U4 Expert Answer

Anti-corruption strategies for authoritarian states

Query

What evidence is there for effective anti-corruption interventions in authoritarian contexts?

Content

1. Background
2. The link between regime type and the levels of corruption
3. Why do autocrats engage in anti-corruption?
4. Anti-corruption reforms in Qatar
5. Anti-corruption reforms in Rwanda
6. Anti-corruption reforms in Singapore
7. Lessons learned
8. References

Summary

This U4 Expert Answer explores the strategies and policies used by authoritarian states to counter corruption. It provides an overview of the theory and evidence linking the type of government (democratic vs. autocratic) to the levels of corruption in a country. The answer then explores the potential reasons that could motivate an autocratic leader to engage in anti-corruption and provides three examples of successful transformations in authoritarian environments: Qatar, Rwanda and Singapore.

The answer finds that even though autocracies are not necessarily better than democracies at controlling corruption, most successful transformations have occurred in democratic environments. Moreover, while certain autocracies have managed to control petty and bureaucratic corruption, other types of corruption, particularly those that can benefit the ruling elite, tend to remain unscathed.

Author(s): Roberto Martinez B. Kukutschka, tihelpdesk@transparency.org
Reviewed by: Nieves Zuniga, tihelpdesk@transparency.org

Date: 20 May 2018 **Number:**

1. Background

In its broadest sense, authoritarian regimes encompass all forms of undemocratic rule. Compared to democracies, these regimes do not maintain the institutions and procedures of participation and political competition, fundamental rights and control of power (separation of powers, parliaments, elections, plurality of parties, etc.) characteristic of a democracy. Juan Linz's (1975) widely cited definition identifies three characteristics through which authoritarian regimes can be differentiated from democratic and totalitarian ones:

1) limited pluralism contrasted with the principally unlimited pluralism of democracies and monism of totalitarianism
2) limited political participation and absence of citizen mobilisation
3) no legitimation of the system through a common and dominating ideology, but rather through mentalities, psychological predispositions and values in general (patriotism, nationalism, modernisation, order, etc.)

Polity IV characterises authoritarian regimes through the presence of a distinctive set of political characteristics, such as restrictions on or the suppression of competitive political participation, the selection of the chief executive through the political elite, sparse limitations on the executive and a high degree of control over social and economic activity (Marshall, Gurr and Jaggers 2017).

The main challenge of fighting corruption in a non-democratic country is that many of the tools commonly used to ensure transparency and accountability, such as institutional checks and balances, are often missing or, even when they exist on paper, do not affect the ruler or the ruling elite. This posits a serious risk for corruption as a country's laws and institutions are meant to serve as a check on any predatory behaviour by politicians.

Based on this, it is easy to see why democracy is often seen as a remedy against corruption: a democratic form of government with functioning checks and balances, free and fair elections as well as a free media and civil society, at least in theory, creates incentives for elected officials to generate policies that are beneficial for all voters (universalism) and refrain from engaging in corrupt practices or favouring the few over the many (particularism). More specifically, Freedom House's criteria for an electoral democracy include:

- a competitive, multi-party political system
- universal adult suffrage
- regularly contested elections conducted on the basis of secret ballots, reasonable ballot security and the absence of voter fraud
- significant public access of major political parties to the electorate through the media and through generally open political campaigning

This U4 Expert Answer provides an overview of the theory and evidence linking the type of government (democratic vs. autocratic) to the levels of corruption in a country. The answer then explores the potential reasons that could motivate an autocratic leader to engage in anti-corruption and provides three examples of successful transformations in authoritarian environments: Qatar, Rwanda and Singapore.

2. The link between regime type and levels of corruption

For the reasons outlined above, democratic governments, at least in theory, are expected to be less corrupt than authoritarian ones. However, the empirical evidence in favour of this hypothesis is, at best, mixed:

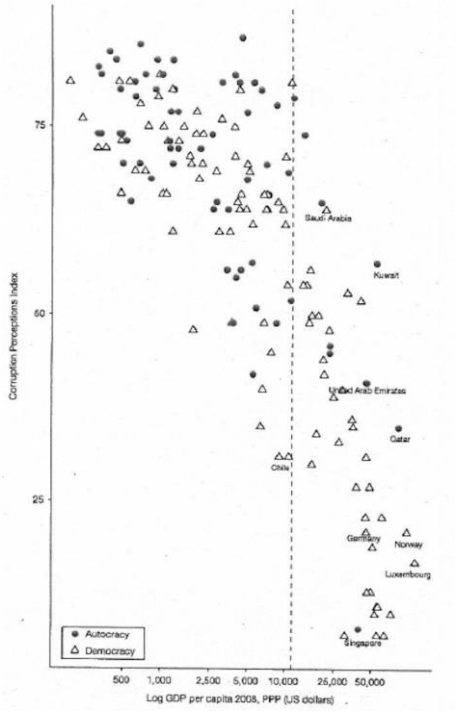
In their book Transitions to Good Governance: Creating Virtuous Circles of Anti-Corruption, Mungiu-Pippidi and Johnston (2017: 3) show that 46 out of the 54 countries (85%) in the upper tercile of the World Bank's Control of Corruption Index (CPI) are democratic, i.e. catalogued as "free" by Freedom House. The remaining 15%, however, is constituted by weak/flawed democracies and authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes. The authors recognise, however, that this relationship is mostly driven by old democracies that managed to establish a good control of corruption before the Second World War (Mungiu-Pippidi 2015). When looking at countries with poor control of corruption, "corrupt democracies outnumber corrupt autocracies by two to one" (Mungiu-Pippidi and Johnston 2017: 3).

Golden and Fisman (2017) come to a similar conclusion and show that autocracies, on average, are about as (in)effective in controlling

corruption as democracies. When plotting the CPI against a county´s per-capita income and their regime type (see figure 1), it is difficult to know what to make of the effect of democracy on corruption. On one hand, figure 1, which is based on a sample of 164 countries, shows that "wealthy countries generally have both low levels of perceived corruption and democratic political institutions" (Fisman and Golden 2017: 177). Moreover, most countries perceived as non-corrupt, tend to be democratic. On the other hand, among low- and middle-income countries (those on the left of the dashed line), there is little discernible relationship between democracy and corruption.

Based on this evidence, economic development seems to be the driving force behind the relationship pictured, i.e. poor countries tend to have high levels of corruption regardless of their form of government and it is thus unclear whether democracy, once one controls for a country's overall level of development, makes any additional difference in controlling corruption (Fisman and Golden 2017).

Figure 1. Scatterplot of Logged GDP and Corruption Perception's Index (with regime type)



Source: Fisman and Golden 2017, p. 176

This finding is in line with the results of Charron and Lapuente (2009), who also claim that the impact of democratisation on quality of government is contingent upon levels of economic wealth: at low levels of economic development, democracy is expected to have a negative effect on the quality of government, while at higher levels a positive relationship is expected.

While democracy might be useful in the fight against corruption since it allows for the use of a wider array of tools and strategies, it is not a silver bullet. According to Soreide (2010), voters can be myopic in the sense of preferring short-term benefits without considering future consequences, but even when the voters are well informed, they do not always punish corrupt incumbents in the next election: voters judge politicians on a whole range of factors other than performance (e.g. party-affiliation, ideology, charisma, etc.), and some will reward incumbents for a specific political result without considering the economy as a whole, or they will vote for a candidate whose promises of a reform may never happen (Soreide 2010).

As a result, many democracies struggle with entrenched corruption, while a small number of autocratic states perform relatively well on international corruption indices. Furthermore, in their analysis of long-term changes in the levels of control of corruption around the world, Mungiu-Pippidi and Johnston (2017) identify 22 countries (in a sample of 171) that show statistically significant improvements in their World Bank Control of Corruption scores since the year 2000[1]. It is worth noting that out of these 22 countries, ten of them are considered non-democratic (e.g. Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Rwanda).

In sum, while countries with good control of corruption are overwhelmingly democratic, the latest wave of democratisation has not necessarily delivered the anti-corruption effects that the theory laid out in the previous section would anticipate (Mungiu-Pippidi and Johnston 2017), and while some authoritarian regimes seem to have made substantial progress in controlling corruption, it is worth keeping in mind that this progress depends entirely on the continued goodwill of a small circle of senior decision makers, rather than any

[1] The list includes, among others: Botswana, Cape Verde and Rwanda in sub-Saharan Africa; Bhutan, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in the Middle East; Chile, the Cayman Islands, Costa Rica and Uruguay in Latin America and the Caribbean; Estonia, Poland, Romania and Slovenia in Eastern Europe; Georgia in the former Soviet Union; and Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan in Asia.

enduring feature of the political system (Sutton 2017).

The following section provides an overview of the drivers and challenges that are unique to fighting corruption in autocratic settings.

3. Why do authoritarian states engage in anti-corruption?

From the perspective of anti-corruption theory, explaining why some authoritarian states engage in anti-corruption strategies is not easy. In his 1988 book Controlling Corruption, for example, Klitgaard explains how the decision to engage in corruption is fuelled by the presence of monopolistic power and administrative discretion and hindered by the presence of accountability mechanisms. In short:

Corruption =
Monopoly + Discretion – Accountability

The main implication of this theory is that corruption can be reduced by negatively affecting the agent's motivations to engage in corrupt behaviour by

- decreasing the level of discretion among agents
- limiting the monopoly of agents
- increasing the level of accountability in the system (Klitgaard 1988)

Following this framework, the checks and balances and the transparency and accountability mechanisms that often accompany democratic forms of government (e.g. separation of powers, elections and individual civil and political rights) would be expected to reduce the incentives to act in a corrupt manner. However, since these constraints are absent in authoritarian regimes, it seems reasonable to expect democratic regimes to be less corrupt than authoritarian ones.

Klitgaard's theory, however, has its limits. It assumes, for example, that corruption is the result of an information and interest asymmetry between an agent (either in the form of a bureaucrat or a ruler) – assumed to act in his or her own self-interest – and a principal (either in the form of a ruler or citizens), typically assumed to embody the public interest (Klitgaard 1988). The main criticisms of this framework are that corruption is i) an exceptional behaviour and can be curbed simply by changing the incentive structure of the agents by increasing the cost and the probability of being caught; and ii) that the problem lies exclusively with the agent and that principals are mostly righteous actors working towards the public good and thus interested in monitoring and punishing corrupt behaviour.

As a result of these weaknesses, scholars have started to take into account contextual factors and the need to involve regular citizens in the fight against corruption so that they can also play the role of principals and hold government accountable. This has slightly changed the understanding of corruption as a balance between opportunities and constraints. As captured by Mungiu-Pippidi (2015):

Corruption = Constraints (Legal + Normative) – Opportunities (Power discretion + Material resources)

According to this formula, the level of corruption in a country is thus the equilibrium that emerges from the interaction between the opportunities to engage in corruption – i.e. discretion (privileged access to power, monopolistic practices, red tape, etc.) and material resources (foreign aid, discretionary budget lines, natural resources, public sector employment, public contracting, etc.) – and constraints, which can either be legal (laws and regulation) or normative (media, civil society, public opinion, informed electorate, etc.) (Mungiu-Pippidi 2015).

Based on this formula, authoritarian regimes, which are characterised by the limits on political pluralism, absence of free and fair elections, lack of checks and balances on executive power, disregard for abuses and infringements of civil liberties, low levels of media freedom and civil liberties, and the absence of an independent judiciary (Economist Intelligence Unit 2017) would be expected to have higher levels of corruption than their democratic counterparts. Mungiu-Pippidi and Johnston (2017: 17) even state that such regimes "cannot reasonably fulfil the ethical universalism criteria, even if they have few bribery cases, able bureaucrats and a business friendly climate, simply because rulers who do not risk losing power enjoy de facto immunity".

Corruption theory predicts that the most effective ways to fight against corruption require establishing checks and balances on the government to limit discretionary decision making and reduce opportunities for rent-seeking. As

shown by the evidence presented in the previous section, doing this is difficult in democratic contexts; in autocratic ones success depends almost exclusively on the will of those in power (Sutton 2017). Thus, authoritarian regimes can be among the most corrupt (e.g. Venezuela) as well as among the cleanest countries in the world (e.g. Singapore and Qatar). Given the fact that anti-corruption efforts can theoretically reduce the ruling party's monopoly on power, what motivates regimes that do engage in such efforts?

Authoritarian regimes "require legitimacy to replace the lack of democratic or otherwise accountable institutions or mechanisms that justifies their mandate of authoritarian rule." Anti-corruption efforts that support a further liberalisation of the economy can promote investment and prosperity, and therefore consolidate support for regime. (Laurence 2016).

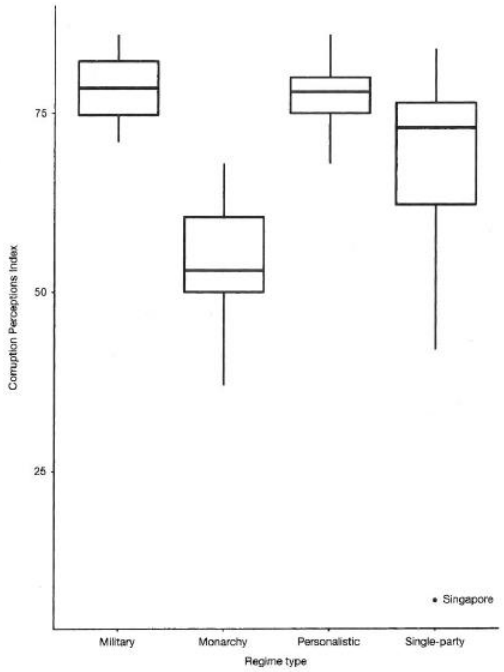
From the scarce literature identified on this issue, there seems to be two main variables that determine whether autocratic rulers engage in anti-corruption reforms, i.e.:

- the need to ensure the survival of the regime
- the nature of the ruling coalition

Chang and Golden (2010), for example, find that the time horizon of the autocratic leader (i.e. the ruler's expectation to remain in power for a shorter or a longer period of time) and the nature of the ruling coalition help explain the variation in levels of corruption across autocracies. In general, short-lived regimes tend to be more corrupt. Regarding the nature of the ruling coalition, they find that personalistic and personalistic-hybrid regimes are significantly more corrupt than single party and military regimes.

Similarly, Fisman and Golden (2017) show that single-party regimes are modestly less corrupt than military personalistic regimes. As shown in figure 2, among the different type of non-democratic regimes, however, monarchies are seen as the least corrupt. The authors hypothesise, that monarchs might have more incentives to keep corruption in check to maintain a good reputation and ensure the survival of the regime for their descendants.

Figure 2. Boxplot of Transparency International's CPI (inverted) for different types of non-democratic regimes



Source: Fisman and Golden 2017, p. 183 Note: the CPI values have been inverted by the authors so that lower CPI scores represent lower levels of corruption.

It is worth mentioning, however, that anti-corruption efforts in autocratic regimes tend to be not only unpredictable, but also "repressive and discriminatory" (Mungiu-Pippidi 2015: 62). It is often the case that anti-corruption regulations passed by the government would apply primarily to lower level public officials and exclude the ruling elite. Anti-corruption laws in these contexts can also be used to exert control. The autocrat or ruling elite can systematically manipulate access to corrupt rents as a means to ensure loyalty and minimise dissent (Hollyer and Wantchekon 2011).

Corrupt behaviour and the efforts exerted by subordinate officials, therefore, act as strategic complements: the regime regulates the opportunities for corruption and rewards its most loyal agents with the ability to partake in rents. Thus, the most corrupt officials are also likely to be the most loyal.

In sum, "anti-corruption without democratization is an incomplete package, unlikely to deliver honest, responsive government" (Sutton 2017). The far more likely outcome is that a smaller group will continue to benefit from corruption at the expense of others.

Despite these limitations, some non-democratic regimes have managed to make their way to the top of the most widely used corruption indexes. The following section focuses on three of these exceptions: Qatar, Rwanda and Singapore.

4. Anti-corruption reforms in Qatar[2]

With a score of 63 on a scale of 0 (very corrupt) to 100 (very clean), Qatar is the best performer in anti-corruption in the Middle East and North Africa region. This score not only puts the country in the top 30 worldwide, but also suggests that Qatar is doing better than many Western democracies such as Spain with a score of 57 or Israel with a score of 62. The World Bank's Control of Corruption Indicator also shows an improvement between 2000 and 2016, where the score evolved from 0.53 to 0.96 on a scale from -2.5 (most corrupt) to 2.5 (least corrupt).

Qatar's existence as a modern state dates back to 1972 when Sheikh Khalifa Al Thani came to power through a coup. His son Hamad bin Khalifa deposed him in 1995, and sustained the same government system implemented by his father. This was, however, the tipping point for Qatar's anti-corruption crusade: Hamad's father had handed his son the task of modernising the economy, but Khalifa continued extracting money from the Qatari state and did not push for economic progress.

Hamad's bloodless coup was partly motivated by his frustration with the trajectory of economic development that Qatar had been following, and his recognition of untapped potential for the country's economic and political future. After taking over the government, Hamad worked on liberalising the state and installing some top-down reforms, such as granting women suffrage and holding regular municipal elections and allowed for the participation of female candidates. Hamad also abolished the Ministry of Information and gave the press more freedom. The establishment of Al-Jazeera in 1996 was a landmark for the Arab world, as it was the first pan-Arab channel engaged in open criticism of Arab governments and leaders, albeit never in the case of Qatari affairs.

Qatar's anti-corruption efforts can be clustered into five different areas:

Legal reforms

The country signed the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in 2005 and ratified it in 2007. Following ratification, the country passed a number of laws to combat corruption by public officials. In the past three years, corruption and misuse of public money has been a focus of the executive office. In 2015, the Emir issued a decree (Emiri Decree 6/2015) to restructure the Administrative Control and Transparency Authority (ACTA), which is charged with investigating alleged crimes against public property or finances perpetrated by public officials.

Bribery is also a crime in Qatar and the law imposes penalties on public officials convicted of taking action in return for monetary or personal gain, or for other parties who take action to influence or attempt to influence a public official through monetary or personal gain. The current penal code (Law 11/2004) governs corruption law and stipulates that individuals convicted of bribery can receive up to ten years imprisonment and a fine equal to the amount of the bribe but not less than US$1,374.

Additionally, in November 2015, the Emir issued a law increasing penalties for corrupt officials, and in 2016 issued another legislation giving the State Audit Bureau more financial authority and independence, allowing it to publish parts of its findings, provided that confidential information is removed, something it was not previously empowered to do before. Those convicted of embezzlement and damage to the public treasury are subject to terms of imprisonment of no less than five and up to ten years. The penalty is extended to a minimum term of seven and a maximum term of 15 years if the perpetrator is a public official in charge of collecting taxes or exercising fiduciary responsibilities over public funds. Investigations into allegations of corruption are handled by the Qatar State Security Bureau and Public Prosecution. Final judgments are made by the criminal court.

[2] This section is based on the findings of the "Background Paper on Qatar" by Lina Khatib (2014).

Judicial reforms

Part of Sheikh Hamad's reforms covered the judiciary. In 1999, a court of final appeal was added to the Qatari legal system, following the establishment of the High Judicial Council which was tasked with offering advice on judicial appointments and to propose legislation concerning the judicial system.

In October 2004, long-promised court reform unified Qatar's dual court system (of Shari'a and civil courts). In 2007, an administrative court and a constitutional court were established and, in 2008, the supreme court was created, but the Emir appoints all of its justices. Although the judiciary system has been perceived as efficient in its operations, it suffers from the same problems as other state institutions. According to the Heritage Foundation's Economic Freedom Index, the judicial system in Qatar is not independent in practice and court cases involving foreign nationals frequently discriminate in favour of Qataris.

Administrative simplification

Beyond these legal and institutional changes, the Qatari government also embarked on a process of streamlining its regulations regarding business practices and it liberalised the economy. Sheikh Hamad directed a process of privatisation and established the Doha Stock Market in 1995. He also implemented reforms that

- simplified government administrative procedures (including financial auditing and reporting)
- reduced the time needed for businesses to prepare for paying taxes
- provided clear access to information about government regulations that applied to the business sector
- made customs procedures for the import and export of goods more efficient

These reforms were supported by additional incentives to attract foreign businesses, from facilitating the process of obtaining loans from the Qatar Development Bank to imposing zero taxes on exports and imposing no restrictions on overseas profit transfer.

Public financial management

The government of Qatar also undertook efforts to limit the royal family's access to public treasury. In 1970, 33% of total government expenditure used to be spent on the royal family, and throughout the 1980s, princes regularly extracted money from the treasury for deposit in their personal Swiss bank accounts. This practice was put under control by Sheikh Hamad, who recalibrated the informal state distribution mechanism by creating formal channels for monetary handouts in the shape of welfare (including property rights), subsidies and employment. Despite this important step, the budgeting process in Qatar is still among the most opaque in the world according to the scores in the Index of Public Integrity.

Redistribution policies

Qatar's wealth has enabled the ruling family to curb potential dissent both domestically and abroad. Domestically, wealth is distributed to citizens and to tribes in the form of cash handouts, a social and health service, and through the allocation of bureaucratic posts. Qataris enjoy free health services and education, a stipend of around US$7,000 per month per citizen, and almost guaranteed employment in the public sector (the unemployment rate is 1%). Tribal leaders are appointed in well-paid public posts. Wealth distribution has aided Qatar in avoiding the rise of popular discontent seen elsewhere in the Arab world.

Externally, Qatar has used its wealth to pump foreign aid into numerous countries in Africa and the Middle East, as well as to fund a wide variety of political groups. Co-opting and financing those groups serves to keep instability away from Qatar and maintain cordial relations with volatile actors like Islamist extremist groups.

In sum, Qatar has engaged in more reforms to fight corruption than other countries in the region, and the efforts to streamline bureaucratic processes, strengthen anti-corruption institutions and public financial management, and liberalise the economy to attract foreign investors have helped in an overall move to better governance. However, the reforms remain strictly top-down measures directed by the government and exclude the ruling family and people in the business community with close ties to the government.

The permeation of informal networks (mainly in the form of tribal relations) within state institutions and civil society, the lack of interest in and avenues for political participation among Qatari

citizens, and the clientelistic relationship between citizens and the state support the continuation of this status quo.

The political openings installed by Sheikh Hamad are more to do with establishing legitimacy for the regime – and thus, continuity – than with the desire for genuine political reform. They are also driven by the Emir's political ambitions to put Qatar on the map in international relations and economic affairs: r to be taken seriously by the international community, Qatar needs to cultivate an image of "playing by the rules".

Access to the Qatari market, or at least to the greatest contacts, typically depends on developing the right connections and contacts with powerful middleman who are generally influential members of the ruling family. These individuals then collect hefty commissions for making the necessary introductions. At the top there are virtually no financial disclosure procedures or other protections that could prevent conflicts of interest, and the state does not enforce the separation of public office from the personal interests of public office holders, at least among office holders who are also powerful members of the ruling family.

5. Anti-corruption efforts in Rwanda[3]

Since the 1994 Genocide, which killed at least 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus, the government in Rwanda has been effectively controlled by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) under the leadership of President Paul Kagame, who has "tightened his grip with each election" (Sundaram 2017). Kagame recently secured his permanence in power at least until 2024 in an election that featured no meaningful opponents. A new challenger, Diane Rwigara, one of the challengers, was targeted by misogynistic smears, and when she still insisted on running, election authorities barred her. Opposition politicians have been found dead after criticising the president or end up in jail, as was the case of Victoire Ingabire, Kagame's most prominent challenger in the 2010 elections. She also faced slurs about an alleged extramarital affair, and was imprisoned for a campaign speech seen as critical of the president and as a call for people to revolt (Sundaram 2017).

As an authoritarian state, however, Rwanda has made remarkable progress in many fields. The country is at peace and is considered among the most stable on the continent (Bozzini 2014). Its GDP has registered an average annual growth rate of 7.6% from 2000 to 2010 and hit 8.6% in 2011. Extreme poverty is reported to have decreased dramatically. Similarly, a number of socio-economic indicators, including school enrolment, life expectancy, child mortality and prevalence of HIV, have significantly improved, and the Human Development Index has reflected such improvements. An important contribution to these achievements has been made by foreign aid, which has been injected in large quantities by donors since the aftermath of the genocide, making Rwanda a so- called "aid darling" (Bozzini 2014).

One of the key reasons behind Rwanda's improvement in the last few years, as well as one of the elements which explains donors' willingness to provide high aid volumes, is considered to be governance: the government of Rwanda is commended for its capacity to manage resources efficiently and deliver results. Perhaps the most celebrated feature of this concept of governance is the control of corruption. Rwanda scores 55 points in Transparency International's CPI, which makes the country one of top performers in its region. The World Bank's Control of Corruption Indicator also provides a positive outlook of the progress made in the fight against corruption: between the year 2000 and 2016, Rwanda improved from a score of -0.60 to 0.69.

A key reason behind this progress is, in Rwanda, commonly referred to as the government's "political will" to fight corruption, which relied on the following interventions:

Legal and institutional reforms

Since 1994, the government of Rwanda has enacted a number of new laws and created institutions designed to help control corruption. On the legal side, the key document is the law n° 23/2003 on the prevention and repression of corruption and related offences, but a number of

[3] This section is based on the findings of the paper "Background Paper on Rwanda" by Alessandro Bozzini (2014).

other laws include commitments to counter corruption, particularly the penal code.

On the institutional side, the government established several bodies including

- the Office of the Ombudsman
- the Rwanda Public Procurement Authority (RPPA)
- the Office of the Auditor General
- the Anti-Corruption Unit in the Rwanda Revenue Authority
- the Public Procurement Appeals Commission

Moreover, a number of high-level officials must disclose their assets: in 2011 the Public Account Committee was established within the parliament, and on 13 June 2012, the government approved the national policy to fight against corruption. In addition, politicians and civil servants have been prosecuted when allegations of corruption were brought against them, including several cases of high-ranking officials being forced to resign, dismissed or prosecuted. Finally, government institutions have launched sensitisation campaigns to raise the population's awareness on the negative consequences of corruption.

Similarly to the strategies used by the government in most socio-economic sectors, the fight against corruption has also been led by the highest institutions of the country and has followed a top-down approach: the establishment of new laws and institutions, the sensitisation campaigns and public calls for integrity have mostly come from the highest levels of government, including from the president himself. While this is positive and extremely important, as it would be impossible to counter corruption without a commitment by the top level of leadership: if improvements are to be sustained in the long term and beyond the current generation of leaders, then accountability structures need to be strengthened and transparency in the management of public affairs enhanced.

Zero tolerance policy

The government has been praised for the strong stance it takes on corruption, as reflected by its vigorous implementation of a zero tolerance policy at all levels of the public sector. In 2004, for example, all 503 members of the Rwandan judiciary were dismissed, allegedly for corruption and incompetence related matters. In 2007, 62 police officers were dismissed for soliciting bribes (Chêne 2011). An increasing number of senior officials are also being prosecuted for corruption-related crimes, although observers argue that it is difficult to determine whether the prosecutions are legitimate or politically motivated (Bertelsmann Foundation 2010).

Public service reform

Since 1997, the government has implemented far reaching public sector reforms, including rapid downsizing by about two-thirds with the dismissal of 6,000 inadequately qualified employees, the removal of 6,500 ghost workers. Benefits have been monetised and salaries increased, while new public service laws have been enacted. Since 2005, there has been greater focus on pay reform, improved human resource management as well as training and capacity building. Recruitments are increasingly done on the basis of competitive tests, following objective criteria, and institutions have internal and external audit systems.

Despite the interventions outlined above and the clear progress made in Rwanda to reduce corruption, some authors consider that the government has focused almost exclusively on bribery and other economic crimes such as embezzling public funds and mismanaging resources (Bozzini 2014). Other forms of corruption, however, are largely absent from common perception and from the public debate. Moreover, as was also the case with Qatar, anti-corruption interventions have been "top-down" in nature, and while this has achieved some good results, other accountability mechanisms remain weak: the judiciary, the media and civil society, all play only a limited role in the country (Bozzini 2014).

Politicians are not the only ones who cannot speak freely against the regime. Kagame's crackdown on the press means few media reports dare to contradict his government's statements. According to Freedom House, "journalists risk arrest under a variety of restrictive laws and can face long jail terms if convicted. Journalists also face intimidation from authorities, as well as arbitrary detention and arrest on trumped-up charges unrelated to their work. Many have fled the country to avoid persecution and reprisals, but even in exile, Rwandan journalists have experienced extra-legal intimidation, leaving a chilling effect that extends beyond the country's borders. Most private outlets do not cover controversial topics, though a few radio stations have shown a willingness to criticize government

policies. Pro-government newspapers and radio stations dominate the media landscape."

As an authoritarian regime, checks and balances on the executive are weak in Rwanda, which allows for those closer to Kagame and the RPF to benefit from the state. According to Freedom House (2017), the Rwandan judiciary lacks independence from the executive. The parliament, on the other hand, is under the control of the ruling party. This absence of opposition, which the government often labels as a sign that the country is a "consensual democracy", weakens the parliament's potential as an accountability institution (Bozzini 2014).

This lack of checks on the executive makes it easy for the president to "play kingmaker in the economy, granting his associates lucrative businesses while seizing others with impunity" (Sundaram 2017). Since the RPF dominates all the levers of power (the security services, the bureaucracy, the judiciary, banks, universities and state-owned companies), its members find it easier than non-members to win government contracts and licences or get access to high-level government jobs (The Economist 2003; Bozzini 2014).

6. Anti-corruption efforts in Singapore

The case of Singapore is different to that of Qatar and Rwanda. Singapore's anti-corruption efforts started long before corruption indicators such as Transparency International's CPI or the World Bank's Control of Corruption emerged. It continues to consistently rank among the top performers in the world on both these indicators.

The fight against corruption in Singapore was heightened after the Opium Hijacking Scandal, which uncovered high-levels of corruption in the police in 1951, when a gang of robbers, including three police detectives, was caught stealing 1,800 pounds of opium (Ankamah and Manzoor 2017). Consequently, the role of the police in leading the fight against corruption in the country was taken over by the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB).

The establishment of the CPIB is often considered the breakthrough in the fight against corruption in Singapore and has served as inspiration for many other countries to try to replicate its success. However, anti-corruption agencies elsewhere have rarely been able to reproduce the CPIB's success (Mungiu-Pippidi 2011).

Since the 1959 general elections, the People's Action Party (PAP) has dominated Singapore's politics. The PAP has been in power for the last 50 years – since Singapore's inception – and has presided over an authoritarian regime (Reyes 2015). The PAP rose to power partly thanks to its commitment to counter corruption. Before the 1959 general election, the PAP, led by Lee Quan Yew, exposed the minister of education for accepting S$700,000 from American donors (Quah 2017). After assuming power in Singapore in June 1959, the PAP government mapped three key strategies in tackling corruption in Singapore.

First was the introduction of the Prevention of Corruption Act in 1960. The new act granted the CPIB many legal powers to fight corruption, including the power to arrest (section 15), conduct investigations (section 17) and the capacity to search and seize money or other goods (section 22). In its 2014 annual report, the CPIB concluded that it has a strong mandate from the government in power to fight corruption holistically.

Second was the government's introduction and enforcement of meritocracy in the public service. The introduction of meritocracy in the Singapore public service, according to some scholars, has been institutionalised to the extent that it is still being practiced after the resignation of Lee. For instance, in 1992, the prime minister, Goh Chok Tong stressed that the key to Singapore's success was the fact that Singapore was a meritocratic state, and it is this practice that has made Singapore to excel as a nation.

The third and last was Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP government's introduction of competitive salaries for public sector workers. Quah emphasises that Lee did this by matching public sector with private sector salaries to reinforce meritocracy and minimise corruption. Singapore also pays its government employees well, which allows it to attract and retain top talent – and gives those whom it hires a powerful incentive to stay honest. The government monitors what the private sector pays for a wide range of skills, positions, and tasks, and it attempts to maintain public employees' salaries at no less than 75% of that level (Stepan 2015).

Additionally, Singapore has removed opportunities for corruption by digitalising many government services (Stepan 2015). Singapore's public sector

has one of the most developed electronic services in the world, only after Australia, South Korea and the United Kingdom. As a result, it is harder for a dishonest official to find occasions to demand bribes or skim from government payouts.

It is worth noting that the CPIB, which is often credited as the main driver of change in Singapore is effective not only because of its vast legal powers to investigate corruption, but also because successive political leaders have ensured its operational impartiality by not interfering in its daily operations (Quah 2017a). Moreover, not even the members of the PAP are beyond the reach of the CPIB. Between 1966 and 2014, the agency has investigated five party leaders and eight senior civil servants. The CPIB is effective because of its legal powers, adequate budget and personnel, and operational autonomy to investigate anyone without fear or favour.

Although Singapore is often praised for a perceived lack of corruption, transparency and accountability remain low. Government ministers can serve in several capacities simultaneously, and legislators often serve on the boards of private companies, including as chairpersons, which creates conflicts of interest (Reyes 2015). Singapore was the fourth-worst-ranked country in the Economist's 2016 "crony-capitalism index", which aims to measure the degree to which accumulation of private wealth depends on political connections.

Despite Singapore's overall clean image in terms of public sector corruption, some recent scandals involving state-owned enterprises have emerged. This was the case noted in a Singapore authorities' press release on 23 December 2017: Singapore's state-owned company Keppel Offshore and Marine was fined U$422 million for bribery in exchange of several projects in Brazil.

7. Lessons learned

One of the most common recommendations against high-level corruption is the promotion of democracy as a way of introducing checks and balances that can curb misuses of power. One reason why democracy is insufficient is that it is not easy for voters to actually exercise control over their politicians (Soreide 2010). For this reason, as shown before, weak democracies are often not better at controlling corruption than authoritarian regimes.

Political will and the sustainability of anti-corruption efforts

This Expert Answer looked at three of the most widely cited cases of authoritarian anti-corruption successes: Qatar, Rwanda and Singapore. In all three cases, "political will" is often cited as a key determinant for success in anti-corruption. In these three cases, political will was shown either through the enactment and application of relevant reforms (e.g. public financial management in Qatar, establishment of an independent anti-corruption agency in Singapore, or the zero tolerance policy in Rwanda).

Political will, however, has received relatively little attention from academics and thus remains poorly defined (Martinez B. Kukutschka 2014). Anti-corruption scholars have noted that relying on political will to counter corruption is an over-simplification of the problem (Johnston 2017) for two reasons.

First, assessing the commitment of an actor to fight against corruption is difficult. Brinkerhoff (2010) identifies the following elements as ways to assess the presence of political will:

- identifying whether specific anti-corruption initiatives stem directly from the government
- checking the analytical rigor of these initiatives and how they address the main sources of corruption in the country
- determining whether the government mobilises support from other stakeholders (e.g. civil society, the private sector or the media) to implement reforms
- making sure that agencies and institutions in charge of preventing, detecting, investigating and sanctioning corruption-related offences receive sufficient resources (human and financial) to fulfil their tasks
- establishing sanctions that are effective, proportionate and enforced regardless of the offenders' position
- learning and adapting the strategies to emerging circumstances

While political will might be clear in hindsight, determining whether political will exists at the specific moment of an intervention is much more of a challenge. Given the complexity of anti-corruption interventions, successes attributed to political will may in fact be shaped by many other forces or circumstances (Johnston 2017).

Linking the effectiveness of anti-corruption policies on the presence of political will takes for granted that the ideas for reform will work and that failure will depend mostly on specific actors pulling through with their commitments. If these reforms do not work, however, the political will argument can be dangerous as it oversimplifies a complex reality (assuming that failure is mostly a matter of absence of political commitment) and can serve to blame the victims (Johnston 2017).

Anti-corruption as a top-down approach

Since political will is seen as originating at the top of the system, it holds with the idea that anti-corruption "champions" can produce positive results. Singapore's story is often cited as an example that a strong anti-corruption champion can change the system from the top. The experiences of Rwanda and Qatar, however, prove that replicating Singapore's success is not an easy task: in both these cases, the governments have clearly clamped down on petty bribery and other types of corruption that involve low-level public officials but little has been done in these countries to address grand corruption. In this sense, Singapore seems to be an exceptional case.

Another problem with top-down approaches, particularly in non-democratic contexts, is that progress in the fight against corruption is often tied to the ruler's personality and the sustainability of the system can be endangered once the anti-corruption "champion" leaves office. In contrast, the demand for good governance and anti-corruption in more democratic societies can be sustained through the political demands from citizens (Johnston 2017).

Anti-corruption as a win-win situation

It is worth noting that countering corruption in non-democratic states is not driven by a selfless intention or a "moral dictator". In the cases mentioned in this answer, the push to counter corruption was derived from the rulers' expectations of obtaining economic and political benefits from it. In the case of Qatar, the government's anti-corruption efforts coincided with its will to modernise and enter the global economy. Similarly, in Rwanda, the strong stance against corruption came after the genocide, and the push towards efficient and clean bureaucracies went hand-in-hand with the need to attract foreign aid and investment.

There is, however, insufficient evidence to explain why certain elites engage in changing their societies and do not fall into the predatory group (Mungiu-Pippidi 2011). Some authors suggest that anti-corruption might be a way to exercise better control over the country's economic resources in favour of the ruler's agenda (e.g. reward loyal followers or engage in economic transformation). Moreover, as explained before, the motivation in authoritarian regimes to fight against corruption might simply stem from the desire to remain in power or ensure the long-term survival of the regime.

The examples of Qatar, Rwanda and Singapore also provide some insights regarding the anti-corruption strategies for non-democratic states. It is worth stressing, however, that as mentioned throughout the text, anti-corruption without civil and political rights is an incomplete intervention as it allows only for the use of limited tools. In authoritarian contexts, however, any intervention that relies on civil society or the media is often out of the question. As a result, in such environments, controlling corruption will rely mostly on top-down efforts designed to curb certain types of corruption, most likely petty and bureaucratic corruption. Other types of corruption such as political or grand corruption, on the other hand, are unlikely to be targeted by the government, as the ruling elite often strives to maintain some degree of privilege and access to specific rents.

8. References

Ankamah, S.S. and S.M. Manzoor E. Khoda. 2017. "Political Will and Government Anti-Corruption Efforts: What Does the Evidence Say?" Public Admin Dev. 38. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/pad.1815

Bozzini, A. 2013. "Successes and Limitations of a Top-Down Approach to Governance: The Case of Anti-Corruption in Rwanda". ISPI Analysis 164. https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/analysis_164_2013_0.pdf

Bozzini, A. 2014. "Background Paper on Rwanda". Berlin: Hertie School of Governance. http://anticorrp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Rwanda-Background-Report_final.pdf

Brinkerhoff, D.W. 2010. "Unpacking the Concept of Political Will to Confront Corruption". *U4 Brief*.

Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute. https://www.u4.no/publications/unpacking-the-concept-of-political-will-to-confront-corruption/pdf

Chang, E. and M.A. Golden. 2010. "Sources of Corruption in Authoritarian Regimes". *Social Science Quarterly* 91:1.

Charron, N. and V. Lapuente. 2009. "Does Democracy Produce Quality of Government?". QoG Working Paper Series 2009:1. Gothenburg: The Quality of Government Institute. https://qog.pol.gu.se/digitalAssets/1350/1350706_2009_1_charron_lapuente.pdf

Chêne, M. 2011. "Anti-Corruption Progress in Georgia, Liberia and Rwanda" Transparency International Helpdesk. Berlin: Transparency International. https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/assets/uploads/helpdesk/HelpDesk_Anticorruption_progress_in_Rwanda_Liberia_Georgia.pdf

Economist Intelligence Unit. 2017. "Democracy Index 2017: Free Speech Under Attack". London: Economist Intelligence Unit. http://www.eiu.com/Handlers/WhitepaperHandler.ashx?fi=Democracy_Index_2017.pdf&mode=wp&campaignid=DemocracyIndex2017

Fisman, R. and M.A. Golden. 2017. *Corruption: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Freedom House. 2017. "Rwanda Profile". https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/rwanda

Hollyer, J. and L. Wantchekon. 2011. "Corruption and Ideology in Autocracies". *The Journal of Law, Economics and Organization* 31: 3. https://academic.oup.com/jleo/article/31/3/499/807412

Johnston, M. 2017. "Relying on 'Political Will' to Fight Corruption is Magical Thinking". *The FCPA Blog*. http://www.fcpablog.com/blog/2017/12/20/michael-johnston-relying-on-political-will-to-fight-corrupti.html

Kaufman, D. and P.C. Vicente. 2011. "Legal Corruption" *Economics and Politics* 23.

Khatib, L. (2013). "Qatar's Foreign Policy: The Limits of Pragmatism", *International Affairs* 89(2). https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1468-2346.12025

Khatib, L. 2014. "Background Paper on Qatar". Berlin: Hertie School of Governance. http://anticorrp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Qatar-Background-Report_final.pdf

Klitgaard, R. 1988. *Controlling Corruption*.

Laurence, A.J. 2016. Anti-Corruption Campaigns in Authoritarian Regimes: The Case of China. Budapest: Central European University. http://www.etd.ceu.hu/2016/laurence_anthony.pdf

Marshall, M.G., T.R. Gurr and K. Jaggers. 2017. "Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2016" Vienna, VA: Center for Systemic Peace. http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/p4manualv2016.pdf

Martinez B. Kukutschka, R. 2014. "Building Political Will: Topic Guide". Berlin: Transparency International. https://www.transparency.org/files/content/corruptionqas/Topic_Guide-_Political_Will.pdf

Mungiu-Pippidi, A. 2011. "Contextual Choices in Fighting Corruption: Lessons Learned". Oslo: Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation. https://www.oecd.org/countries/zambia/48912957.pdf

Mungiu-Pippidi, A. 2015. *The Quest for Good Governance: How Societies Develop Control of Corruption*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mungiu-Pippidi, A. and M. Johnston (eds.). 2017. *Transitions to Good Governance: Creating Virtuous Circles of Anti-Corruption.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Puddington, A. 2017. "Breaking Down Democracy: Goals, Strategies, and Methods of Modern Authoritarians" Washington D.C.: Freedom House. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/June2017_FH_Report_Breaking_Down_Democracy.pdf

Quah, J.S.T. 2017. "Singapore's Success in Combating Corruption: Lessons for Policy Makers", Asian Education and Development Studies, Vol. 6: 3.

Quah, J.S.T. 2017a. "Anti-Corruption Agencies in Asia Pacific Countries: An Evaluation of their Performance and Challenges" Berlin:

Transparency International. https://www.transparency.org/files/content/feature/ACAs_background_paper_2017.pdf

Reyes, S. 2015. “Singapore’s Stubborn Authoritarianism” *Harvard Political Review.* http://harvardpolitics.com/world/singapores-stubborn-authoritarianism/

Soreide, T. 2012. “Democracy’s Shortcomings in Anti-Corruption”. CMI Working Paper. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute. https://www.cmi.no/publications/file/4678-democracys-shortcomings-in-anti-corruption.pdf

Stepan, A. 2015. “Are Authoritarian Countries Really Better at Fighting Corruption?” World Economic Forum. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/04/are-authoritarian-countries-really-better-at-fighting-corruption/

Sundaram, A. 2017. “Rwanda: Kagame’s efficient Repression” *The New York Review of Books*. http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2017/08/04/rwanda-kagame-efficient-repression/

Sutton, T. 2017. “Can You Separate the Fight Against Corruption from Democracy?” The National Interest. http://nationalinterest.org/feature/can-you-separate-the-fight-against-corruption-democracy-23350

The Economist. 2003. “Kagame Won, a Little Too Well”. *The Economist*. https://www.economist.com/node/2023062

Transparency International. 2018. Corruption Perceptions Index. https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017#resources

World Bank. 2017. Worldwide Governance Indicators. http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/