of corruption, and the second argument explains why the absence exists. Together, the arguments constitute an “absence-of- alternatives framework” (and by extension an absence of rational theoretical basis) for studying corruption. Our paper seeks to fill this gap, and the Weberian model is a good starting point.

III. Max Weber on political or bureaucratic corruption

The term “corruption” refers to the misuse of resources or power for private gain or “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.” Categories of corruption include but are not restricted to bribery, embezzlement, facilitation payment, fraud, collusion, extortion, patronage, clientelism and nepotism (ODI & UK DFID, 2015). A commonly used distinction between political corruption and bureaucratic corruption is a good starting point to understand the Weberian model as it shows that political corruption takes place at the highest levels of political authority (Andvig & Fjeldstad, 2001; ODI & UK DFID, 2015). It involves politicians, government ministers, senior civil servants and other elected, nominated or appointed senior public office holders. Political corruption is the abuse of office by those who decide on laws and regulations and the basic allocation of resources in

a society (i.e., those who make the “rules of the game”). Political corruption may include tailoring laws and regulations to the advantage of private sector agents in exchange for bribes, granting large public contracts to specific firms or embezzling funds from the treasury.

The term “grand corruption” is often used to describe such acts, reflecting the scale of corruption and the considerable sums of money involved. By contrast, bureaucratic corruption occurs during the implementation of public policies. It involves appointed bureaucrats and public administration staff at the central or local level (ODI & UK DFID, 2015). It entails corrupt acts among those who implement the rules designed or introduced by top officials. Corruption may include transactions between bureaucrats and with private agents (e.g. contracted service providers). Such agents may demand extra payment for the provision of government services; make speed money payments to expedite bureaucratic procedures; or pay bribes to allow actions that violate rules and regulations. Corruption also includes interactions within the public bureaucracy, such as the payment or taking of bribes or kickbacks to obtain posts or secure promotion, or the mutual exchange of favors (ODI & UK DFID, 2015). This type of corruption is often referred to as “petty corruption,” reflecting the small payments often involved – although in aggregate terms the sums may be large. Political corruption and bureaucratic corruption are therefore related. For instance, corruption at the top of a bureaucracy increases corruption at lower levels (Chand & Moene, 1999; ODI & UK DFID, 2015).

Max Weber, in relation to political or bureaucratic corruption, formulated the concept universally understood as the Weberian model for organizing human society and activity. At the centre of Weber’s model is a discussion of bureaucracy, which he uses to describe organized social structure within a rational-legal society as one type (form) of power (Nyandoro, 2020). The institution of bureaucracy is designed to accomplish large-scale administrative tasks by systematically coordinating the work of many individuals. Added to rational-legal or bureaucratic power, Weber has observed two other types of power in organizations, namely the traditional and charismatic (Nyandoro, 2020). Of the three types of power as formulated by Weber in relation to what constitutes corruption, this paper emphasizes bureaucracy because of Weber’s advancement of a view of political or bureaucratic corruption. This view distinguishes between “corrupt” and “non/not-corrupt” behaviour. Important here is the fact that these specific characteristics of the modern bureaucracy determine several “political arena” expectations including such questions as what is deemed appropriate public behaviour (Nyandoro, 2020). Bureaucratic corruption can further be understood in the light of a clash of morality on the one hand and legality on the other. There is a contradiction between traditional values, which are a part of everyday life of a people, and norms of the larger society which stand out as compelling force. The idea of the modern division between the public and private office is, however, alien to a traditional culture and corruption finds space when this separation is not strictly observed (Hoadley & Hatti, 2020).

Any attempt to understand the nature and magnitude of bureaucratic and/or public corruption must therefore deliberately emphasize, among other things, the role of the state and its institutions. A state can be defined as a political association with effective sovereignty over a geographical area with monopoly in the use of legitimate physical force. Parliament as an institution/arm of the state must uphold the law and the constitution, which is an aggregate of fundamental principles or established precedents that constitute the legal basis of a polity/society, organization or an entity. The constitution guides the state and all institutions and agencies of government and, as an embodiment of the law, declares and defines the rights and duties or responsibilities of citizens under law. In order to make and enforce laws for the peaceful co-existence of the people within a given state, an institutional framework, which encompasses the armed forces, civil service, bureaucracy, the courts and the police, is essential. The state not only leads but also embodies the society, the individuals and the collective within the society. Therefore, for the state to function properly and play its constitutional entrenched role, institutions must co-exist with the political will by public office holders/bearers to adhere strictly to the dictates of the constitution, which should be the source of any institutional arrangement. Such institutions may be “good” institutions or “bad” and may be “strong” or “weak” institutions depending on the state and, to a large extent, the

sincerity of the dominant political players within the state (see Acemoglu et al. May 2004). In fact, politicians and state agents, who make and enforce the laws in the name of the people, may also be corrupt (Nyandoro, 2020).

Ledermann et al. argue that to be able to effectively analyze the determinants of corruption, it is imperative to concentrate precisely on its “institutional features” (Daniel Ledermann et al. November 2001). According to North (1991) “institutions are the humanly devised constraints (checks and balances) that structure political, economic and social interaction.” This definition re-emphasizes the assertion that institutions play a key role in determining the nature of interactions in each state. Institutions also tend to determine the distinction between a “gift” and a bribe. Primarily, the political structure, which has a big influence on the economic sector, also goes a long way in determining the social structure. This brings to mind North’s theoretical postulation that “institutions provide the incentive structure of an economy: as that structure evolves, it shapes the direction of economic change towards growth, stagnation or decline” (North, 1991).

Institutions are “a set of humanly devised behavioral rules that govern and shape the interactions of human beings, in part by helping them to form expectations of what others will do” (Rodrik et al. 2002). Here, we therefore see how institutional arrangements go a long way in building trust in a society as each player is aware that the other player is going to play fair with him or her. This trust, which can be used to prevent corruption (Lambsdorff, 2015), is a result of the fact that every member of the society is aware that there are consequences for every action taken and that there are rules and regulations to enforce such actions. It follows therefore, that if corruption and corrupt practices become embedded in the psyche of the people, particularly, the political class, every member of the society would want to cut corners and join the bandwagon; this behavior would gradually become the norm rather than the exception. This brings us to the issue of “corruption by greed and corruption by need” (Hatti et al. 2010). The former is widely associated with politicians and the elite class (a small group of powerful people who hold a disproportionate amount of wealth, privilege, political power, or skill in a society) while the latter is associated with the middle and the lower classes within who readily justify their corrupt acts not only by linking it with the fact that others above them are doing the same. However, they go a step further to say that they only engage in corrupt practices (in contrast to the woman from Kazakhstan) because of their poor social status and the absence of alternatives (McMann, 2014). The impression is that if they (collectively or individually) were in a better financial position than they currently are, they were not likely to be corrupt.

In developing the analysis of collective action, John Commons defined institutions “as made up of collective actions, which along with conflict of interests define the economy” (Commons, 1931). In his work, he studied the relationship between individuals and individual choice. For him, it is the collective actions or inactions of the people in relationship with one another in a given society that determines the economic outcome of the society and extent of what is perceived to be corrupt behavior by an informal or non-state collective/group of people. This readily leads to the idea of having an unwritten informal institutional arrangement that emphasizes trust, honesty, and loyalty, in the form of social capital (Putnam, 2000).

In most of Africa, and in the case of Nigeria, where much of the indigenous population is living in poverty, while the formal institutions can be said to be very weak, the same cannot be said of the informal institutions that is, if the informal institutions are defined along the line of social capital with its strong emphasis on the norms of reciprocity. The World Bank Group has also raised alarm as it considers corruption a major challenge to its twin goals of ending extreme poverty by 2030 and boosting shared prosperity for the poorest 40 percent of people in developing countries. The norm of reciprocity can influence one’s behavior when one senses a moral obligation to return a favour. It is this idea of reciprocity that brings about the much talked about patron-client system which is a very strong and sensitive issue among the Nigerian people (see Smith, 2007: 12-13). The whole idea of the so-called “culture of corruption” (Smith, 2007) actually stems from observation of this aspect of the Nigerian cultural heritage in which culture has often been used to explain or

excuse acts of corruption (see Larmour, 2012). It is, therefore, correct to conclude, as Smith (2007) and Olivier de Sardan (1999) did, that every individual in the populous and mostly poor West African nation is either a patron or a client to another individual. The average Nigerian, in an attempt to get out of the cycle of poverty, which is largely caused by corruption and misappropriation of resources (e.g. capital and extractive resources like oil), finds himself/herself becoming enveloped in the net of corruption and going ahead to justify his actions by hiding under the “man must survive” slogan – a term commonly used by the very poor to justify their involvement in corrupt practices. Such justification of corrupt and dishonest practices in a country with endemic corruption (Enakhimion, 2011) had the effect of grossly compromising economic institutions.

Economic institutions are said to be endogenous and are often brought about by collective choices (see Acemoglu et al. 2004). They determine economic outcomes that include the growth rate of the economy and the distribution of economic resources to the various groups within a country. Economic institutions also help not only to determine the economic potential of an economy but also to predict the outcome of economic actions. It therefore becomes easy for economic institutions to determine which group in the society will be better favored in the distribution and control of resources both in the present and in the future. History has shown that a minority group within any given society normally has a monopoly to the wealth of the country - be it in the form of a monarchy, a powerful tyrant or a few democratically elected representatives. Whether this minority decides to distribute the wealth to favor all within the society is another issue, but the dominant discourse suggests that systemic corruption which pervades this group and sometimes forces lower ranked citizens to use “gifts” and “bribery” to solicit for what they need and want is a major impediment to sustainable economic development (Political Corruption, L2046).

This brings us to the question of secured property rights (Acemoglu et al. 2004), a fundamental ingredient that must be present and protected if the ruling minority (which become powerful as a result of the fact that resources have been distributed by whatever means possible to its class) is serious about empowering the rest of the members of the society to curb corruption. The enforcement of property rights enables positive economic activities in any society leading to a more viable market and bringing about equality before the law as against arbitrariness. The absence of strong economic institutions guaranteeing property rights is thus another factor encouraging corruption. The absence of secure property rights coupled with the inability of the state to provide for both the present and future needs of its citizens therefore means that an alternative means of survival has to be sought thereby encouraging corruption. For example, the failure of the ruling class within the state to protect their income and fortune both in the immediate and in the future, create a kind of fear of not knowing what might happen as soon as the office holder leaves office. The mentality is therefore to accumulate as much as possible enough ill-gotten wealth (sometimes through soliciting for “gifts,” “presents” and “bribes”) while in office as a protection against the unknown. In corruption comments relating to India, black money and corruption have been identified to be the twin pillars of the modern Indian edifice characterized by bribes, nepotism, shady alliances between politicians, business and the media (Hatti & Hoadley, 2012). Such indulgence in corruption clearly underscores the absence of working or viable political institutional frameworks that are informed by some theoretical understanding of what constitutes corrupt behavior.

Political institutions and economic institutions are closely linked, with the former driving the latter (Acemoglu et al. 2004). The very fact that political institutions not only determine the form of government for any given country but also emphasize the restraint of such a government to corruption shows how important it is to have a good political institutional arrangement in place. This brings us to the two crucial components of political power, referred to as *de jure* (institutional) and *de facto* political power (Acemoglu et al. 2004: 6). Our interest in these two types of political power is because while the *de jure* political power, which derives its powers from the constitution,

is greatly associated with a representative type of government, the *de facto* political power does not.

A major factor encouraging corruption and preventing the fight against corruption from being executed with vigor is the issue of ethnicity. Political office holders are very quick to appeal to ethnic sentiments whenever they are accused/arraigned or arrested for corruption-related offenses. It is not uncommon to see ethnic solidarity groups demanding the release of such political office bearers/holders. The issue here now is not whether or not the accused politician is guilty, but that he/she is simply being prosecuted because he belongs to a particular ethnic group. Therefore, the soft state thesis of Gunnar Myrdal becomes very relevant. According to Myrdal (1968), “a soft state whether democratic or undemocratic is bedeviled with the inability to institute reforms or enforce social discipline” or social justice (see also Ogundiya, 2009: 286). It is a state where the legal system and its paraphernalia are moribund or at least ineffective. Even when framing policies, the authorities (under the control of political-bureaucratic elites) are reluctant to place obligations on the people, especially in matters of corruption (Myrdal, 1968: 101; Ogundiya, 2009). Our point of departure is that the thesis tends to give an impression that the political-bureaucratic elite care so much about the people/masses and are therefore not too willing to put so much obligations on them.

At times, those in political power in less advanced economies of the world pretend to make/grant some reforms and concessions, but in a very nominal sense. This partly confirms that, by contrast, political elites in advanced industrial societies exercise more power in the sense of producing desired outcomes than those in less developed countries (Rothman, 2001; see also Ekundayo, 2017). Elites in the poorer (less developed) countries of Latin America, Africa, and parts of Asia, thus, often behave as if they are creating new public policies and yet nothing changes (Rothman, 2001). The bureaucrats/bureaucracy in the latter case is in fact protecting itself while the state laws and rules are broken enabling the political elite to amass wealth which allows them to live the kind of lives befitting their “social status” both in and outside public office. It is simply a matter of “fair play even among robbers” (see Smith, 2007).

IV. Corruption in southern Africa: A comparison of perspectives

Southern African Corruption Compared with Indian and other Forms of Corruption in the World

The concept set forth in Hatti and Hoadley (2020) in *Understanding Corruption* builds upon a generalization of behaviour of bureaucrats in India and Indonesia. In many respects these copy or are set by patterns of traditional behaviour, i.e. “fixing” jobs for family members without reference to qualifications or experience, a hierarchical chain of command resembling that found at the village level, deference to older persons and those higher on the pecking order and so on. Thus, these forms of traditional behaviour clash with a “legal-rational” administrative system, popularized by Weber.

There is therefore a connection between traditional behaviour and the running of South Africa’s or Zimbabwe’s governmental administration in southern Africa. For example, to a large extent, former president, Jacob Zuma’s, conduct parallels that of a traditional Zulu chief in handling recruiting to positions (especially how the early 2000s KZN ANC recruitment drive and 2020s truck torchers helped ignite Zuma-aligned looting and corruption) (Ngalwa, 2021; see also Skeen, 2007), promotion, tax evasion (not tax compliant) and other aspects. Powerholders especially facilitate the tendering and contracting processes, but is it ever sufficient to declare interest and then proceed with involvement in contracts and projects? In Weberian terms these practices may or may not always border on (or embrace) corruption (Booyesen, 2011). Tenders and contracts are sometimes not given on merit. This, however, does not quite fit in with the demands of a legal-rational bureaucracy with its emphasis on qualifications, full-time employment, meritocracy, as well as the expectations of honest dealings, impartiality in personnel questions, and awarding contracts based on demonstrated merits.

South Africa under Zuma and, in the 2020s, under Cyril Ramaphosa (the fifth President of the Republic, who ascended the throne in 2018) has experienced various facets of non-Weberian or traditional corruption instead of the, for Western scholars, more normal approach using the Western/Weberian model (Hoadley & Hatti, 2020). Traditionally, it subscribes to loyalty to peer groups i.e. family, clan, caste et cetera, but what constitutes corrupt behavior is that the President and the political leadership in the country maximizes exploitation of positions for the gain by close individuals and peers. This is contrasted with the Weberian approach/model that emphasizes loyalty to organizations' rules and supports the use of whistle-blowers to unearth corruption (Hoadley & Hatti, 2020). Conventionally/customarily, there is a preference for using known go-betweens to avoid confrontation. Nonetheless, corrupt politicians in South Africa only use go-betweens for secrecy and to spread the blame unlike in Western systems where directness is considered a virtue. This though leads to impersonal relations since nothing is hidden (Hoadley & Hatti, 2020). It is traditionally morale in South Africa, just like in India, to subscribe to the bazaar model where price and quality are negotiated although the skewed market model with limited competition and/or access to information is immoral and perhaps corrupt. The Western/Weberian framework instead tries to promote behavior that conforms to known prices and fixed obligations (Hoadley & Hatti, 2020).

In Weber's terms, as in South African traditional culture, there is no difference between public and private assets with subordinates as they are surrogates of the ruler. Thus, this may not be associated with corrupt tendencies. However, it is deemed corrupt behavior if public assets are unofficially tapped for private use. In Western economic and political systems, though, the division between public and private assets is a basic and standard norm. Therefore, to facilitate transparency, an official is appointed manager of the organization's assets under stringent audit rules (Hoadley & Hatti, 2020). In non-Weberian tradition, there is enforcement and political will and a person's position in the hierarchy determines rules, hence none apply to apex. It is nevertheless perceived as corruption when one turns a blind eye to the breaching of rules inherent in a position. For Max Weber, the cardinal/fundamental principle is the existence of rules and regulations and the belief that rules will be enforced (Hoadley & Hatti, 2020). In most traditional African societies/polities (South Africa and Zimbabwe included), there is nonetheless no apparent limits to corruption except by tradition (a non-Weberian concept). But the Weberian notion allows for a reasonable extent of corruption through types of "gentleman's agreements" (Hoadley & Hatti, 2020) as reflected in most Western European countries.

Evidently, corruption is rampant in most countries (Sweden and Europe not excepted), and it is interesting that much of this is based upon the strength of traditions learned in childhood and correlated with what has been picked up in practice. To a great extent, much has been picked up in practice. Here comparisons can be of use. In contrast to this European example, Zuma does not differ from, say, Putin or Ji Ping, or any other so-called authoritarian rulers. The former President grew up in a South African political environment where political corruption was entrenched. Comparative experience does not however indicate that the historical South African political environment was especially likely to nurture a venal bureaucracy (Lodge, 1998). As a fairly industrialized and extremely coercive state the apartheid order may have been less susceptible to many of the forms of political corruption analysts have associated with other post-colonial developing countries (Lodge, 1998). Democratization and the advent of independence in 1994 have made government less secret, inhibiting corruption in certain domains but through extending government's activities opening up possibilities for abuse and corruption in others.

The extent of corruption in contemporary South Africa is largely inherited with some security and some autonomous administrative structures having a history of routine official misbehavior (Lodge, 1998). Corruption in South Africa has reached alarming proportions with roughly one-third of Africans and two-thirds of whites believing that there is more corruption since 1994 than under apartheid (Lodge, 1998). For former President Thabo Mbeki, it is incumbent on government unequivocally to affirm its seriousness and desire to stamp out corruption, but this is a serious challenge when the government itself engages in corrupt practices (Budhram, 2019; see

also Lodge, 2002). The effects of corruption in post-apartheid South Africa are manifold. Corruption now culminates in and amounts to endemic state capture, where the government's decision-making is influenced by a corrupt and politically connected elite. One good example is an Indian family, the Guptas, involved in orchestrating "state capture" or seizing control of state organs for corrupt purposes, and political and statutory powers misused to maintain a symbiosis of self-enrichment and power preservation (Budhram, 2019; see also The Conversation.Com, 2021). Another example is confirmed by the June 2005 incidents when Zuma's conflict with Mbeki reached a crescendo. Then President Mbeki dismissed Zuma from the vice presidency after the fraud and corruption conviction of one of his close colleagues, businessman Schabir Shaik and Zuma's financial advisor, who was accused of soliciting bribes from a French arms company on Zuma's behalf (Legassick, 2021). The judge in that case found that there was a generally corrupt relationship between Shaik and Zuma, who was subsequently charged with two counts of corruption confirming how rife the penchant for self-enrichment had become.

Similarly, in Zimbabwe the tendency for self-enrichment and power preservation steeped in so-called liberation entitlement is rampant (Nyandoro, 2022; Muzorewa & Nyandoro, 2021). Corruption existed in colonial times in Zimbabwe, but its magnitude in contemporary times though also deriving from inherited practice (as in South Africa) has assumed major proportions with negative impacts on social, economic and political development. In an African context, South Africa is unusual for the depth and experience of its administrative and political institutions and the degree of separation between them (Lodge, 2002). Political appointments within the upper echelons of the public service undermine civil service professionalism and may, therefore, facilitate corruption (Lodge, 2001). Nevertheless, in Zimbabwe, South Africa and other parts of the world (within the context of Weberian versus non-Weberian arguments) the experience of corruption can be opposed to mere perceptions of it (Lodge, 2001).

For Zimbabwe and parts of southern Africa, the complex context within which corruption is produced and the current understanding of corruption is a sufficient basis for the existence of the vice or perceptions of it (Moyo, 2014; Nyandoro, 2020). Corruption has become a way of life and a principal method for the accumulation of personal wealth. It is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon with many causes and effects, but importantly it assumes a range of forms and functions in different contexts (Moyo, 2014; Nyandoro, 2020). From this, there is no southern African version of corruption. Corruption in the region functions within what we have already observed as bureaucratic behaviour. It does not contrast significantly from Indian bureaucratic behaviour which has been illustrated by Hoadley and Hatti (2012, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2020). It thus appears there is no peculiarly identifiable African corruption that differs from say European or South Asian corruption. In our view and supported by literature, corruption has become so international that it is only the instruments, not the goals, that are ethnic or nationally defined. However, the nature and magnitude of corruption globally can be probed.

Nature and Magnitude of Public Corruption in the World

Public corruption has several international dimensions. It does not know borders; it is an affliction in the industrial advanced nations of America and Europe as well as the developing regions of Africa (e.g., Nigeria), Asia, and Latin America (e.g., Brazil, Columbia). Broadly speaking, corruption is a disease that eats into the cultural, political and economic fabric of society. "Corruption is one of the greatest challenges of the contemporary world. It undermines good government everywhere, fundamentally distorts public policy, leads to the misallocation of resources, harms the private sector, private sector development and particularly hurts the poor" (Amundsen, 1999).

While corruption in the world (also seen as state capture) is very depressing, it is not a new phenomenon in countries like the United States of America (USA) as evidenced by the history of the reconstruction period following the Civil War in the US, which, by any standards, was characterized by mega corruption (White, 2017). In the US, however, reliable expert opinion data

on public corruption is scarce at the state level, so scholars typically have depended on the number of public officials indicted for corruption by federal prosecutors to assess corruption (Boylan & Long, 2003; Meier & Holbrook, 1992; Goel & Nelson, 1998). Today, even countries perceived as relatively corruption-free according to Transparency International's Perception Index seem to be accepting as normal forms of political and/or business behavior generally described as "corruption" when practiced elsewhere.

Many multinational companies and cartels have contributed to "internationalizing" corruption (Hoadley & Hatti 2020; Augustino, 2020). "Business as usual" in the West – foundations engaging in multimillion-dollar transactions without audit or tax declarations, political parties whose donors remain anonymous even though they may be hostile to the country, a corps of professional lobbyists openly representing special interests, and so on – would be considered proof of the "endemic crookedness" of developing world countries. What differentiates one country from another regarding corruption is how willing citizens are to eradicate or participate in it. A common observation regarding the prevalence of corruption is that it occurs whenever people holding positions of power and authority in public and private spheres use their influence to breach prevailing moral and ethical norms. By engaging in such behavior, they choose rewards ("gifts") for themselves and their friends and families instead of what is best for the common good. Self-interest takes priority over the interests of the community or country, even though it goes against the terms of their employment and/or duty. Thus, largely "corruption" is about defining limits to activities otherwise common or even required in everyday life.

V. Conclusion

It can be stressed that there is an interesting combination of Southern African and global versions/variants of corruption. Wherever it exists, as in the Zimbabwean and South African examples, it functions rather sporadically within the bureaucratic behaviour analysed by Max Weber for Western society. It nevertheless contrasts and shares some similarities with the Indian bureaucratic behaviour or aspects of it as Hoadley and Hatti have tried to illustrate in their articles. Corruption is thus a salient feature of human condition in any organized society and business enterprise. Much of traditional manners of behaviour come close to what is termed "corruption," but the limits are difficult to set as some societies in the world perceive "gift-giving" and "presents" as corruption, but others see these as a part of traditional and cultural norms and values. Clearly, corruption is almost inevitable where risks are low and the returns high. It can be noted that traditional public behaviour comes precariously close to what in the West (or according to Max Weber) might amount to corrupt practices.

The conceptual understanding of corruption and its international perspectives or the different/divergent theoretical cases of corruption across the globe covered in this paper suggest that the vice is systemic/endemic in politics and business, and requires national, regional, continental and international solutions. Any practical measure aiming at eradicating corruption and like tendencies of course requires an understanding of what constitutes "gifts" and what constitutes corrupt behaviours in Weberian and other terms. The article thus contributes immensely to wide-ranging debates and literature as well as contemporary or current methodological and conceptual social science analyzes to understand corruption in Africa and other global regions.

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