

·What is it, and what is it *not*?

For purposes of cross-cultural, scientific study, corruption has been defined as “the misuse of public power for private benefit”. More generally, a popular understanding of corruption is when the government (or any individual or organization) does not do what it is required by law to do or does something non-violent but illegal due to deliberate decisions. “Deliberate decisions” are important to distinguish corruption from incompetence 不胜任 and negligence, which may have similar results or enable them without criminal intent. It's very hard to prove, however, that an example of poor governance results from a deliberate decision, and even the most clearly corrupt officials will, when accused, either “pass the buck” 推卸责任 to a “fall guy” 替罪羔羊, 容易上当的人, 诡计的受害者 (have someone “take the fall” 代人受罪 for him/her), claim ignorance (based on “plausible deniability” 泛指做了坏事而能不留证据的行为), or accept lesser charges of incompetence/negligence.

·What are some common examples of it?

The American system of lobbyists 游说议员者 is considered to be a form of “institutionalized corruption” 制度化的腐败, meaning the existence of the problem is well known and in fact an important, inseparable part of the political system. Gerrymandering 不公正划分选区 of electoral districts makes it almost impossible for some candidates to win elections. Unregulated stock markets are plagued by “insider trading” 内幕交易. Less systematized examples include bribes for favors, extra fees to get special (or any) service, misuse of official funds, favoritism and other violations of Max Weber's rational-legal bureaucratic ideal.

·How do we know it exists? How do we measure 测量 and study it?

In many cases, corruption is either dismissed or accepted as “how we do business around here.” The international non-profit organization Transparency International www.transparency.org tries to measure and compare corruption around the world with two indices, the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) and the Global Corruption Barometer. Other lists may be found at www.worldaudit.org/corruption.htm and some which are grouped with right-wing organizations which are explicitly anti-China. All of their methods are flawed but generally accepted in the West as valid. Naturally, states lower on the indices (“more corrupt”) are less likely to approve of their methodologies. Note that in personalistic regimes or other situations where rule of law is weak or non-existent, the term “corruption” becomes almost meaningless, as it may be perfectly legitimate to make decisions on a personal basis. There is also evidence to suggest that political systems with “too much” regulation and red tape offer more opportunities for officials to take in extra funds “on the side” (in addition to regular salaries). Corruption is also highly correlated with Black Market activity, likely because officials are paid off to tolerate it.

·How can we reduce 减少 or eliminate 消除 it?

Raising government accountability to the people *by any means* inevitably reduces corruption, so it may be wrong to suggest a universally applicable solution. Insiders in government often suggest raising the salaries of officials to a level where they are hardly tempted to accept bribes, but excepting areas where government wages are below subsistence levels (and bribes are needed for basic survival), this obviously invites skepticism. Governments all try to fight corruption, but their strategies are usually based on different cultural practices and even different definitions of the scope, depth, and meaning of the problem.

It is generally thought that greater government “transparency,” the public availability of information, makes misuse of power and resources more difficult and thereby less likely. Most citizens of Western countries expect their governments to publish or otherwise reveal *all* relevant information about public administration, whatever is in “the public interest” to know. All governments also want to keep some things secret, for easily mixed purposes of protecting security and avoiding embarrassment or accountability, and in the West, “watchdog” media and “investigative journalism” are used to uncover secrets deemed to be in the public interest and eventually published in mass media. Liberal or Western Democracy offers a standard method for “throwing the bastards out of office” when incumbent 现任的 government officials are deemed corrupt, but in practice this method for holding public officials “accountable” is rarely achieved. An open, accountable government may respond to popular demands and especially formal petitions to redress grievances 纠正冤情, 平反冤案 or have corrupt officials removed. Other regimes treat corruption as an internal matter 内部事务 and use anti-corruption agencies and campaigns to deal with the problem, only using the media to announce the solution to or resolution of a corruption problem. Western, liberal skeptics accuse such methods of being corrupt themselves, evidence more of falling out of favor 失宠 with those in power rather than (or in addition to) official malfeasance, often neglecting to note how clean the government of Singapore is without accepting Western ways. Others say the best way to deal with corruption is to become a rich and wealthy country, arguing that upright governance is a *result* of economic development rather than a *cause*. One more unattractive option is for people to “take to the streets” to protest or even riot to demand that the corrupt individual(s) resign and be replaced.

Vocabulary:

abuse of power 滥用权力 accountability 问责性 anti-corruption 反贪污, 反腐败 appeal to higher authorities 上访 auditor/audit 审计员、稽核员 / 审计、查账 backroom dealing 秘密交易 bribery/bribe 贿赂 (行为)、受贿、行贿 bureaucratic profiteer 官倒 (do Sth.) by the book 教条主义 circumvent/go around (Sth./Sb.) 绕行、绕过、设法避开 co-opt (Sth./Sb.) 指派 connections 关系 counterfeit 仿制品 crackdown 制裁 强制 取缔 creative accounting 创造性会计, 伪造账目 crony capitalism 权贵/裙带资本主义 derelict of duty 渎职、玩忽职守 disregard (Sth./Sb.) 蔑视 embezzlement 侵占、挪用、盗用 entropy 无序状态测量法 favoritism 偏爱, 偏袒, 不公平 felony VS. misdemeanor 重罪 VS. 轻罪 fraud/fraudulent 欺骗/欺骗的 “friends in high places” 地位显赫的朋友、上层的朋友 go in the back door 走后门 graft 营私、贪污、受贿 hush money 封口费 inspection 视察、检查 inspector 检查员、巡视员、巡官 kickbacks 佣金, 回扣 log rolling 政客间互相投赞成票以通过彼此有利的提案 malfeasance 渎职、不正当、不法行为 money laundering /laundrer money 洗钱 negligence 玩忽职守、渎职、业务过失、疏忽、错漏 nepotism 裙带关系、任人唯亲 non-profit 非营利的 non-partisan 无党派的 officially 原则上的 party discipline 党纪 play favorites 偏爱, 偏宠 “pork barrel” politics 政治分肥 preferential treatment 优惠待遇、特惠待遇 Princeling 富二代 (for) profit (为了) 盈利 profiteering, profiteer 牟取暴利 (的人), 不正当利益 protection racket 向商号收取保护费用的黑社会组织 protocol 规章制度 red tape 繁文缛节 regulatory capture 规制俘虏 remonstrance/remonstrator 上访 rents 寻租 “revolving door” (betw. govt. & private sector) 官商勾结 rigged election 操纵选举 scandal 丑闻 (formal) self-criticism 检讨, 自省, 自我批评 sell (Sb./Sth.) out 背叛 (be a) sellout 背叛者 “throw the book” (at Sb.) 警告某人应按规定办 under the table 地下交易 upright/clean (official or government) 正直的 uprightness, integrity, probity, rectitude 正气 violation (of legal code) VS. compliance 违反法律 VS 服从法律 white-collar crime 白领犯罪