A Systems Model on Corruption and Anticorruption Reform

International, Domestic Pressure, and Government Strategies to Preserve the Status Quo

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Corruption is perhaps the biggest political and economic challenge of the twenty-first century. It stands at the core of, or closely by to, endemic poverty, political instability, organized crime, international terrorism, civic disaffection, economic decline, and a number of other issues damaging the quality of government and the quality of life of billions of people around the globe. Long gone is the time when it could be swept away as an issue solely affecting poor and underdeveloped nations, or when it was proposed to be functional to certain types of bureaucracies affected by pervasive red tape. Now it is finally recognized for what it is—the cancer of society.

Despite the evils its name now conjures, however, public efforts to curb corruption have largely missed the target, and more often than not they have ended up demonstrating a gross level of incompetence, or plain and sheer disinterest. Seemingly contradictorily, the crude political reality of the fight against corruption has gone on during the past 20 years hand-in-hand with the stark evolution of anticorruption scholarly production.

During this period of time, the anticorruption reform (ACR) subfield has seen its consecration in the emergence of an international anticorruption regime, which is, in turn, the public manifestation of a great body of work produced regarding policy advice and related elements. These, however, seem to have produced limited impact compared to the progress of studies focusing on the consequences

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of corruption properly speaking. Most contemporary reports on anticorruption interventions undertaken by national governments and international donors paint a bleak picture of the success level of the often-applauded technical progress made: "despite extensive resources being channeled into the fight against corruption, there are very few success stories to tell when it comes to the actual implementation of anti-corruption reforms."[1]

The objective of the present study is to address, from a theoretical perspective, the political challenges inherent to ACR and the real politics that stand in the way of actual reform. The analytic model suggested here shows that national governments have at their disposal a number of strategies to protect the status quo during different scenarios of anticorruption stress. As a result, the model describes a dynamic that sheds light on the reasons behind the current levels of implementation of national and international anticorruption initiatives.

The Problem with Anticorruption Reform

Traditionally speaking, the literature on anticorruption has been dominated by a normative approach based on the principal-agent model.[2] Succinctly put, this model sees corruption as a consequence of the limited information and actions available to leaders to control the behavior of public officials, thus resulting in abuses of the public trust. Whether the figure of "leaders" is embodied by the political elite, civil society, or international organizations, the model inevitably focuses on the best available strategies to reduce corruption through the adoption and implementation of public policies and other sociopolitical interventions.[3]

Addressing the intrinsically political nature of common anticorruption initiatives in the developing world, a secondary group of studies (which may be considered as the cleanups approach) addresses the emergence of anticorruption campaigns in countries affected by widespread corruption in the following terms: "The impetus to clean up corruption can be provided primarily by political exigency rather than by genuine interest in the efficient functioning of the nation's political and economic institutions."[4] Viewed from this perspective, anticorruption efforts are not designed following technical considerations, but rather the expected benefits they might produce in terms of political capital and concentration of power; thus they tend to be highly temporal, limited by the term in office of the political leadership that adopted them.[5]

Pushing the political resistance to technically oriented anticorruption reforms further, it is even possible to see the adoption of counterreform measures (from the enactment of regulations to constitutional reforms) that facilitate the practice of public malfeasance: the censorship of the media, intervention of the

judiciary and/or regulatory agencies, increased legislative powers to the executive branch, spread of special procurement types, and deactivation of formal channels for the monitoring of public spending, among others.[6] Thus it becomes apparent that at the center of the discussion regarding ACR stand the particular interests of the political leadership, but what forms do these take, and how are they manifested?

Just as any other policy, anticorruption requires the initiative of a senior official (or a politician with prerogative) to address malfeasance by introducing a coherent group of actions aimed at reducing corruption in a certain part of the public and/or private spheres. As government activities are never free, the simple idea of performing an action against corruption requires us to consider the inherent costs of that action as a starting point.

Already in the 1980s, Robert Klitgaard, an advisor on economic strategy, institutional reform, and anticorruption, was considering the magnitude of implementation embedded in the anticorruption idea in an effort to provide a grounded advice to policy makers. Considering the variety of activities and instruments that could be adopted to fight corruption, each one with its specific cost to the organization, Klitgaard suggested that it would be inefficient to invest in all of them without considering the relative impact they potentially offered.[7] As government, just like any other organization, does not have unlimited resources, it would be wise to invest in those activities that produced the highest margin of benefits in terms of anticorruption success; however, this success in turn needs to be considered in terms of benefits for the whole system. Corruption is not an evil by itself, only when considering its pernicious effects. Therefore, the cure for corruption should not be allowed to be more expensive to society (and not just in monetary terms) than corruption itself, and that is a real possibility when the marginal returns of anticorruption activities are considered, but the marginal returns of anticorruption efforts are not the only (or even the most important) element in the calculations of real-life politics. To stop at that would be to adopt the premise that social benefits and collective well-being are the only concerns of the leadership, when realistically speaking they usually are not. The whole concept of corruption entails the idea that social considerations are put aside in favor of private benefits. If the leadership is already engaged in illegal acts, the anticorruption drive will not just stop short of the maximum, but it will most likely stop much earlier than that. Klitgaard's evaluation of the appropriate length of an anticorruption campaign is perfectly reasonable when considering public administration from a normative perspective, but it becomes futile when the politics of corruption is considered.[8]

Before tackling the issue of efficiency in a scenario of corrupt leadership, let us consider an additional element to the equation. Taking a more realistic ap-

proach, it is usually considered that, besides the considerations of technical, financial, and political costs related to the adoption and implementation of anticorruption policies, there is also the element of political capital. Anticorruption, just as any other government activity, not only translates into costs, but as it impacts in society (hopefully in a beneficial way), it also creates benefits for the government in the form of political capital. This capital, when we drop the assumption of a virtuous and devout leadership, explains in theory the reason why certain policies are adopted while others are ignored. Not surprisingly, political capital is especially important in democracies, where it has the ability to directly translate into votes and power. Therefore, Klitgaard's idea of anticorruption efforts being efficient just as long as social welfare is attained could be converted into a more realistic statement: anticorruption efforts are pursued just as long as they are politically profitable for the leadership.[9]

While the above assertion is already difficult to contest, anticorruption policies are not just like other policies: they target the government itself (or at least the bureaucracy that supports it), contrary to most other policies that target in one way or another civil society. The contradiction or dilemma is obvious. Going back to the subject of efficiency in a scenario of corrupt leadership, there is a clear incompatibility between the objective pursued and the actors called on to address it. To give an analogy, it is equivalent to expecting a thief to arrest himself.

It could be added that, to convince corrupt politicians to ignore anticorruption recommendations, not only minority interests and patronage must provide higher political capital, but also political capital can be completely surrendered for higher rewards in the form of proceeds from corruption. We can take political capital completely out of the equation and expect a political leadership to reject any anticorruption activity that might create obstacles to his network of corruption or even prosecute it. Certainly, the relative weight of political capital against illegal incomes will depend on the subjective preferences of the political actors, but when the latter are prioritized, we could expect anticorruption reforms to completely stagnate; and this is a major peculiarity of anticorruption policies, for other types of policies do not introduce additional costs to their implementation beyond regular resources. Anticorruption policies effectively cost the organizational resources demanded to their adoption and implementation, and any surreptitious benefits the leadership may have been perceiving from corruption and the national anticorruption standards. All else being equal, they have a higher ratio of costs to political capital than most other types of policies.

Once we stop assuming that anticorruption reform is of any interest or benefit to the political leadership, and that even the contrary might be true (corrupt politicians stand to lose from reform), the implementation of campaign promises

and international conventions become less likely, while counterreform efforts become a real possibility. Just as Florencia Guerzovich, a consultant in open governance, social accountability, and anticorruption, describes, "[i]n all societies, there are stakeholders with vested interests who stand to lose from [anticorruption] reforms."[10] She then goes even further: "According to different Mexican anticorruption stakeholders, as no institutional anchor (or proactive advocacy tactics) made it mandatory or politically costly to roll back disclosure, executive officials have been willing and able to undo positive transformations."[11] This situation highlights some qualities of the government as a reactive and creative system, one that not only adapts passively to the demands of its environment but that is able to develop new mechanisms to defend itself and even change its surroundings. The international anticorruption movement tends to see national governments as actors facing only two options, either adopt its recommendations regarding anticorruption reforms, or ignore them. In reality, however, national governments have two additional options: they can adopt policies that decrease the prevention and control of public malfeasance, effectively making it easy for political leaders to benefit from corruption without fearing detection and prosecution; and they can also undertake actions against the international anticorruption movement, diminishing its strength, changing its focus towards other nations, or convincing it of the merits of their national anticorruption standards. Each one of these options will naturally entail a different consequence and will have a different degree of difficulty. Nonetheless, all four are perfectly possible alternatives, and to describe a government as being only able to execute the first two is an oversight that may very well explain why there has been so little progress in the academic field of anticorruption reform.

Therefore, it is possible to say that to acknowledge the existence of a leadership tolerant to corruption is to accept the possible existence of government actions aimed at defending (and even reinforcing) the existing anticorruption standards, against any or all actions taken by international and local supporters of anticorruption reform.

Without making assumptions about the honest or corrupt nature of the political leadership, its description in the terms discussed above is both realistic and consequential. It is realistic based on what it is widely known regarding the level of high-level corruption in most developing countries around the globe, and of the level of adoption and implementation of anticorruption policies described earlier. We may call the governments of these countries apathetic, tolerant, or even corrupt; what matters is that we recognize the reality of the lack of incentives they have to adopt actions against malfeasance. It is consequential because it opens the door to analyze government activities, not just in terms of what they do

to implement policy recommendations, but also in terms of what they do to resist implementation. The key to begin exploring the consequences of this reasoning will be, then, to explicitly adopt a description of the nature of national governments in relation to their interest in controlling corruption.

Ivan Krastev and Georgy Ganev ask and respond exactly in line with the present discussion:

> Why anticorruption programs are not getting support from "the top" is the central question of this paper. It is not a study of anticorruption policies, it is a study of incentives. The "highest levels of the state" do not support anticorruption efforts (1) because they have incentives to be involved in corruption, or (2) because they do not have incentives to initiate anti-corruption campaigns even when they do not have incentives to be involved in corruption.[12]

These hypotheses will be at the core of the theoretical framework to be developed in the rest of this article. For an honest government, anticorruption policies should only be attractive in direct relation to the political capital they can generate for them; for a corrupt government, anticorruption policies should be avoided in direct relation to the interests they threaten. The discussion turns now to the construction of a model responsive to this premise.

A Systems Model of Corruption

The above discussion directly points to the inherent lack of incentives for anticorruption reform among the political elite and suggests the pervasiveness of political struggle behind demands to curb public malfeasance through challenges to the status quo. Translating this argument to a theoretical model, systems theorist David Easton's *Dynamic Response Model of a Political System* is found to fit perfectly the tenets of the present study.[13]

At its core, Easton's model aims at providing an essential structure to understand the different forces that might create stress for a political system and subsequently identify the coping mechanisms available to it to keep a minimum level of support flowing. Over this basis, the model incorporates multiple elements that are part of the dynamic processes embedded in the system; but at the end, all of them follow the author's interest to address the survival of the political system.

The political system (which from here on will mean the national government, interchangeably, for the present purpose) works as a machine that converts inputs into outputs. The inputs will take the form of demands or support, both coming from civil society or international actors. In turn, the system produces outputs in the form of government actions aimed at affecting in one way or another civil society and the international scene (that is, the system's environment).

These "exchanges" or "transactions" between the government and the actors in the environment represent the life of the political system, the way a country is run. However, to work properly, demands and support need to be held constant lest the government begins to see its stability threatened.

While Easton sees both types of inputs crucial for the life of the system, the issue of survival is directly linked to the level of support.[14] Although demands are the raw materials for government actions, as the leadership needs to create in response to specific necessities, without support the government is completely unable to perform any action. Therefore, the constant flow of support from society (or international actors) to the government is essential for the leadership to keep exerting its authority; without it, it would be hard to say it is still in power, especially when its subjects and peers are unwilling to recognize it a commanding role. Support, in these terms, is indistinguishable from political capital.

Demands tend to affect the government only in relation to the way they affect the level of support when left unattended. When demands increase, they usually reflect a situation that is unsatisfactory for society. If it is a reaction to previous government actions, such as the wrong monetary policy or corruption in defense procurement, this will usually be joined by a decrease in the overall support for the political leadership. If, on the other hand, demands are raised as a reaction to the emergence of new circumstances, such as a drought or the aggressive stance of a foreign nation, the level of support will depend on the government response to the challenge. This is the nature of demands which by themselves do not seem to create what Easton calls stress to the political system; demands are only stressful when the system fails to respond appropriately.

This brings us to the issue of output failure, which describes "the failure of the authorities to produce adequate outputs" in response or anticipation of societal and/or international demands, and the consequent "decline in the input of support."[15] In other words, output failure represents the scenario created by those government actions that are widely considered unsatisfactory, delegitimizing the leadership. It happens when either social circumstances, perceptions, or both, are incongruent with public demands. When demands increase, and support decreases, the political system has difficulty in making decisions and having them accepted, and so it is said to undergo stress. If left unattended for too long, stress may cause the authorities to be replaced, the regime to be modified, and even the political community to fall apart.

There can be no doubt, then, that corruption represents an unofficial output, but this is not all. Currently, most countries have included in their legal systems provisions to criminalize at least some (if not all) forms of corruption, making malfeasance in public life an illegal and criminal act. The identification of corrup-

tion as a problem of government sets it apart from other types of outputs. While the latter may increase or decrease support, depending on the quality of the output produced by the system and the way it impacts the circumstances and perceptions of the citizens, corruption is widely and almost unanimously considered to be detrimental to society, and thus it always creates stress to the government by decreasing the level of support and raising demands. In the words of Easton, "[e]xtended reliance on this kind of outputs. . . may well prove more effective in stressing than in maintaining a system."[16]

The description of corruption as a specific type of output that is by nature stressful to the political system brings us back to the discussion about output failure, which was said to "represent the scenario created by those government actions that are widely considered unsatisfactory, delegitimizing the leaders."[17] Connecting the dots and employing the terminology developed in Easton's work, we would then understand corruption as a kind of output that generates a scenario of output failure, which in turn creates stress for the system by giving rise to an increase in demands and a decrease in support. Furthermore, if such a situation remained unchecked, it could develop into the unsustainability of one or more of the political objects (authorities, regime, political community) and the consequent failure of the system to guarantee its own survival.

If the above description of corruption is accepted, it is possible to argue that corruption produces stress on the political leadership following four different patterns or scenarios: corruption perception; corruption in processes; corruption intolerance; and prolonged stress.

Corruption perception. In the first scenario, a corrupt activity involving one or more members of the ruling elite (the authorities) is perceived by domestic and/or international actors outside the public sphere (the environment, from now on); this situation is commonly referred to as a corruption scandal. Such output produced by the authorities is incompatible with the expectations of the citizens, and thus triggers the voicing of demands for anticorruption actions and a reduction of support for the government, causing stress to the system.

Corruption in processes. The second scenario shares with the previous one the implicit initial stage of a corrupt activity being undertaken by the authorities; however, in contrast to it being directly perceived by the environment, as in the cases of a corruption scandal, it is only perceived through its detrimental effects on the *circumstances* surrounding the individuals in the environment. These circumstances usually belong to the economic sphere, but they can take other forms. After the material circumstances in the environment are damaged by the incidence of corruption, the environment reacts in the usual pattern of withdrawal of support for the authorities and increase in demands; this time, however, the de-

mands are not aimed at corruption control, but at solving issues which are but the symptoms of corruption, for example, declining economic growth, political inclusion, access to justice, and others.

Corruption intolerance. The third scenario describes not a situation where corruption is directly perceived or indirectly suffered, but a shift of paradigm to one in which corruption is addressed by the environment *before* it occurs. This is the case of the emergence of the International Anti-Corruption Regime (IACR) and the general environmental shift towards more stringent rules and procedures to prevent and dissuade the engagement of public actors in malfeasance. Although the development of the IACR is gradual and has moments of higher and lower intensity, the general pattern is one where the environment experiences an evident decrease in the levels of corruption it is willing to tolerate, and as a result it tries to affect the implementation of ACR in domestic settings through different forms of influence and pressure. This influence and pressure are what we have been calling *demands*. When the authorities in turn fail to meet these demands through their engagement in appropriate anticorruption activities, support decreases and the system is again said to be under stress.

Prolonged stress. Finally, the pattern of corruption in systemic terms can further reduce support through the system's prolonged exposure to stress under any or all of the previous scenarios. In such a scenario, what takes place is not only a reduction in the level of support for the authorities, but also for the political regime in general. The level of stress exerted over the system, in this sense, affects not only the possibilities of a particular set of authorities to remain in power, but furthermore erodes the public support for the system of government, its institutions, and the legal structure of the country.

Through these four different patterns of effect, corruption creates problems for the normal functioning of government. Such scheme, certainly, departs drastically from the common and one-dimensional conceptualization of corruption, and allows us to study it from different perspectives depending on the scenario we wish to focus on, with its particular effects and dynamics. These scenarios will in turn provide the specific settings in which the political leadership will be forced to adopt strategies to defend the status quo against anticorruption demands.

The strategies, as advanced earlier, are to be regarded as coping mechanisms, and they take different forms following closely the characteristics and conditions of the stress scenario they are called to resolve. These elusive nonreform outputs that generate support and decrease demands are further elaborated in the following section.

Mechanisms for Coping with Anticorruption Pressure

As we have seen, the incidence of corruption creates stress for the political system under any one of four scenarios. Luckily, however, the political system has ways of securing the constant provision of at least a minimum level of support flowing, enough to keep the political system intact in order of priority: they are called the coping mechanisms, available to the system to deal with stress and guarantee its own survival. These coping mechanisms will explain how a political system manages to endure even after the government fails to tend to the demands of citizens and international actors.

In Easton's elaboration of his model, coping mechanisms are ubiquitous; they are mentioned sporadically, directly referring to specific mechanisms, and are not collected under a special title. Nonetheless, in explaining the fundamental categories of analysis employed in his work, Easton states that:

> We shall find that political systems accumulate large repertoires of mechanisms through which they may seek to cope with their environments. Through these they may regulate their own behavior, transform their internal structure, and even go so far as to remodel their fundamental goals.[18]

Coping mechanisms do not only (or even largely) aim internally at transforming the political system so as to adapt to public discontent, but they can also be directed externally at the sources of demands and support, that is, the system's environment. In this way, coping mechanisms are indistinguishable from outputs as they have been discussed earlier, with the only difference being that the former describe the system's response to actual or potential stress.

Therefore, we shall talk of coping mechanisms as those government actions that seek to secure support for the authorities without having to necessarily tend to the specific demands of civil society and/or international actors. In this manner, Easton's model relates to the argument of this study regarding the ways in which the government managed to avoid drastic changes in the national anticorruption standards.[19]

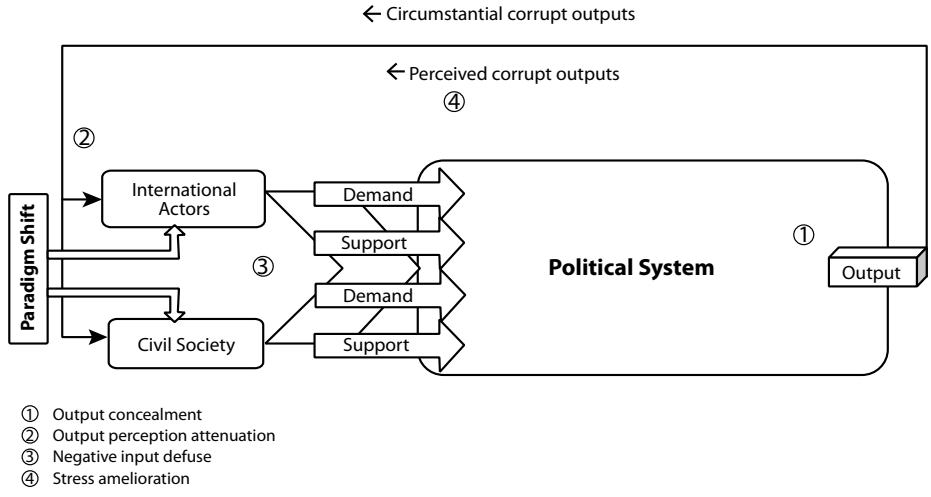

Figure. Coping points in the systems model of corruption and anticorruption reform. (Adapted from David Easton, A Framework for Political Analysis (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 110.)

Disregarding the specific scenario we wish to focus on, coping mechanisms are distributed throughout the model and its processes of output production/reaction, output effects (outcomes), and input production/reaction (demands and support), reflecting the entire cycle through which the systems interacts with the environment. Based on the moment of the cycle when coping mechanisms can be expected to be effective, these four stages will be called *coping points*: (1) output concealment, (2) output perception attenuation, (3) negative input defuse, and, (4) stress amelioration. The figure shows the position of the stages in the model.

The coping point of output concealment covers the exit channels of the political system and allows for the activation of mechanisms that target precisely those channels through which corruption may be discovered, and preemptively disable or obstruct them. In other words, at this point actions are taken against certain anticorruption enforcement efforts that deal with investigation and detection. Examples are the inefficient implementation of access to public information or financial transparency laws and the adoption and implementation of norms and actions against freedom of press. As a consequence, coping mechanisms embedded in this stage are corruption enablers to different degrees.

The coping point of output perception attenuation covers the entry channels of social perception, and allows for the activation of mechanisms that address the way corrupt (or corruption tolerant) outputs generate increased demands and decreased support, by suppressing or altering the way citizens and international actors perceive information of public malfeasance. Their objective is to cut the link between corruption news and attitudinal change, preventing the generation of

demands. Examples are smokescreens, the discredit of plaintiffs, and the fostering of corruption tolerance.

The coping point of negative input defuse covers the entry channels of the political system and allows for the activation of mechanisms that address the way demands are directed towards the government. They aim at cutting the link between popular dissatisfaction and the actual manifestation of demands, preventing their transfer into the system. Examples are the exercise of police repression/coercion, the creation of legal obstacles to advocacy, the manipulation of public priorities by agenda setting, and the allocation of responsibility on external actors. This is the final coping point before the government can be said to come under stress.

Lastly, the coping point of stress amelioration covers output failures after the system has come under stress and allows for the activation of mechanisms that serve as compensatory measures. There are two different kinds of mechanisms in this point: symbolic measures, which describe the production of outputs that aim at changing the perception social actors have of the way the government is handling the issue, without actually implementing them in any effective way; and genuine measures, which aim at generating support through the effective satisfaction of demands not related to the original source of stress. Examples of the former are public promises, adoption of ineffective policies, and conduction of mismanaged investigations; examples of the latter are clientelism and other forms of economic stimuli, alternative populist gratifications, political concessions, scapegoat convictions, and nonpartisan investigations/prosecutions. The multiplicity of mechanisms, of which each coping point introduced only a sample, suggests the very real problem of pushing for ACR without having full political will behind them.

Possibilities for Reform: Types of Environmental Pressure

Coping mechanisms are essential to understanding the possible ways in which the authorities are able to protect the status quo for years and even decades, getting past corruption scandals, periods of economic crisis, and the emergence of new global trends such as the international anticorruption movement. Those mechanisms available to the political leadership, however, are only as effective as the amount of support they can stimulate and the types of demands they succeed in repressing. Information on the strength with which civil society and international actors pressure the political system is just as important in understanding why certain mechanisms are successful while others are not. Certainly, civil society and international actors do not exert pressure over the government in only one

way, but will also be found to have different strategies available to them depending on the intensity of the specific case, the scenario where it is embedded, and the resources available at that moment in time. Each strategy or activity in turn has a relative amount of effectiveness attached to it in terms of its potential to stress the system; what this amount is, however, is a matter of empirical analysis, but a basic typology can be laid down.

Direct pressure. The first category of the available forms of impact to environmental actors includes those activities that are commonly considered to exert unmediated pressure over the government. For local actors, these are public exhortations, popular criticism, protests, advocacy/networking, and legislative initiatives. On the side of the international community, the activities available under this category are public exhortations, international conventions, international agreements, and aid conditionalities.

Indirect pressure. Diminishing in their capacity to produce stress on the system, activities addressing the anticorruption status quo in an indirect manner work more as instruments that stimulate pressure rather than exerting it themselves. Available to civil society, these activities are media coverage, technical corruption-related reports, and corruption awareness. On the side of the international community, the activities available under this category are technical and financial assistance, international cooperation, and technical corruption-related reports.

Influence. The third and final category of impact available to environmental actors is of the subtlest kind. While direct and indirect pressure can usually be traced for their effects (or the lack of them) on the stability of the status quo, to talk about influence is to focus on all those activities that have anticorruption concerns at their core but are so ubiquitous that their impact is not explicitly recognized, and thus can barely be said to even exist. Nonetheless, small traces of their existence can be found almost everywhere in the political system. For both civil society and international actors, these activities involve the general dissemination of corruption awareness and anti-corruption principles and information targeting not members of the environment, but public officials. The objective of this influence is to affect the perceptions of the government itself in relation to the social, political, and economic costs of corruption.

Conclusions

The discussion undertaken here regarding the theoretical possibilities for ACR highlights the difficulties faced by reformers when considering the presence of coping mechanisms available to domestic authorities. The fact that the latter

can actually and effectively repel demands for reform and roll them back whenever implemented, forces the literature on ACR to recognize and accept the existence of incentives to maintain the anticorruption status quo, and to build its theoretical models on that fact. Without dwelling on the actual incentives that different sets of authorities have to hinder ACR, the core of the issue is that such a situation exists, and to turn a blind eye to it condemns any effort to formulate anticorruption recommendations utterly useless. It would be very much like preaching to a completely uninterested choir: while in anecdotic cases it might have worked, there is no scientific logic to keep funding a project that resembles a missionary effort.

For political leaders in corruption-ridden societies, public office represents not only political power, but also a way of profiting economically. There, both political capital and corruption profits need to be considered as embedded in the structure of incentives for political life, and the current international anticorruption movement wastes its time and money appealing to only the former, disregarding the latter. And that is why the implementation of ACRs has been continuously disappointing for the past 20 years.

In addressing the inherent constraints of ACR, the present study also identified some strategies available to nongovernmental reformers that, although more scant, inflexible, complex and costly than those available to preserve the status quo, provide an opportunity to employ the resources of the international anticorruption movement in a more effective and efficient way, informed by realistic assessments of social and political contexts. Following the systems model of corruption and anticorruption reform developed here, the most opportune strategy can then be identified based on the state of the system, the current levels of stress, and the resources and willingness of actors present. The rest is up to the expertise and power of the environmental actors to execute the selected strategy, and the further production of research regarding the processes implicit in it. If such a systematic approach is taken, then the state of ACR may see in the future an existence that the past has so far denied.

Notes

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