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JOURNALISM AND REPORTING OF CORRUPTION:

Time to let go of old habits?

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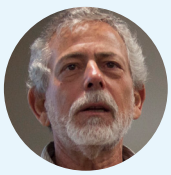

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In the throes of an incredibly powerful confluence of difficult phenomena affecting billions across the world—war, climate change, post-covid recovery, rising debt and shocks to the global economy—it is easy to understand why some think there are bigger things to worry about today than corruption.[1] The word corruption, for so long brandished by journalists around the world to signify endemic problems with specific societies, today seems almost like a hollow rebuke to an enemy that nobody cares about. In many countries, corruption reporting is now becoming subsumed under a wave of ambivalence to news content, evident in the 32% to 38% of respondents polled from across the world actively avoiding news content.[2] From the point of view of a journalist, it is incredibly frustrating when one's efforts fail to inspire public action, even if the definition of investigative journalism merely implies such an ambition.[3]

Despite this public disinterest, journalism is currently experiencing a golden age in reporting corruption, and efforts to tame the vice have multiplied, achieving significant success. The Pandora Papers, the largest collaboration of investigative journalists on a single project in the history of the world, laid bare secrecy structures serving the global elite, criminal and

1 Although there is no single agreed upon definition of corruption, for the purposes of this paper, we define corruption as the abuse of public power for private gain.

2 Digital News Report 2023, Reuters Institute for the study of Journalism, 2023, available at https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2023.

3 For the purposes of this paper, we are using the UNESCO definition of investigative journalism, which is "the unveiling of matters that are concealed either deliberately by someone in a position of power, or accidentally, behind a chaotic mass of facts and circumstances - and the analysis and exposure of all relevant facts to the public."

otherwise. Investigative journalists from around the world have produced breathtaking accounts of corruption in their countries, aided by better data science and improvements in open-source investigative technology. A former United States President is facing criminal charges for various crimes of concealment and corruption. Countries in the global south are speaking up against a "rigged" international financial system. The story about the different kinds of corruption, those involved, and those victimised by corruption is being told with more clarity every day.

But are newer news formats, deeper insights and braver journalism increasing the value of journalism to the public in dealing with corruption? Why doesn't the public's imagination seem to be captured by media reporting on corruption? What can be done to better achieve this goal? The tea leaves are yet to settle enough for there to be a clear answer, but there are a few possible reasons why investigative journalism is not doing this consistently. This paper examines them with examples from Kenya and across the world.

Kenya's big talk on corruption has yielded little

Kenya's 2013 election had all the signs of a new dawn for the country. The country had just elected its youngest ever duo of President and Deputy President. Its economy had experienced some of its best years, and while corruption was a major concern for the country, there were herculean efforts made both in the public sector and by civil society to help Africa's sixth largest economy turn a corner. Immense expectations lay on the shoulders of Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto to take governance of the country's resources to the next level, especially given that their mandate sprang from a new constitution that gave independence to the country's investigative agencies.

Soon however, old habits and a new, more voracious appetite for public funds began to emerge. Within the space of just two years, the country's papers had reported on at least three major corruption scandals, with the amounts embezzled going into billions of dollars. The most naked examples of this lay in the country's appetite for large infrastructure projects funded by new sources of capital.

Kenya's standard gauge railway project connecting Uganda to Kenya's port in Mombasa, which when first mooted was believed to cost between 400 and 500 million US dollars, suddenly was reported to be costing 3.8 billion. A slew of brilliant reports in the legacy media, together with litigation by civil society groups to make the key contract between Kenya and a Chinese company public, gave the country every impression that the official watchdogs had caught a scent of grand corruption and would reveal all in due course. Instead, for ten years Kenyans heard only prevarication at the highest levels of government and reluctance at lower levels to reveal what Kenya had committed to paying.

At 3.8 billion dollars, the standard gauge railway was Kenya's biggest financial commitment for a single project in its history since independence. Sources from within government revealed to the press that the country risked losing its port to China if it couldn't keep up with the loan repayments.[4] Kenya's new government published the loan agreement for the project which gave the impression that the country had signed up to a bad and possibly corrupt deal, but beyond this there has been no public inquiry, no interdictions, and no arrests emerging from the debacle.

4 George Omondi, Mombasa risks losing its port as audit finds it was used to secure SGR, The East African, December 20, 2018. Available at https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/business/mombasa-port-at-risk-as-audit-finds-it-was-used-to-secure-sgr-loan-1408886.

This isn't the only instance where no consequences have flowed from media reporting on corruption. A 2015 corruption scandal where millions of Kenyan shillings had been misappropriated by a government parastatal meant to empower the nation's youth, similarly led to nothing. In 2017, Christine Lagarde, then IMF Managing Director, noted that "When cheating is rewarded, and when elites are seen to play by different rules, trust will give way to cynicism, and social cohesion will fragment."[5]

The media's role regarding corruption has largely been to expose where it lies and who is responsible. The expectation of journalists is that various agencies tasked with fighting corruption will then pick up the story and take steps to dispense justice on behalf of the public. Lagarde's words speak to the dystopian context that countries like Kenya are in when there is no action. The media suffers as a result, because despite public trust in the media, confidence that media revelations will lead to official action withers.

If, despite constant media reporting, there is no official action taken against mismanagement and corruption, then the word corruption itself loses its meaning as something abhorrent or taboo. This has far-reaching impact. Not only does the normalisation of corruption undermine the very institutions mandated to fight it as well as the media that reports about it, but that normalisation also facilitates cultural shifts encouraging vices that eventually may completely undermine the very pillars of society.

In 2016, three years after the standard gauge railway scandal in Kenya, the Aga Khan's East Africa Institute published its 'Kenya Youth Survey'. Close to 2000 young people from across the country were polled on their views of their country. The evening that the survey was published, news piece after news piece reported the most glaring statistic from the survey: 50% of the respondents said that corruption was acceptable if they didn't get caught.

While the statistic was shocking, it certainly shouldn't have come as a surprise. Kenya's median age is 19. It stands to reason that a significant percentage of the country's population has little context on a brief moment in Kenya's recent history when corruption was taboo and reports of corruption led to action either by government or by popular civil society.

That time was not so far in the past. In early 2003, at the dawn of a new regime that had just wrestled power from Kenya's 24-year-old dictatorship, not only were Kenyans excited about what lay ahead, they were determined to fight old, stubborn habits of corruption. When police officers attempted to extract bribes from the driver of a public service vehicle, its passengers conducted a citizen's arrest of the policemen. When the then minister for transport declared that every public service vehicle must be fitted with seatbelts, have a carrying capacity limit and speed governors, investors in the public transport sector initiated a strike, parking their vehicles. A determined citizenry walked to work en-masse for months, determined to break the will of transport operators who were infamous for law-breaking and endangering the lives of their clients. These stories may not have been investigative exposes, but they recorded incidents that would form part of the new regime's early mythmaking. Yet it was journalism, this time specifically of the investigative nature, that began to expose cracks in the façade of a government elected to break with a past in corruption. In 2004, investigative journalists working for *The Daily Nation* broke the story of a scheme to steal billions of Kenya shillings via security-related contracts, that came to be known as the Anglo-leasing scandal.

5 Christine Lagarde, "Corruption Disruption", IMF blog, December 8, 2017

Public outrage led to resignations of implicated senior government officials and to their prosecution alongside well-connected businessmen. This was unprecedented in Kenya. Investigative journalism was at the centre of efforts to fight corruption, setting the ball rolling in this case. Journalism's role in exposing grand corruption almost became a given, as yet more scandals and high-powered individuals were exposed over the years.

The impact of investigative reporting in those early days became rarer as the years wore on. Why?

In those 19 years before the youth were surveyed, almost ten billion dollars are believed to have been misappropriated or lost through corruption. In only a handful of the corruption cases that had been reported on did the country's enforcement agencies act and impose criminal sentences. For a crime so well covered that government institutions post signs outside their premises stating that "this is a corruption free zone", there has been little to show for it. In Kenya's 2022 election, candidates facing various corruption-related charges were running for office, since candidates are not barred as long as an appeal is ongoing. The Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) recommended that 241 candidates should be disqualified from running in the elections, but in the end only five were.[6]

Corruption: The 'catch-all' term?

The steady stream of journalistic reporting on corruption may itself warrant deeper introspection, especially if these reports have contributed to the normalisation of the vice. Journalists have used the term corruption as a catch-all term for transgressions that may seem corrupt at first, but turn out to be pretenders to this ignominious title.

Kenya's storied standard gauge railway project may seem to Kenyans as emblematic of corruption, yet it serves as an example of those instances where not everything described as corrupt is, at least legally, corrupt. Prior to the commissioning of the first phase of the construction of the railway, it was announced to the public that trains running on the new track would be powered not by electricity as had been sold in glossy pre-election posters, but by diesel. The sleek images of bullet trains that had been used to sell this project were in fact a series of boxy cabs devoid of any of the imagined technology. This left some in the public feeling like they had been promised a far better product than they received, strengthening claims that the deal itself was corrupt. However, the decision itself seems to have been recommended in a feasibility study done by the China Road and Bridge company, the company contracted to construct the line and procure trains on behalf of Kenya's government. That the same organisation conducting a feasibility study (it conducted it for free) would then receive the contract to construct the line may be unseemly but is a firmly established Chinese business practice.

That Kenya signed on to such a lopsided deal may have been negligent, but was it corrupt? That has yet to be proven. Reporting in the case of the standard gauge railway may have built public expectations that the revelations in the press would lead to action, but more careful reporting might help the public understand that not every transgression that leads to public loss stems from corruption.

6 Hourehold, Katharine (2022). Corruption convictions no bar to running in Kenya's election. https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/corruption-convictions-no-bar-running-kenyas-elections-2022-07-27/

Yet, because corruption has and does permeate many sectors of society, it isn't difficult to understand why journalists of every sub-genre would be tempted to use the term corruption to describe actions that undermine the public good, especially where some form of personal gain is suspected. There are few sectors of public life that elicit such suspicion (warranted and otherwise) than the centrepiece of democracy, an election. This is not just a Kenyan phenomenon. Increasingly there are indications that corruption's influence on voting has been talked up in the press more than occurs in reality.

Elections, scandals and trust in media reporting

The United States of America has long postured itself as a haven of democratic values and has played an outsized role in the corruption conversation globally. However, at the time of writing, for numerous reasons, a sizeable chunk of its population is considering making former President Donald Trump its President again. Trump has been the subject of perhaps the greatest amount of scrutiny of any elected president in that country's history, and for good reason: from the debacle of his not releasing his tax returns prior to the 2016 election, to the findings that have led to more than three dozen criminal charges including corrupt concealment of a document and conspiracy to obstruct justice. By the storied standards of the United States, Donald Trump seems unelectable. Trump isn't a pure example of a country's normalisation of corruption, but Americans were treated to an inordinately high amount of corruption-related reporting surrounding him as part of the "Trump bump" news phenomenon.

The political reportage around Donald Trump exemplifies yet another possible reason why corruption doesn't capture the public's imagination as it once did: trust or a lack thereof in journalism produced by the news media itself. In June 2023, *The Atlantic's* Tim Alberta published a stellar long-read titled "Inside the meltdown at CNN."[7] The article gave readers a true inside look into the withering fortunes of media giant CNN, as witnessed by Alberta who spent months embedded with the office of Chris Licht, then CNN's CEO. While the article gives a blow-by-blow account of one media executive's failed attempts to resurrect CNNs dying reputation, ratings, and profitability, Alberta also paints a complex yet startlingly accurate picture of what happens when the public, or in CNN's case *a public* loses trust in a news brand. CNN was perhaps the hardest hit among household media companies, but it was not the exception as far as a loss of trust from the public in its reportage. The 2016 US election peeled back masks revealing the motives of the news media. A comprehensive study on the media's coverage of both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump found overtly and consistently negative overtones in news articles. Trump's penchant for lying on the soapbox was matched to Clinton's own foibles, with the only moderated coverage being over the state of the race. The report succinctly puts it this way:

7 Tm Alberta, Inside the Meltdown at CNN, The Atlantic, June 2nd, 2023, available at https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2023/06/cnn-ratings-chris-licht-trump/674255/.

> It's a version of politics that rewards a particular brand of politics. When everything and everybody is portrayed as deeply flawed, there's no sense making distinctions on that score, which works to the advantage of those who are more deeply flawed. Civility and sound proposals are no longer the stuff of headlines, which instead give voice to those who are skilled in the art of destruction. The car wreck that was the 2016 election had many drivers. Journalists were not alone in the car, but their fingerprints were all over the wheel.[8]

For example, Trump's failure to release his tax returns and Hillary Clinton's emails dominated a very significant 17% of all news coverage i.e., one out of every six articles were about either the emails or taxes. What the media largely failed to do was to analyse each candidates' policies and plans as deeply as it covered the controversies surrounding Trump and Clinton. There seems to be an illusion that negative coverage equates to coverage that leans into the imperative of professional skepticism that every journalist must adhere to. It may come from one of journalism's oldest analogies, that "if a dog bites a man, that's not news. But if a man bites a dog…", which elevates anomalies in society to newsworthy items. Better still, the saying "bad news is good news" describes the media's penchant for looking for a hole in the sky.

The demobilising effect of exposing corruption

Studies have closely documented the paths through which journalism, media reporting, and government transparency can inspire the fight against corruption. An independent media that ensures the timely publication of information on government revenue flows and operations, is a necessary condition for public demand for accountability and reducing the scope for corruption with impunity. Countries with a freer press have lower levels of corruption, and changes in press freedom seem to impact corruption levels. Journalistic efforts to collect, compile, verify and make sense of relevant information make knowledge accessible to audiences that rarely follow the goings-on of government sufficiently close to make informed decisions. Greater media reach, laws requiring members of parliaments to disclose information on finances and conflicts of interests, and a greater social and political integration in the international community seem to strengthen the anticorruption potential of press freedom. [9]

However, exposure of corruption may also under some circumstances breed resignation rather than indignation. The demobilising effect of exposing corruption can be understood in light of the logic of collective action, since citizen mobilisation depends upon evidence that others will do the same. In contexts in which corruption reaches systemic levels, citizens may perceive most others to be corrupt and therefore find it unlikely both that citizens will mobilise against corruption and that legal systems will effectively punish wrongdoers.

8 Patterson, Thomas E. "News Coverage of the 2016 General Election: How the Press Failed the Voters." HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series RWP16-052, December 2016, available at https://www.hks.harvard.edu/publications/news-coverage-2016-general-election-how-press-failed-voters.

9 An attempt to provide an overview of this rich body of work, including work on barriers to engagement against corruption discussed below can be found here: Bauhr, Monika and Marcia Grimes.(2021). "Democracy and Quality of Government" in Bagenholm et al (eds) The Oxford Handbook of Quality of Government. Oxford: Oxford University Press.https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/33431/chapterabstract/290559694?redirectedFrom=fulltext

If corruption stories contribute towards cementing citizens expectations of most other people being corrupt, it may lead to political resignation and alienation rather than indignation, protest and voting out of rascals.[10] Such disillusionment coupled with dissatisfaction with public service delivery may also in the end feed authoritarianism and support for populist radical right parties.

Capturing Public Imagination?

Intrigued by the puzzle of why a widespread distaste for corruption does not necessarily translate into citizens exercising their right to protest or voice complaints, and why citizens sometimes refrain from using their electoral right to punish corrupt politicians, numerous studies document important barriers to engagement and reasons for information avoidance. Access to information is most certainly important for demand for accountability. Yet citizens engagement may be hindered by partisanship biases, clientelist ties, and loyalty structures. If corruption allegations are just seen as part of a political game, there are good reasons for partisans or those embedded in loyalty structures and patronage ties to let information fly under the radar and simply disregard it. Other factors, such as the politician's ability to attract investment, build successful coalitions, generate economic growth, or make otherwise popular decisions may be more important to most citizens. In many parts of the world, citizens may also see the prospects of finding a non-corrupt politician as a utopian idea rather than a prospective reality. In such contexts citizens may simply lack the possibility to imagine corruption in check. Therefore, every effort to help citizens imagine what the opposite of corruption is may contribute towards capturing public imagination. What is quality of government? And how do you recognise it when you see it? Quality of government has been defined in different ways, but one of the widely used definitions is impartiality in the exercise of public power.[11] Interestingly, many attempts to define quality of government are more encompassing than simply describing the opposite of corruption.[12] For instance, while it seems impossible to exercise public power impartially and also be corrupt, it is quite possible to be partial without being corrupt. Defining and describing opposites of corruption may help citizens recognise trustworthy public service delivery when they see it or at least imagine what it entails.

10 Bauhr, M., & Grimes, M. (2014). Indignation or Resignation: The Implications of Transparency for Societal Accountability *Governance*, *27*(2), 291–320. https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12033 See also Persson, A., Rothstein, B., & Teorell, J. (2013). Why Anticorruption Reforms Fail—Systemic Corruption as a Collective Action Problem. *Governance*, *26*(3), 449–471.;Chong, A., O, A. L. D. L., Karlan, Dean, & Wantchekon, L. (2015). Does Corruption Information Inspire the Fight or Quash the Hope? A Field Experiment in Mexico on Voter Turnout, Choice, and Party Identification. *The Journal of Politics*, *77*(1), 55–71; Bauhr, M., & Charron, N. (2018). Insider or Outsider? Grand Corruption and Electoral Accountability. *Comparative Political Studies*, *51*(4), 415–446. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414017710258 Cheeseman N., & Peiffer, C. (2022). The Curse of Good Intentions: Why Anticorruption Messaging Can Encourage Bribery. *American Political Science Review*, *116*(3), 1081–1095.

11 Rothstein, B., & Teorell, J. (2008). What Is Quality of Government? A Theory of Impartial Government Institutions. *Governance*, *21*(2), 165–190. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0491.2008.00391.

12 See also Heywood, P. M. and Kirby, N (2020) Public Integrity: From anti-corruption rhetoric to substantive moral ideal. *Etica Pubblica: Studi su legalità e partecipazione*, 1(2), pp. 11–31. (doi: 10.1400/281574)

It is also important to note that there are substantial within-country variations in the quality of government. A large-scale public opinion survey in Europe, the European Quality of Government Index (EQI), reveals that regions that operate under the same jurisdiction and national level institutions can still vary quite dramatically when it comes to the extent to which citizens encounter corruption in public services in sectors such as education, health care and law enforcement.[13] Such variations in quality, impartiality and corruption in public service delivery are noteworthy reminders that local institutions, traditions and engagement matters, even if overall national structures and institutions remain the same. Such variation also exists within state administration, where an otherwise corrupt government can harbor institutions that operate with integrity. Such "pockets of effectiveness" or "islands of integrity" may help visualise that institutions are malleable at least in the medium to long term, as opposed to necessarily stuck in predetermined trajectories and capture public imagination on what and where things can be done differently.[14]

In light of what we know about the dangers and sometimes devastating effects of an indiscriminate elite mistrust, public imagination may be inspired by stories that more closely describe the practices that lead up to, or in themselves constitute, an abuse of public resources. Although corruption may be a useful word to attract attention and make the headlines, more precise descriptions of the forms of malfeasances and lack of accountability that the narrative exposes may be helpful. Using words that more closely describe related practices such as discrimination, lack of impartiality, appallingly bad job performance, lack of trustworthiness, distortion of facts, also recognising that corruption can have both legal and illegal forms, may add nuance and caliber expectations on government action. It may also help observers imagine that anticorruption efforts have to reflect the diversity in forms of corrupt practices and that prosecution is just one option and not always possible. Importantly, investigative journalism can not only call for the use of existing laws, but also inspire the passing of new laws, if existing laws cannot deal with the problems observed. Different forms of corruption may also lead to different levels and forms of demands for accountability and also be responsive to different types of anticorruption reforms.[15] Some forms of corruption have negative effects on citizens' daily lives while others are far removed from the public eye and effects are more long term and indirect. Investigative journalists have reached important progress when it comes to revealing the latter form, yet sums of money lost or stolen is abstract information about money few have ever seen, which still may not sustainably motivate engagement among the vast majority of citizens. Describing and illustrating the link between an abstract sum of money lost and concrete consequences such as services withheld may be difficult to do yet may also have the potential to reach wider constituents.

13 Charron, N., V. Lapuente, M. Bauhr & P. Annoni (2022) "Change and continuity in quality of government. Trends in subnational quality of government in EU member states". Journal of Regional Research https://recyt.fecyt.es/index.php/IR/article/view/95282. To access the data see: https://www.gu.se/en/quality-government/qog-data/data-downloads/european-quality-of-government-index

14 McDonnell, Erin Metz, and Luiz Vilaça, 'Pockets of Effectiveness and Islands of Integrity: Variation in Quality of Government within Central State Administrations', in Bågenholm et al. (eds), The Oxford Handbook of the Quality of Government, Oxford Handbooks (2021; online edn, Oxford Academic, 14 July 2021), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198858218.013.32, accessed 25 July 2024.

15 Bauhr, M. (2017), Need or Greed? Conditions for Collective Action against Corruption. Governance, 30: 561-581. https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12232.

Furthermore, gripping corruption stories are oftentimes individualised stories of villains and heroes. Individualised narratives risk characterising corruption as a story of individual morality and thereby conceal and ultimately protect the institutions and systems that allow corruption to thrive. In the case of the Pandora Papers, narratives that tied offshore companies to individual stories of illicit wealth and nepotism helped expose systems along with individuals, but striking the right balance between the two may help stories make a more lasting impact. The risk of placing individual morality and illicit wealth at the center is that it may lure audiences to believe that simply getting rid of a couple of crooks will provide a long-lasting solution to the overall corruption problems. When this is shown not to be the case, and if old crooks are replaced by new ones, it may contribute to breed resignation rather than a willingness to continue to call for more comprehensive reforms. Furthermore, when stories of individual morality and honesty come to dominate the news, the risk is always that such agenda benefit the most blatant liars at the expense of those that may still seek to uphold the principles of playing by the rules. Research suggests that institutional reforms can contribute towards containing corruption, including increasing the share of women in elected office (at least in democracies) and recruiting public bureaucracies on merit as opposed to political connections.[16] In light of this, reporting on how the government fares when it comes to creating institutional conditions for containing corruption seem just as important as reporting on corruption scandals or money lost post hoc. There seem to be more room for critical approaches and intriguing narratives surrounding these institutional reforms, how they contribute towards reducing corruption, and under what conditions they fail to do so.

Increasingly, new digital media platforms allow citizens to engage in anti-corruption activities, including crowdsourcing platforms and websites, whistleblower platforms and tools and portals that give citizens access to government information. News media organisations are studying and piloting new models of journalism, both investigative and non-investigative that attempt to include their audiences more solidly in story ideation, storytelling and the provision of information that paints a more nuanced picture of corruption, helping the audience member place themselves in the issue but doing so with a sense of agency around what to do about it. Gamification of content serves as one example where news media companies are reaching out to audiences to help them consider the subject of corruption beyond reporting of the hard facts thereof. For example, Africa Uncensored piloted a card game that turns instances of corruption into trivia questions; the objective being to get younger audiences interested in the history and impact of corruption in Kenya. These initiatives can have a different impact on corruption than has previously been imagined through the lens of prosecution, punishment and the structures that support this approach to dealing with corruption. Addressing it in these newer ways may help raise the social cost of corruption, making the public's imagination of corruption one where their own value system comes under threat. This broadens the tools that are at the public's disposal when dealing with corruption. Also, the larger challenges raised by the use of digital tools and digital transformation, including the use of AI in anticorruption efforts, would perhaps inspire imagination on new opportunities to engage in anticorruption efforts.[17]

16 Bauhr, M., Charron, N., & Wängnerud, L. (2024). Will Women's Representation Reduce Bribery? Trends in Corruption and Public Service Delivery Across European Regions. *Political Behavior*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-024-09925-x; Esarey, J., & Schwindt-Bayer, L. A. (2018). Women's Representation, Accountability and Corruption in Democracies. *British Journal of Political Science*, *48*(3), 659–690. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123416000478; Dahlström C, Lapuente V (2017). Organizing Leviathan; Politicians, Bureaucrats and the Making of Good Government. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

17 See CMI/U4, *Exploring AI for Anti-Corruption*, available at https://www.u4.no/publications/artificial-intelligence-a-promising-anti-corruption-tool-in-development-settings/shortversion.

Conclusion

How can investigative journalism and the media better capture public imagination about corruption and avoid resignation and cynicism? That seemingly straight forward question defies a straightforward answer. However, we offer some reflections on how a better understanding the causes and consequences of public resignation in the face of corruption may inspire ideas on how to dampen cynicism and alienation. Those idea include engaging with the barriers to citizens' engagement in the fight against corruption, describing the differences between different types of corrupt practices and specifying their particularities and consequences, explaining and characterising what quality of government is to help citizens imagine opposites of corruption, avoiding stories only on individual morality, scrutinising the anticorruption potential of institutional reforms, and finding ways to harness digital engagement and transformation. If any of these can help better inspire public imagination and engagement, we have come some way.

It is a difficult time for the media, but one of opportunity as well. The opportunity lies with people who feel and experience agency in their dealings with government or in their consumption of the press. When achievements seem limited, it may help to recognise how much worse it would be if there were no anticorruption efforts whatsoever. Imagining such a counterfactual world may make our own world seem less bleak. No elegant answers have yet emerged about how to activate citizenry across the world to this cause, but if there ever was a time when this solution felt close, it would be now. "Through chances various, through all vicissitudes, we make our way."

MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

KAMEL AYADI

Founding Chairman of the Global Infrastructure Anti-Corruption Center MENA (GIACC – MENA) and member of the Board of Directors of the World Justice Project, Tunisia

Kamel Ayadi is an international consultant and civil society activist in the fields of anti-corruption, ethics, governance, corporate social responsibility, and social accountability. He has served in a number of high-level positions, including Minister of Public Service, Governance, and Anti-corruption; Chair of the Authority on Financial and Administrative Control; Secretary of State; Senator; and Chair of the Regulatory Authority of Telecommunication. After having served in leadership positions in numerous NGOs, including President of the Tunisian Order of Engineers, he was elected in October 2003 as the president of the World Federation of Engineering Organisations (WFEO, 100 member countries). He also served for six years as the Founding Chair of its standing Committee on Anti-corruption. He is the Founding Chair of the World Leadership and Ethics Institute, Founding Chair of the Tunisian Centre for Strategic Thinking on Economic Development. He is also the Founding Chair of the Global Infrastructure Anti-corruption Centre's for the MENA region.

SHAMILA BATOHI

National Director of Public Prosecutions, South Africa

Career Advocate Shamila Batohi has served as South Africa's National Director of Public Prosecutions (NDPP) since February 2019. Advocate Batohi began her career as a junior prosecutor in the Chatsworth Magistrate's Court in 1986 and steadily advanced to become the Director of Public Prosecutions in KwaZulu-Natal. She was seconded to the Investigation Task Unit established by President Nelson Mandela in 1995, investigating and prosecuting apartheid-era atrocities, and later served as the first regional head of the Directorate of Special Operations in KwaZulu-Natal, investigating and prosecuting serious organised crime and political violence. Immediately before her appointment as NDPP, she served as a Senior Legal Advisor to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in the Hague.

MONIKA BAUHR

Professor at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Monika Bauhr is a Professor at the department of Political science, University of Gothenburg and a research fellow at the Quality of Government Institute. Bauhr investigates the causes and consequences of corruption and quality of government. She studies the link between democracy and corruption, the role of transparency and access to information, women representation and the nature of different forms of corruption and clientelism. She also investigates how corruption influences public support for foreign aid, international redistribution and the provision of public goods more broadly. She has previously been a visiting scholar at Harvard University, Stanford University and the University of Florida in the US and the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. She has also served as a consultant and participated in public events relating to climate change, corruption and development policies. Between 2014 and 2017 she has been the Scientific Coordinator and Principal Investigator of the ANTICORRP (Anticorruption Policies Revisited: Global Trends and European Responses to the Challenge of Corruption), a large-scale multidisciplinary research program, involving 20 institutions in 15 European countries, funded by the European Commission. She is also a co-editor of the recently publishedOxford Handbook of the Quality of Government.

MARTHA CHIZUMA

Former Director-General of the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), Malawi

Martha Chizuma served as Director-General of the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) in Malawi until 31st May 2024, the first woman to hold that position in its history. She is currently consulting on governance with a focus on anti-corruption. Her three-year tenure at the Bureau galvanized anti-corruption efforts in Malawi. Among other initiatives, the Bureau dealt with high-level corruption from both the previous regime and the government of the day. She prioritised asset recovery both as a deterrent and to provide restitution. Martha holds a master's degree in law from the UK and bachelor's degree in law (Hon) from Malawi. Before joining the Bureau, she served as Ombudsman of Malawi from December 2015 to May 2021, repositioning the Office of the Ombudsman to serve the whole population of the country, not just handling complaints from public servants. During her tenure there, the Ombudsman's office won awards as best public service delivery body, best institution amongst constitutional bodies, and overall best public service body in Malawi. Martha has also held various positions in the judiciary and private sector.

IZABELA CORRÊA

Secretary for Public Integrity at the Brazilian Office of the Comptroller General

Izabela has been dedicated to the themes of integrity and anti-corruption academically and as a practitioner for over fifteen years. She is currently serving as the Secretary for Public Integrity at the Brazilian Office of the Comptroller General. Prior to that, she was the Postdoctoral Research Associate for the Chandler Sessions on Integrity and Corruption. She has also served in the Brazilian Central Bank (2017–2021), and in the Brazilian Office of the Comptroller General (2007–2012), where she led a team of public officials that oversaw the development and implementation of high-impact transparency and integrity policies. Izabela holds a PhD in Government from the London School of Economics and Political Science and a master's degree in political science from the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) in Brazil. She is a member of the Chandler Sessions and the managing editor of its paper series (2021-2024).

JAVIER CRUZ TAMBURRINO

Compliance Officer of the Chilean Central Bank, Chile

Javier Cruz Tamburrino is the Compliance Officer of the Chilean Central Bank. His main responsibilities include, among others, designing and implementing an Annual Compliance Plan, coordinating and articulating the compliance activities with the Prosecutor's Office, the Comptroller's Office, the Division Management Corporate Risk and the other areas of the Bank. Prior to joining the Central Bank, Javier Tamburrino served for nine years as Director of the Financial Analysis Unit (UAF), a public service whose mission is to prevent Money Laundering (ML) and the Financing of Terrorism (FT) in the Chilean economy, also acting as National Coordinator of the ML/TF Preventive System of Chile.

TODD FOGLESONG

Lecturer and Fellow-in-Residence Munk School, University of Toronto, Canada

Todd Foglesong joined the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy at the University of Toronto in 2014. He teaches courses on the governance of criminal justice and the response to crime and violence in global context. In cooperation with the Open Society Foundations, he is developing a peer-based system of support for government officials that seek to solve persistent problems in criminal justice. Between 2007 and 2014, Todd was a senior research fellow and adjunct lecturer in Public Policy at Harvard Kennedy School (HKS). Between 2000 and 2005 Todd worked at the Vera Institute of Justice, creating a center for the reform of criminal justice in Moscow and founding Risk Monitor, a non-governmental research center in Sofia, Bulgaria that supports better public policies on organized crime and institutional corruption. Before that, Todd taught political science at the Universities of Kansas and Utah.

GUSTAVO GORRITI

Founder and Editor of IDL-Reporteros, Peru

Gustavo Gorriti leads the investigative center at the *IDL-Reporteros*, in Lima, Peru. He was Peru's leading investigative journalist before having to leave the country, largely because of his reporting. During the April 5, 1992, coup, he was arrested by Peruvian intelligence squads and "disappeared" for two days until international protests forced President Alberto Fujimori first to acknowledge his detention and then to release him. Gorriti had earlier investigated, among other things, the drug ties of the man who became Fujimori's de facto intelligence chief. After several months of mounting threats and harassment, Gorriti left Peru for the United States, where he was a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the North-South Center. In 1996, he settled in Panama and went to work for La Prensa. Gorriti's investigative reporting there, however, had a similar effect, and the government attempted unsuccessfully to deport him. After Fujimori lost power, Gorriti returned to Peru in 2001. Gorriti was a Nieman fellow in 1986. He received the Committee to Protect Journalists' International Press Freedom Award in 1998.

JIN WOOK KIM

Inaugural Chief Prosecutor of the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO), South Korea

Jin Wook Kim was the inaugural Head of Korea's Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials, completing his term in January 2024. Prior to that appointment, he was head of the international affairs department at the Constitutional Court of Korea (2020–21), and head of the education department and research department, at the Constitutional Research Institute (2016–20). He holds a master of law from the National University of Seoul, where he also graduated in archaeology and art history. He holds an LLM in public law from Harvard University.

JOHN-ALLAN NAMU

CEO and Editorial Director of Africa Uncensored, Kenya

John-Allan Namu is an investigative journalist and the CEO of Africa Uncensored, an investigative and in-depth journalism production house in Nairobi, Kenya. Africa Uncensored's ambition is to be the premier source of unique, important and incisive journalism. Prior to co-founding Africa Uncensored, he was the special projects editor at the Kenya Television Network, heading a team of the country's best television investigative journalists. He has received numerous awards for his work including the CNN African Journalist of the Year and joint journalist of the year at the Annual Journalism Excellence Awards by the Media Council of Kenya.

BOLAJI OWASANOYE SAN

Research Professor, Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies and Immediate Past Chairman, Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) Nigeria

Owasanoye started his career as an assistant lecturer at the Lagos State University. He moved to the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS) in 1991 and became a Professor of law 10 years later. In August 2015, he was appointed as the Executive Secretary of the Presidential Advisory Committee Against Corruption (PACAC) before being appointed to the ICPC in 2017. He was involved in advocacy for passage of major anti corruption bills in Nigeria including Nigeria Financial Intelligence Agency Act , Proceeds of Crime Act, and reenactment of the Money Laundering Prevention and Prohibition Act and the Terrorism Prevention Act, amongst others. At the continental level he participated in drafting and advocating adoption of the Common African Position on Asset Recovery by the African Union in 2020 and served as member of the UNGA/ECOSOC established FACTI Panel in 2020-2021. His portfolio of consultancies include Nigerian federal and state agencies, as well as international development agencies such as the World Bank and USAID, DFID and UNITAR. In 1997, he co-founded the Human Development Initiative (HDI), a non-profit organisation. In 2020, He was awarded the rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) and national honour of Officer of the Federal Republic (OFR) in 2022.

ANNA PETHERICK

Associate Professor in Public Policy at Blavatnik School of Government, United Kingdom

Anna Petherick is Associate Professor in Public Policy and Director of the Lemann Foundation Programme. Since her DPhil on the topic, Anna has researched corruption, gender and trust, and advised policymakers on the topic. She wrote the UNODC "The Time is Now: Addressing the Gender Dimensions of Corruption" report, published in 2020, and has presented on the topic of gender and corruption at the United Nations General Assembly. Anna is also co-Principal Investigator of the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT) project. Prior to becoming an academic, Anna wrote a column for The Guardian that fused longevity and wellbeing research (how to die as late as possible, and until then stay as happy and as physically young as possible), and another column about the social dimensions of climate change for the journal, Nature Climate Change. She was a science and then foreign correspondent at The Economist, and a section editor at the journal, Nature. Anna holds a BA (MA) in Natural Sciences (Evolutionary Genetics, Population Modelling) from Cambridge University.

KATHLEEN ROUSSEL

Former Director of the Public Prosecutions, Canada

Kathleen Roussel is a Special Advisor on Trade Compliance with the Canada Border Services Agency and the former Director of Public Prosecutions, a post she held for 7 years from June 21, 2017. Kathleen was Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions from 2013 to 2017. Previously, Kathleen served as Senior General Counsel and Executive Director of the Environment Legal Services Unit at the Department of Justice (Canada), from 2008 to 2013. From 2001 to 2005, she was the Senior Counsel and Director of the Canadian Firearms Centre Legal Services, before joining the Department of Environment's legal services later that year. Before joining the public service, Ms. Roussel worked as a criminal defence lawyer. She has been a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada since 1994 and graduated from the University of Ottawa Law School in 1992, having previously obtained an Honours Religion degree from Queen's University. She also currently serves as Chair of the OECD's Working Group on Bribery.

AGUNG SAMPURNA

Former Chairman of the Audit Board of the Republic and Lecturer at the University of Indonesia, Indonesia

Dr Agung Firman Sampurna was the Chairman of the Supreme Audit Agency for the period 2019 – 2022. Previously, he served as Member I of BPK-RI for the period 2014 – 2019, Member III for the period 2012 - 2013, and Member V for the period 2013 - 2014. Agung Firman Sampurna once led the Main Auditorate of Finance State (AKN) III (2012 – 2013), AKN V (2013 – 2014), and AKN I (2014 – 2019). Recipient of the Mahaputra Naraya Star, Agung Firman Sampurna is heavily involved in training activities, research, seminars and various other forums, both domestically and abroad. Agung holds a Bachelor of Economics from Sriwijaya University, a Master of Public Policy and Administration from the University of Indonesia and a PhD in Public Administration also from the University of Indonesia.

TANKA MANI SHARMA

Former Auditor General, Nepal

Tanka Mani Sharma Dangal is a Nepalese Bureaucrat. He has long experience in Public Financial Management and fiscal administration. He has experience in Public Procurement Management and development administration, Civil Service Administration and Training, Cooperative Societies Regulation and Management, Health Sector Financing, Public Enterprises Management, and other different areas of public sector management. He served as an Auditor General of Nepal from 2017 to 2023 for 6 years. His prior positions include Secretary at the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers, Ministry of General Administration, and Public Procurement Monitoring Office. He had also served as a Director General of the Inland Revenue Department, Department of Customs, Department of Revenue Investigation, and the Registrar of the Department of Cooperative. likewise, he had served as Finance Chief in different Ministries and Departments of the Government of Nepal.

Mr. Sharma holds a Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA). He has attended various national and international training and seminars and acquired knowledge and skills in different fields of the public sector management and governance system. He has rewarded with the "Best Civil Service Award" in 2001 by the government of Nepal. He has awarded the medal "Prasidda Prabal Janasewa Shree" by the president of Nepal in the year 2021. He was also awarded the "Prabal Gorkha Dakshin Bahu" medal in 2000.Mr. Sharma hopes to build a more efficient and effective public administration, promoting good governance through transparent and accountable public sector management. Moreover, he emphasizes maintaining professional integrity and controlling mismanagement and corruption in the governance system.

CHRIS STONE

Professor of Practice of Public Integrity, Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford

Chris Stone is Professor of Practice of Public Integrity. Chris has blended theory and practice throughout a career dedicated to justice sector reform, good governance and innovation in the public interest, working with governments and civil society organisations in dozens of countries worldwide. He has served as president of the Open Society Foundations (2012–2017), as Guggenheim Professor of the Practice of Criminal Justice at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government (2004–2012), as faculty director of the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations at Harvard University (2007–2012), and as president and director of the Vera Institute of Justice (1994–2004). He is a graduate of Harvard College, the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cambridge, and the Yale Law School. At the Blavatnik School, Chris's work focuses on public corruption turnarounds: the leadership challenge of transforming cultures of corruption into cultures of integrity in government organisations, large and small. As an affiliate of the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights within the University's Faculty of Law, Chris serves as the principal moderator for the Symposium on Strength and Solidarity for Human Rights.

LARA TAYLOR-PEARCE

Auditor General, Sierra Leone

Mrs Lara Taylor-Pearce is the Auditor General of the Republic of Sierra Leone. She is a fellow of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants of the UK, Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sierra Leone, and holds a MBA in Leadership and sustainability from the University of Cumbria (UK). As the government's chief external auditor since 2011, she has won praise for helping change Sierra Leone's public-sector accountability landscape, including her work in developing its 2016 Public Financial Management Act and other public-sector oversight acts. She is a former Vice Chair of the INTOSAI Development Initiative, the former Chair of the Governing Board of the African Region of Supreme Audit Institutions–English Speaking (AFROSAI-E), council member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Sierra Leone, and a member of the Board of Afrobarometer, a pan-African body responsible for providing data on citizens' views on governance and other democracy measures within the African Region. Mrs Taylor Pearce is the holder of several national awards including the National Integrity Award, she has been recognised as a Grand officer of the Order of the Rokel, and has been one of the fifty most Influential Women in Sierra Leone for four consecutive years.

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