

## Transparency International Anti-Corruption Helpdesk Answer

# The relationship between corruption and protest

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From Bosnia Herzegovina to Ukraine, from Afghanistan to Tunisia, from South Sudan to Brazil, “popular outrage at governmental corruption is a common theme in political crises” (St George’s House 2015). Nonetheless, the relationship between corruption and popular protest is a nuanced one. First, academics contest the effect that perceptions of corruption have on citizens’ political action. While a substantial number of studies have argued that high levels of background corruption act as a catalyst for protest (Beyerle 2014; Johnston 2005a), others such as Peiffer and Alvarez (2016) have contended that widespread corruption actually reduces citizens’ political engagement.

The role of corruption scandals – as distinct from background levels of corruption – in mobilising popular opposition is also an interesting consideration. How does the relationship between corruption and protest in settings that have high background levels of corruption but few high profile scandals (perhaps due to severe limits on press freedom) differ from these dynamics in countries with generally low levels of corruption that experience periodic but well publicised corruption scandals?

Second, some scholars make a distinction between protests that are specifically “anti-corruption” in nature on one hand, and on the other hand protests driven by a broad array of grievances that may be related to corruption, including on matters such as fraudulent elections, unpaid wages and poor macroeconomic performance (Lewis 2020: 4). While protesters in the latter case might not always be explicit in identifying corruption as the prime target of their action, it often plays an underlying role as a driver of their discontent. Moreover, movements protesting about various socio-economic grievances often do consciously choose to articulate their complaints using narratives of corruption (Smith 2014). Nonetheless, precisely because the term “corruption” is so often used by protestors to cover a broad range of economic grievances and democratic failings, it can be difficult to determine what actually drives the emergence and durability of anti-corruption movements (Bauhr 2016: 6).

In the case of dedicated anti-corruption protests, there is a third cleavage in the literature studying potential trigger points of such popular unrest. In particular, there is a lively debate about the type of corruption most likely to provoke protests and demonstrations. Studies looking at African countries have concluded that grand, high-level corruption is more likely to generate protest, whereas research in other countries – notably China – suggests that street level bribery is more likely to lead to protest. What appears clear is that different forms of corruption have “diverging impacts on contentious politics by altering the costs and benefits associated with mobilising to protest” (Lewis 2020: 3).

Finally, considerable work has been done on the role of social movements in advancing anti-corruption work, specifically considering how to sustain protest movements, and convert flash-in-the-pan outbursts of political activity into more durable forms of anti-corruption activism.

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# Query

*Please provide an overview on the relationship between corruption and protest actions (rallies, actions, demonstrations).*

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### 1. The contested effect of corruption on popular protest

#### Corruption as an accelerant of popular protest

Intuitively, it seems highly plausible that frustration about corruption would lead to popular protests in countries with some degree of civic and political freedom. This assumption is lent weight by the fact that so many protest movements around the world have come to employ anti-corruption narratives in the last decade (Belyaaeva et al 2019).

Even in repressive contexts, Orlova (2018) argues that the anti-corruption agenda can serve as the most powerful unifying narrative for opposition groups, as it unites a diverse range of interests

and is an underlying cause of many perceived socio-political ills. Given the genuinely high levels of corruption in many of these countries, it is reasonable to assume that this is not simply a rhetorical device, but that corruption serves as a motivating factor for mass movements seeking to oust political leaders. Notably, a recent study by Školník (2021) found that in seven post-communist countries marked by high levels of corruption, those citizens who perceived politicians to be corrupt were more likely to approve of public protests and demonstrations.

A number of prominent scholars of corruption have indeed sought to demonstrate that social movements arise in response to corruption (Johnston 2005a; Beyerle 2014; Chayes 2018), and that experiences with corruption make citizens more likely to participate in anti-corruption protests (Landell-Mills 2013: iv). Several studies from South America have provided some empirical backing for these assumptions, generally finding that exposure to bribery is a significant variable in citizens' propensity to protest (Faughnan and Seligson 2015; Gingerich 2009; McCann and Domínguez 1998; Taylor 1987).

More recently, Monyake and Hough (2019) have found that in Africa too, citizens who have experienced bribery in their interactions with the state are more likely to support anti-corruption protests, and in fact are more likely to report having taken part in protests and demonstrations in the year prior to the survey.

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Taking a longer-term view, Rodrik, Subramanian and Trebbi (2004) find that corruption is a driver of political instability as it undermines the rule of law and faith in public institutions. Rotberg (2004: 9) posits that corruption exacerbates political instability because citizens come to perceive their leaders as being self-serving, which results in them developing greater loyalties to rival organisations than to the state. Indeed, research in both Africa and Peru has linked grievances caused by government corruption to the rise of revolutionary groups (Taylor 1987; Harsch 1993; Simpson 2014), and Chayes (2015) has built on this work to show how widespread corruption creates fertile ground for violent challengers to the political order. At a macro-level, the World Bank's [Worldwide Governance Indicators](#) show a correlation between corruption and political instability around the world.

### Corruption as a retardant of popular protest

Despite this, several studies have contended that higher perceived levels of corruption actually reduce citizens' willingness to participate in measures intended to reduce corruption. Based on research in East Africa, Persson, Rothstein and Teorell (2013) argue that in systematically corrupt environments, citizens are more likely to engage in corruption as a means of problem solving rather than seek to actively resist it. Similarly, analysis by Peiffer and Alvarez (2016) of the 2013 Global Corruption Barometer dataset found that increased perceptions of corruption correlate with decreased willingness on the part of citizens to engage in anti-corruption activism. The implication is that rampant graft leads to widespread disillusionment with politics, and in such settings, people are less

likely to believe their actions will change anything (Bauhr and Grimes 2014).

Nonetheless, Monyake and Hough (2019: 17) point out that there is a spectrum of actions that citizens can take to indicate their discontent with corruption. They find that while Africans who report regularly paying bribes are unlikely to resist demands for bribes or report incidences of corruption, they do actually participate in anti-corruption protests. Thus, the fact that people are unlikely to challenge demands for bribes should not be seen as a sign they are unwilling to support citizen-led efforts to reduce levels of corruption through other means, including protest.

What this indicates is that although there seems to be a positive relationship between background levels of corruption and political protest, "the mechanisms that cause latent discontent to boil over in collective resistance and violent confrontation are complex" (Wedeman 2016). As Tilly (2003) has shown, not all popular grievances lead to collective protests, corruption can produce discontent without erupting into open protest. Second, the state is not monolithic, a fact that is well understood by citizens. In China, O'Brien and Li (2006) have shown how protesters confront local officials and institutions without challenging the regime itself, by seeking to win support of high-level bureaucrats to take action against corrupt local officials. The enduring impact of a wave of anti-corruption protests depends on a number of factors, not least its target; if popular agitation is intended to pressure the state to take corrective action against perceived local injustices, this could even serve to ultimately strengthen legitimacy of the regime (Wedeman 2016).

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## 2. Dedicated anti-corruption protests vs broader protest movements

Lewis (2020: 4) notes that focussing exclusively on explicitly anti-corruption protests risks overlooking “the myriad other movements that include corruption complaints alongside grievances about inequality, poverty, service delivery, education, and other issues in which government corruption is entangled.” Indeed, protesters rarely identify “corruption” as the single motivating factor in their decision to take to the streets to demonstrate, though they often frame demands around a “cluster of causes, of which justice – critique of corruption” is central (World Peace Foundation 2015: 10).

In her study of popular anti-corruption movements, Beyerle (2014: 247) finds that “most of the civic initiatives targeting corruption were linked to other injustices and struggles.” Likewise, Della Porta (2015) argues that in protests like Occupy Wall Street, corruption was seen as corruption of democracy more broadly and intrinsically linked to the financial crisis as well as the inability of the political class to manage it. Beyond the condemnation of corruption, slogans like “they don't represent us” also expressed a deeply rooted criticism of the deterioration of representative democracy.

With the slogan “Democracia real ya!” strengthening democracy especially in terms of representative democracy was also a central theme of the Spanish indignados protesters, whose demands included increased citizen participation and electoral reforms (Della Porta 2015).

This complex web of motivating factors of protest makes it hard to single out the underlying factors driving anti-corruption activism. In many cases, however, the spark may be a single high-profile corruption scandal that comes to symbolise all that is wrong with a regime.

## 3. Role of corruption scandals in sparking protest

Recent experiences have demonstrated the potential of a single, prominent corruption scandals to mobilise huge popular opposition to governments. Cases like the Lava Jato case in Brazil can come in the popular imagination to embody the nepotism, embezzlement and cronyism plundering the state (Watts 2017). Chayes (2018: 7) illustrates how the shock at the “scale and sophistication of corrupt practices” that are revealed during a high profile scandal, as well as the “webs of high-ranking public figures involved” is often enough to precipitate mass and sustained protests.

Particularly where a scandal results in a tangible and personal cost, such as the 2015 fire at the Colectiv nightclub in Romania that killed 64 people, popular fury at the underlying corruption can be immense. In the case of the Colectiv protests, malfeasance in the lax enforcement of safety regulations and the poor state of the public health sector, hollowed out by years of corruption, sent people flooding onto the streets as part of a protest movement in which corruption soon took centre stage (Olteanu and Beyerle 2017; Crețan & O'Brien 2020). Here, corruption became “not only associated with the self-enrichment of a few, but tangible, fatal consequences for ordinary citizens” (Olteanu and Beyerle 2017: 818). In Romania, this

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lead to a noticeable shift in perceptions of corruption from a minor inconvenience to an intolerable practice that mobilised thousands of people in opposition, making corruption “the uniting issue of a heterogeneous mass” of citizens (Olteanu and Beyerle 2017: 818).

Interestingly, however, there are cases in which huge corruption scandals result in a more ambivalent and contentious political environment. In South Korea, President Park Geun-hye was accused in 2016 of abuse of power and corruption. Chang and Park (2020: 2) note that “despite overwhelming evidence of her misconduct and corruption...the public’s reaction to related news was dichotomous. The scandal sparked both anti-impeachment protests and pro-impeachment protests.”

#### **4. Role of social media and digital tools in accelerating anti-corruption protest**

Increasing attention is turning to the role of the digital platforms as an “instrument for grassroots movements to challenge current corrupt social practices” (Orlova 2018: 174), with particular focus on Twitter and other social media channels (Nechai and Goncharov 2017; Chang and Park 2020).

Under the slogan “Corruption kills!”, several Facebook groups were created in response to the fire in the nightclub in Romania. These groups successfully provided a space for an alternative critical discourse against leading politicians. They also provided the main source of information around the tragedy and served as a vehicle for people to organise protests in the streets (Patrut

2017). Patrut & Stoica (2019: 228) conclude that the “Corruption Kills!” community was successful in combining “social media collective subjectivity with concrete actions in the offline environment, to turn the mobilisation of rebellious people on Facebook into street protests”.

Similarly, in relation to the #OccupyNigeria protests, social media allowed the initial discussions around the removal of fuel subsidies to move further and include broader issues around corruption and accountability in governance (Hari 2014).

Beyond organising and discussions, activists in Indonesia used the Facebook group “1,000,000 Facebookers Support Chandra Hamzah and Bibit Samat Riyanto” to gather data about corruption and use it in their advocacy (Mattoni 2020).

In relation to the anti-austerity protests in Spain, the 15MpaRato campaign used highly participatory communication channels, including social media, crowdfunding and online petition platforms. This allowed citizens to take a more pro-active stance as producers and brokers of data on corrupt practices. This approach created a connection between the single citizen who denounces corrupt behaviour and the protest group, which provides a collective voice to speak against corruption. (Mattoni 2017).

#### **5. Divergent impact of different types of corruption on popular protest**

There is a long-standing recognition that different forms - or “syndromes” - of corruption produce different results in different types of polities

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(Johnston 2005b). In line with rational choice theory, the implication is that challenging various types of corruption entails different perceived costs and benefits to citizens, and so certain forms of corruption may be more or less likely to result in the emergence of protest movements.

Recent behavioural science approaches to anti-corruption have illustrated that human beings are motivated by a complex array of impulses and cognitive biases, not all of them “rational” (Dupu and Nese 2018; OECD 2018). Nonetheless, it is reasonable to assume that most citizens consider the possible efficacy of a demonstration, as well as any security risks involved, before deciding to participate.

Past work by Uslaner (2008: 123, 244) advanced the idea that petty corruption was less likely to trigger popular protests as it is “not as morally troubling as the grand thievery of the rich and powerful”, which “makes ordinary people disaffected.” Nonetheless, this has been partly challenged by Monyake and Hough (2019), who find that Africans who are exposed to demands for bribes are more likely to participate in protests.

### Grand corruption

In a study of recent protests in Sub-Saharan Africa, Lewis (2020) concludes that perceptions of elite corruption are a more significant determinant of citizen participation in anti-corruption protests than individual experiences with street-level bribery (for which he uses attitudes towards and experiences of police corruption as a proxy).

He posits a number of reasons for this, including the fact that elite corruption blatantly deprives the state of much-needed resources, siphoning away

developmental funds needed to tackle inequality, poverty and poor service delivery. Such effects affect all socio-economic classes (albeit unequally) and have national level implications, which allows opposition groups to “frame issues to appeal to broad coalitions of potential activists” calling for greater accountability (Lewis 2020: 4).

Such messages are easy to align with a range of grievances against elite groups perceived to be engaging in self-enrichment at the expense of the rest of society. The fact that many of the injustices suffered are at least partially the consequence of elite corruption can help to universalise anti-corruption narratives and win broad support for the opposition.

Analysing survey data from the Afrobarometer, Lewis finds that those citizens who express greater concern about grand corruption are significantly more likely to worried about the state of their country’s democracy and economy, which makes them a key constituency for anti-corruption campaigns. Indeed, Lewis (2020: 6) finds that citizens that are more concerned about grand corruption than police corruption are three percentage points more likely than those more worried about police corruption to state they have protested at least once.

### Petty corruption

It is worth noting that, as Lewis acknowledges, police corruption has particular characteristics such as intimidation, and protesting against law enforcement officials is a concerning prospect for many citizens. This could mean that Lewis’ findings in terms of the respective significance of grand and police corruption may not be representative of other forms of petty corruption.

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Indeed, other studies have found that petty corruption can be equally if not more important in sparking unrest than high-level venality.

In China, Wright (2015: 123) has found that while corruption is the “general cause of most collective popular contention”, the most likely trigger of collective protest is typically petty corruption, such as arbitrary taxes, illicit fees and unfair land acquisitions. Noting the apparent paradox in China between “citizens reacting strongly to street-level corruption in the forms of protests and the near absence of protests against high-level corruption”, Wedeman (2016) explains this in reference to the greater risks involved in protesting grand corruption in China. In contrast to Lewis, who contends that the malaise of grand corruption serves as an opposition rallying cry in Africa that cuts across division of class, Wedeman proposes that the absence of a “tangible connection” between elite level corruption and the daily lives of most people in China reduces the potential of grand corruption to spark protest.

In contrast, as Fewsmith (2013: 23) shows, widespread corruption in poor rural areas in China is driven by close ties between local public officials, police officers and organised criminal groups, who conspire to repress popular political mobilisation through intimidation. Festering grievances under the surface, however, can be enough for an isolated incident of petty corruption to erupt into a mass confrontation between local authorities and citizens.

## 6. Corruption as a narrative of protest utilised by diverging political agendas

Given corruption’s systemic nature, narratives of corruption lend themselves to opposition movements, and can serve as “malleable instrument[s] with which to castigate political adversaries” (Jenkins 2014).

Saad-Filho & Boffo (2020) point out that since the 19<sup>th</sup> century allegations of corruption in Brazil have been part of all major protests – regardless of which political party was in power. They further outline how in relation to protest sparked by the Lava Jato scandal (which was linked to the left-wing administration of the PT under President Lula), the political right employed narratives of corruption to gain support for their political agenda and depict themselves as outsiders to the corrupt political system, even though Bolsonaro had been in Congress for 28 years.

In addition, Della Porta (2017) documents how new anti-corruption narratives have emerged against the dominance of the free markets and the policies of liberalisation, deregulation, and privatisation that Stiglitz (2012a) argues have provided new opportunities for corruption. The Occupy Wall Street protests in particular mobilised around the narrative that the wave of deregulation driven by undue influence of big business over policymakers had encouraged irresponsible financial markets in the years leading up to the 2008 financial crisis (Della Porta 2015; Crouch 2012: 95).

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## 7. Sustaining anti-corruption movements

As indicated above, many scholars have come to view demand side pressure from citizens and civil society organisation as crucial to secure lasting improvements in curbing corruption (Johnston 2005b; McNeil and Malena 2010). Where institutions are non-responsive, strong civil society and protests are the remaining channels to influence policies and agendas in countries with high corruption rates (Drapalova 2019).

Recent work on the emergence of the self-organised “protest public” has begun to study how “spontaneous demonstrations driven by civic outrage” against injustices and corruption can be transformed into more institutionalised forms of peaceful protest and durable social movements (Farag 2018; Chowdhury and Ahmed 2019; Belyaeva et al 2019).

# Key resources

## Background

**Chayes, S. 2018. Fighting the Hydra: Lessons learned from worldwide protests against corruption.**  
<https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/04/12/fighting-the-hydra-lessons-from-worldwide-protests-against-corruption-pub-76036>

*In the past half-decade, a succession of uprisings against corruption has broken out worldwide. The frequency and significance of these events forces the question: What is going on? And does this international phenomenon hold lessons for others beset with systemic political corruption, not least in the United States? A look at countries as diverse in culture and political history as Brazil, Burkina Faso, Guatemala, Lebanon, Romania, South Africa, and South Korea suggests that it does.*

- *Because the corruption they challenge is systemic, the protests have frequently encountered a tension between making concrete demands of those in power (say, cleaning up streets or reversing an amnesty law) and aiming at the kleptocratic system more broadly (such as demanding electoral reforms).*
- *This generation of protesters has been attracted by a horizontal model for action, and has balked at designating leaders. But the conceit of leaderlessness has its limits.*
- *Crucial allies have been found within the justice sector, where independence is prized. Defecting elites have also contributed to the fall of some regimes.*
- *In only one of the countries examined (Burkina Faso) has a structural change been won. Elsewhere, the results have been mixed, with some specific reforms gained, a more robust civil society, and some shifts in attitudes and behavior on the part of business and government officials alike.*

*Activists elsewhere who wish to challenge corrupt systems should consider the following:*

- **Leadership is necessary** to give direction to what might be spontaneous and multipolar protests. The leaders must be rigorously principled and able to cross political and identity boundaries.
- **Consistent decision-making** mechanisms should be established to allow for transparent processes that can federate participants.
- **A detailed reform agenda** that targets the kleptocratic network's diverse capabilities will be crucial to exploiting whatever window of opportunity does open.
- **This agenda should be communicated** to ordinary people in such a way as to capture their imaginations, so support doesn't flag when some symbolic victory is achieved.
- **Long-range planning** is required to effectively deal with the multiple likely countermoves the campaign will encounter.
- **Alliances are force multipliers.** Independent individuals or institutions within a corrupt government invariably control some levers of power, or at least information. Because kleptocratic networks are transnational, alliances outside the country's borders are also key.

**Delle Porta, D. 2017. "Anti-corruption from below: Social movements against corruption in late neoliberalism", PACO – Partecipazione e Conflitto, vol.10 (3). <http://siba-ese.unisalento.it/index.php/paco/article/view/18546>**

*In the last decades, a growing awareness has emerged in progressive social movements about the relevance of corruption as a hidden factor that negatively influences political and economic decision-making processes in both liberal-democratic and authoritarian regimes.*

*Rampant corruption has been denounced by social movements, which have developed specific diagnostic and prognostic frames as well as knowledge and practices for the social accountability of political and economic powers.*

*This contribution maps some of the characteristics of civil society as anti-corruption actors, reflecting on the theoretical challenges they present for social*

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*movement theory and for research on corruption and anti-corruption. In order to understand the emergence and outcomes of these mobilizations against corruption, it bridges two bodies of literature which have only very rarely crossed paths: corruption studies and social movement studies.*

*Departing from the traditional visions of anti-corruption from below within corruption studies, the article brings upon social movement studies in order to synthesize some of the main context, organizational forms and framing of (anti-)corruption in today's contentious politics.*

**Drapalova, E. 2019. *Corruption and the crisis of democracy*. Anti-Corruption Helpdesk Series.**  
<https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/helpdesk/corruption-and-the-crisis-of-democracy>

*The relationship between corruption and democracy is a complex one. However, both concepts are closely intertwined. When democracy deteriorates, we can almost certainly expect an increase in corruption due to the erosion of institutional checks and balances, independence of courts and frequent restriction of the space for civil society actions and political rights of citizens.*

*Likewise, when corruption is not tackled, new democratic states can hardly consolidate. This is especially true of political corruption that plunders the country's natural resources and widespread petty corruption that impede the ability for citizens to fully enjoy their new political and social rights. Unresolved or increasing corruption can also undermine citizens' trust in already established democracies and provoke all sorts of citizens' reactions like abstention and distrust, or contribute to other destabilising phenomena like voting for anti-establishment parties and the spread of fake news.*

*Given the large impact corruption has on democracy, sustained efforts to limit corruption can improve the strength of democracy by promoting just and competitive elections, ensuring better quality and delivery of public services and improving citizens' trust in political institutions and governments. The effort of international and local organizations and NGOs to limit corruption should be seen as a contribution to the consolidation of democratic regimes and efforts to improve the quality of governance.*

## **The relationship between corruption and protest**

**Lewis, J. 2020. "Corruption Perceptions and Contentious Politics in Africa: How Different Types of Corruption Have Shaped Africa's Third Wave of Protest", *Political Studies Review*.**  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1478929920903657>

*Does corruption increase general and anti-government protest? Scholarship has produced seemingly incompatible results, with some research demonstrating a strong connection between corruption and the onset of contentious politics and other research finding that heightened perceptions of corruption decrease activism.*

*This article addresses this puzzle by examining how different types of corruption condition diverging contentious outcomes. Focusing on two highly salient forms of corruption in the African context—elite corruption and police corruption—this article argues that the different consequences, salience, and costs associated with these two forms help to condition whether citizens rise up or stay home.*

*This argument is tested via two methods. First, it draws from a survey experiment conducted in five Nigerian states in 2017. The survey experiment tests whether exposure to different types of corruption affects willingness to join in protests. Second, it draws from statistical analysis of geo-located perceptions of corruption and protest across Africa, incorporating checks for both collinearity and endogeneity into the model. The statistical analysis examines whether heightened perceptions of corruption correlate with increased counts of general and anti-government protest. The results from both methods demonstrate that elite corruption is positively correlated with protest, whereas police corruption is not.*

**Monyake, M. and Hough, D. 2019. "Citizens, bribery and the propensity to protest", *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*.**  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14662043.2019.1621040>

*It is widely assumed that the more one experiences corruption the more likely one is to want to protest about it. Yet empirical evidence illustrating this is thin on the ground. This paper fills that gap by focusing on the extent to which self-reported experience of*

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bribery affects the willingness to engage in protests against corruption in Africa. We find that the more one experiences bribery the more one is likely to support anti-corruption protests. A further unexpected finding is that the personal experience of corruption also increases the willingness to rely on bribes to solve public administration problems.

**Peiffer, C. and Alvarez, L. 2016. "Who Will Be the "Principled-Principals"? Perceptions of Corruption and Willingness to Engage in Anticorruption Activism", *Governance*, 29(3).**

Many anti-corruption campaigns aim to encourage citizens to demand better control over corruption. Recent literature suggests that perceived high levels of corruption and government effectiveness in controlling corruption will limit citizens' willingness to actively oppose corruption. Using Transparency International's 2013 Global Corruption Barometer, we test these ideas across a 71-country sample. We find that perceived government effectiveness tends to encourage anticorruption civic action, while perceptions of corruption being widespread tend to have the opposite impact in non-OECD countries. Our analyses also suggest that the interaction between these perceptions is important; we find that, especially among those who perceive that the level of corruption is high, when confidence in the government's efforts grows, so does their willingness to fight corruption.

## Sustaining anti-corruption movements

**Rahman, K. 2017. *Building on social movements to achieve systemic change*, Anti-Corruption Helpdesk Series.**  
<https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/helpdesk/building-on-social-movements-to-achieve-systemic-change>

Over the past 10 years there has been a grassroots "eruption against corruption", led by a "coalition of the concerned" (including citizens, civil society organisations (CSOs), the private sector and government officials) fighting to curb corruption in their communities and countries (World Bank 2017).

There is some evidence that CSOs promoting good governance reforms are a necessary condition to translate anti-corruption campaigns and protests into sustainable reforms. In countries as diverse as Georgia, Brazil, India and Romania, organised civil society groups have been able to capitalise on spontaneous, visceral outpourings of citizen anger at

high-profile corruption scandals as well as on more coherent social movements to achieve systemic change. This has been made possible by providing strategic leadership, direction and a sense of purpose to such movements. As such, harnessing popular social movements and joining forces in loose coalitions could be viewed as a viable strategy for CSOs seeking to achieve lasting change in the fight against corruption.

While there is no silver bullet to achieve such outcomes, a few lessons can be drawn from these examples. Developing a sound understanding of the local corruption context to be able to deploy appropriate tactics, harnessing the power of the media, building awareness and channelling the negative "outrage" into positive "hope" are some of the key lessons learned from the case studies of Georgia, Brazil, India and Romania explored in this answer.

**Orlova, A. 2018. "Challenging Everyday Violence of the State: Developing Sustained Opposition Movements through Anti-corruption Protests", *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*.**

<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/S0163-786X20180000042007/full/html>

This chapter deals with the question of how anti-corruption norms can emerge in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes that actively suppress social dissent and protest. The chapter examines the capacity of Russian opposition movements to create a sustained anti-corruption discourse and to shape political governance. When it comes to addressing corruption through social action in the context of Russia, the situation does not often seem conducive to concerted opposition activity. Nevertheless, even though opposition movements repeatedly fail to impact political decision-making or elite practices, they are not exercises in futility.

The chapter concludes that the anti-corruption discourse can be effectively utilized by the Russian opposition movements to unite its efforts and vocalize their demands in terms of democratic governance norms. Continually repressive governmental measures are creating dangerous public spaces, where massive and violent confrontations are increasingly likely to occur. As the opposition continues to find its voice, challenge elite corruption and vocalize its desires for democratic governance norms, the continuing demands for policies to be reflective of public interest (rather than interests of

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the powerful elites) will not abate. The anti-corruption discourse can play a powerful unifying role for the opposition given the endemic nature of corruption in today's Russia.

**Olteanu, T. and Beyerle, S. 2017. "The Romanian people versus corruption: The Paradoxical Nexus of Protest and Adaptation", *The Open Journal of Socio-Political Studies*. <http://siba-ese.unisalento.it/index.php/paco/article/view/18551>**

*Corruption has been widely perceived as one of the main obstacles to Romania's successful transformation from socialism to democracy (and capitalism). Still, in the ensuing years after the 1989 transition, it did not directly stimulate mobilization and protest from below. However, more recently, the country has been undergoing a civic awakening.*

*This article focuses on the interplay between the Romanian government and citizens to identify the dynamics of the growing anti-corruption protests in Romania since 2012. Four episodes of grass-roots mobilization (Austerity-2012, Rosia Montana-2013, Colectiv-2015 and OUG13/#rezist-2017) are systematically examined, taking into account the political opportunity structures and developing dynamics of contention. While these protests have been quite successful in achieving articulated demands, they have not yet transformed into sustained social movements with a wider political agenda of social change.*

**Farag, M. 2018. 15 incentives for greater citizen engagement in the fight against corruption.**  
<https://voices.transparency.org/15-incentives-for-greater-citizen-engagement-in-the-fight-against-corruption-b33461c88475>

This series of short blog posts puts together a range of ideas to help get more people engaged — and sustain that engagement — in the fight against corruption. In total, there are 15 incentives that fall loosely into three categories: rational, internal and social incentives. Each incentive comes with examples and some concrete ideas on how it can be applied.

## The role of social media in anti-corruption protests

**Nechai, V. and Goncharov, D. 2017. "Russian Anti-Corruption Protests: How Russian Twitter**

**sees it?", *Digital Transformation and Global Society*.**

[https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-69784-0\\_23](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-69784-0_23)

*This article explores the map of political preferences of Russian Twitter users in the wake of March 2017 anti-corruption protests. So far, there is little research on the political aspects of Twitter in Russia and our paper seeks to fill this gap in the scholarship. It is based on content analysis of over 45,000 tweets published during a week after March 26 events.*

*According to the project preliminary results, political attitudes of Russians remain fairly moderate, though evidence points to some polarization among the politically involved.*

*The research also reveals a variety of value patterns shared by politically active users and investigates corresponding clusters of users that are taking shape in the ongoing online discussion and networking. The article concludes with an interpretation of how these clusters might relate to menu of political participation during current electoral cycle in Russia.*

**Chang, K. and Park, J. 2020. "Social media use and participation in duelling protests: the case of the 2016-2017 Presidential Corruption Scandal in South Korea", *The International Journal of Press/Politics*.**  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1940161220940962?journalCode=hjbp>

*This study examines how citizens' social media use may have influenced their participation in highly polarizing protests during the 2016–2017 corruption scandal in South Korea. As social media users mobilize politically by acquiring varied political information from other users, social media use created more incentives for citizens to participate in both pro- and anti-impeachment protests during the scandal. Given that social media is an important arena for political activism, participation in rival protests also influences many motivated protesters to strengthen their side's voices online.*

*Thus, protests may increase citizens' political use of social media. Our empirical analysis suggests that social network service use does not influence citizens' political activities in a unidirectional manner. We have found that social media use and participation in rival protests reciprocally influence each other.*

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