

Review

THE DEBILITATING IMPACT OF CORRUPTION ON DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Corruption knows no bounds and manifests itself in both public and private spaces. The endemic nature of corruption tends to make it a common phenomenon both in the public and private sectors and have a negative impact on the existing democratic governance processes and economic growth. Corruption has numerous dimensions and manifestations all of which erode the social, political and economic fabric of the political society. This paper provides a working definition of corruption and discusses the different types and manifestations of corruption and the overall impact of corruption on democracy, governance and civil society. The paper also challenges investigations of corruption in general. The paper concludes that endemic corruption stalls economic growth, debilitate democratic practices with a likelihood of a degeneration of democratic governance to despotism and authoritarianism.

Key words: Corruption, democracy, governance, society, debilitating

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INTRODUCTION

It has been argued that just like anywhere else in the world, corruption poses a major threat to good governance in Africa. Empirical studies find African countries are troubled the most with corruption. Among the major studies that have cited the endemic nature of corruption is Transparency International whose Corruption Perceptions Index has been widely credited with putting the issue of corruption on the international policy agenda¹

The Corruption Perceptions Index 2013 serves as a reminder that the abuse of power, secret dealings and

bribery continue to ravage societies around the world.

The Transparency International Chairperson Huguette Labelle has emphatically noted that

*"It is time to stop those who get away with acts of corruption. The legal loopholes and lack of political will in government facilitate both domestic and cross-border corruption, and call for our intensified efforts to combat the impunity of the corrupt"*²

¹ Corruption Perceptions Index 2013. Available at <http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview>.

² Corruption Remains a Global Threat". Available at <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2013/results>.

It is on the basis of such empirical studies on the African continent that this paper seeks to establish the extent to which corruption has had a debilitating impact on democratic good governance.

The capacity of governments to monitor, assess and respond to the problem of corruption is limited, and the political sensitivities make dealing with corruption especially challenging (ISS, 2013). Isaac in Kunaka and Mashumba (2002:22) has noted that “In addressing the issue of corruption and its impact on democracy and good governance, it is important to be aware that corruption is like a virus that infects, affects and endangers the existence of individuals, communities and society as a whole”. This endemic nature of corruption makes it a danger to existing governance structures and democracy as loss of confidence with the bureaucracy takes its toll on the populace. Corruption exists in both public and private spaces and as such can readily be noticed. Kunaka and Mashumba (2002:22) maintain that public corruption involves government officials whereas private corruption is between individuals in the private sector and in many cases involve public officials. Both public and private forms of corruption have a negative impact on both democratic governance processes and on economic growth.

CORRUPTION AND CORRUPT PRACTICES: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Corruption can be regarded as an endemic practice that has a negative impact on a wide range of practices and entities that constitute good and democratic governance in the public sphere. Areas most affected by corruption in any country include the rule of law, existing political processes, governance processes and civil society all of which have a bearing on democratic governance. As such, in providing a critical analysis of the debilitating impact of corruption of democratic governance, it would be imperative to provide a blow-by-blow account of how corruption as an illicit practice affects the rule of law, existing political processes, governance processes as well as the operation of civil society. However, one would ask what corruption in its ordinary sense. Ordinarily, corruption refers to a dishonest, bribable, fraudulent or dishonest action by a political office bearer, public official or other person (Witgaard in Cloete, 1996:28). Gildenhuis (1991:69) views corruption as “blatant and deliberate dishonesty in the use of public money and goods”. This definition presents corruption as a utility that fuels and acts as a catalyst whose end result is a deliberate attempt by those bestowed with authority to hold public office to take advantage of their public standing for personal gain. Corrupt action will always be an unaccountable action and as such accountable governments and their public officials should be

uncorrupted. Corrupt behaviour negatively impacts on institutional governance as citizens are bound to judge the whole system of public administration by the behaviour of its officials. Corrupt officials form the face of a corrupt regime which is divorced from the general populace. Consequently, it is therefore essential that stringent steps be taken to prevent the development of a culture of corruption. Where there is a custom of giving tips and gifts, even free lunches to public officials of government functionaries, there is a great risk of such behaviour degenerating into endemic corruption. As a result, the prevention of corruption requires consistent vigilance against possible corrupt practices by public and private sector officials as well as citizens.

TYPES OF CORRUPTION

Corruption is not a one-size-fits-all, but it manifests itself in different shades and colours. Despite the fact that corruption exists in both public and private spaces, there are generic types of corruption that are found in either of these spaces. Corruption manifests itself in three types as presented by the USAID (2010). The pair of corruption under each category belongs to the far end of the pendulum for each pair as follows:

Systematic versus Sporadic Corruption

In this category, systematic corruption applies to a situation where the practice has sunk its roots into a system such that it has become the accepted normal behaviour. Such a situation comes about after repeated indulgence in corrupt practices such that the behaviour becomes imbedded within individuals and is viewed as a normal practice. On the contrary, sporadic corruption is an intermittent form of corruption which is not an everyday practice but manifests itself as an exception. While systematic corruption would be intentional, sporadic corruption is not.

Organised versus Disorganised Corruption

These two forms of corruption involves either groups of organised people purposively organised for corrupt practices or isolated cases of corrupt practices. In organised corruption, a number of officials and systems within an organisation partake in and share the gains from routine corrupt practices. Partakers to such practice share a common vision and purpose and act collectively for their collective benefit (Isaac, 2002: 22). On the other hand, disorganised corruption takes place opportunistically on a case-by-case basis and each case is unique. Partakers to such type of corruption do not

share a common vision and purpose and operate in an individualistic basis without involving collective and concerted effort by a group of organised individuals.

Grand versus petty

These two forms of corruption allude to the size or magnitude of the corruption. Grand corruption refers to large scale abuse and misuse of power while petty corruption is characterised by small-scale abuse and misuse of power (Isaac, 2002:23). In the latter form of corruption the public is exposed to corrupt individuals who subvert their mandate to serve for personal gain.

DIMENSIONS OF CORRUPTION

Corruption is not a *one-size-fits-all* type of a concept but entails different dimensions. It is therefore very important to understand the various forms in which corruption manifests itself in the public spaces and elsewhere in society. For example, The South African Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) identifies several dimensions which corruptions manifests itself in. these are bribery, embezzlement, fraud, extortion, abuse of power, conflict of interest, insider trading or abuse of privileged information, favouritism as well as nepotism (DPSA, 2002:7). These are briefly discussed by Sangweni and Balia, (1999) below.

Bribery involves the promise, offering or giving of a benefit that improperly triggers positive actions or decisions of a public servant or someone in authority. This benefit accrues to the public servant, another person or entity. A variation of this manifestation occurs where a political party or government is offered, promised or given a benefit that improperly affects the actions or decisions of a political party or government. In its most extreme political or public institution manifestations, this may translate to or result from state capture, or the sale of parliament votes, presidential decrees, criminal court decisions and commercial decisions. *Example:* A traffic officer accepts a cash payment in order not to issue a speed fine.

Embezzlement involves theft of resources by persons entrusted with the authority and control of such resources. *Example:* Hospital staff that steal medicines and in turn sell these to private pharmacists and individuals outside of the hospital.

Fraud involves actions or behaviours by public servants, other person or entity that fools others into providing a benefit that would normally accrue to the public servant, other person or entity. *Example:* A public servant that

registers a fictitious employee in order to collect the salary of that fictitious employee.

Extortion involves coercing a person or entity to provide a benefit to a public servant, another person or an entity in exchange for acting (or failing to act) in a particular manner. *Example:* A public health official threatens to close a restaurant on the basis of fabricated health transgression unless the owner provides a public health official with regular free meals. This is a form of blackmail.

Abuse of power involves a public servant using his/her vested authority to improperly benefit another public servant, person or entity (or using the vested authority to improperly discriminate against another public servant, person or entity). *Example:* During a tender process but prior to the final selection of the successful contractor, the Head of Department expresses his/her wish to see the contract awarded to a specific person or entity.

Conflict of interest involves a public servant acting or failing to act on a manner or fails to recuse him/herself where the public servant has an interest and where the public servant or another person or entity stands to benefit from the relationship or association with the public servant. *Example:* A public servant considers tenders for a contact and awards the tender to a company of a close associate or relative.

Insider trading or abuse of privileged information makes use of privileged information or knowledge that public servants have access to in order to provide unfair advantage to another person or entity to obtain a benefit, or to accrue a benefit for himself/herself. *Example:* A local government official has, as a result of his/her particular office, knowledge pertaining to residential areas that are to be re-zoned as business areas. Such knowledge would enable him/her to inform relatives and friends to be able to acquire the residential properties with a view to re-sale these as business properties at a premium.

Favouritism: This is when the provision of resources and services is done according to personal affiliations, (for example along ethnic, religious, political party affiliations, etc) by a public servant belonging to one such entity. *Example:* A provincial/regional manager in a particular province may want to ensure that only persons from his/her tribe are successful in tenders for supply of food stuffs or services. The manager derives pleasure from such an arrangement where people close to him/he enjoy unfair advantage over other tribes.

Nepotism where public servants or another person in authority ensures that family members are appointed to

influential positions or that family member of close associates receive contracts from state resources. This manifestation is similar to conflict of interest and favouritism. Example: A CEO appoints a close relative to an influential position, despite the fact that there are more qualified applicants for the post (Sangweni and Balia, 1999).

In partaking in any of these corrupt practices, public administration suffers financial loss, its integrity is tarnished and this puts the image or reputation of the political dispensation into disrepute (Sangweni and Balia, 1999). The institutions of governance are accused of taking to its employment inefficient public servants who do not have the interest of the public at heart. Similarly service delivery is negatively affected. Citizens judge their political leadership by the type or level of service delivery and not by how eloquent they are able to articulate their policies. With dismal service delivery, citizens eventually lose confidence in the bureaucracy and usually a vote of no confidence is shown to the political leadership in preference to other promising contenders. Corruption also forces citizens to look elsewhere or alternative political leadership, which is what democracy entail. Once identified, corrupt practices forces the bureaucracy to review, amend or change existing legislation and policies on corruption and to make contingent policies that would be enacted once the cancerous corruption devours most of the public service delivery system (Kunaka and Mashumba, 2002:25). This is how the different dimensions of corruption collectively impact on service delivery and influences political choices.

COMBATING CORRUPTION: A GENERIC VIEW

Ramaite (1999:173) has roundly noted that “the most significant and basic steps in fighting corruption is by instituting proper monitoring mechanisms of all public functions, activities and conduct of officials, irrespective of how honest or virtuous officials may appear during the course of their exercise of government authority”. In this regard, it should be emphasised that particular attention should be paid to identify those acts, which are suspect, because of their specific and overall adverse effect on the quality of service and on the capacity of the institution’s ability to deliver quality service in accordance with the public’s expectation. Similarly Smith (1999:193) has noted that “combating corruption to improve effectiveness requires political commitment, practical anti-corruption strategies, stamina to sustain such campaigns, allocation of adequate resources to such campaigns and the establishment of integrity systems at national, provincial and local levels”. Commitment is the fundamental requirement in fighting corruption and it is a fact that it should be practical and sustainable supported by

adequate resources. However, Smith (1999:176) has further noted that “fighting corruption is not an end in itself but a means of accountable government, improving effectiveness and reducing time required to implement policies, improving accountability and introducing evidence-based planning”.

Most importantly adopting a stakeholder approach to combating corruption is an effective way of ensuring that affected communities air their views on what approaches should be taken in this regard. The incorporation of all relevant stakeholders to play their part in making sure that the scourge of corruption is curbed is of paramount importance. It should not only be the national government that should be concerned with combating corruption. The provincial/regional as well as the local spheres of government should also take the lead in coming up with initiatives in coming to fight corruption within their spheres of operation. When the scourge of corruption has overwhelmed provincial/regional and local spheres, it is within the powers of national government to intervene to find solutions as well as to institute appropriate anti-corruption policy framework (Ramaite, 1999:175).

Generally, the most vital tool in the fight against corruption is access to information, taking cognisance of the fact that an informed citizen is an empowered one. This is what one might call ‘sunshine law’ which implies giving the media, private citizens, and watchdog organisations direct access to all official reports on the use of resources, thereby enhancing transparency and public accountability. In terms of information on corruption, citizens should have access to information on the root causes and types of corruption and the consequences thereof. In developing countries, Osborne and Plastrik (1997:239) argue that “the best defences against many types of corruption are full information on corruption, consequences for performances and prosecution of illegal activity”. If everyone in a system faces consequences when performance or the integrity of an institution suffers, as a result of corrupt practices, such action drives costs of service delivery up” (ibid). This implies that corrupt actions are expensive to the institution in terms of resources as well as a drawback to its integrity and reputation. It should also be noted that the fight against corruption will always be met with stiff resistance from those outside the circle of people committed to addressing the scourge. There are those outside the circles and those inside the circle where corrupt practices are done who question the need, viability and even the legitimacy of an anti-corruption drive. Then there are those who are part of the anti-corruption drive and initiatives who raise certain questions on existing anti-corruption drives, institutions and practices (Van der Merwe, 2001:25). These two divergent classes of people in society are in a constant tug-of-war on how best corruption should be minimised, curtailed or eradicated altogether. This antagonism does

help in the combating of corruption because in such a war against corruption, the first important thing is for the people involved in the fight against corruption to harbour a team spirit and show trust for each other. However the most outstanding challenge (and impossibility!) is to diagnose the mind set of different people involved in the fight against corruption. In some cases some of those involved in the fight against corruption are beneficiaries of corrupt practices and would not want to see the curtailment of avenues that had enabled them to gain a lifeline over the years. Such people present rotten apples in the team that is fighting against corruption and as such makes it difficult for a team spirit to prevail.

LEGISLATION GOVERNING THE PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION

Despite the fact that a plethora of legal instruments governing the prevention of corruption are in existence, the scourge still persists in different forms. While many governments and public officials might be aware of the existence of corruption and corrupt practices in reckless abandon, these are often not compelled to action because of a combination of personal and systemic factors. Most African countries are signatories to most of these international and regional anti-corruption instruments and this makes the country legally bound to fight against corruption. Andrew Legg (2014) identifies a set of international and regional instruments/conventions that seek to inform the combat against corruption and which provides a normative legislative framework from which countries can draw as they put anti-corruption policies in place. Among the most notable of these instruments include The UN Convention Against Corruption; The AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption; The OECD Anti-Bribery Convention; The SADC Anti-Bribery Convention as well as The SADC Protocol Against Corruption. It is imperative to acknowledge that all the laws in the world will not stop corruption unless and until the culture within which it exists is changed. There always will be ways of getting around laws and accounting schemes.

International and Regional Instruments

Most African countries are party to a number of international and regional conventions that set out obligations to fight corruption in their respective constituencies. One of the countries in Africa that boasts of a myriad of anti-corruption policies is South Africa which has enacted domestic legislation in order to give effect to the commitments enshrined in these conventions (Donnelly, 2013). These conventions need to be brought into effect domestically. There are two approaches that a

country can follow in making an international piece of law binding in its domestic jurisdiction, namely monism and dualism. If a country follows a monism approach, an international piece of legislation is incorporated directly into that country's legal system without a need for the country to adopt a domestic piece of legislation to give effect to the international law. In dualist countries such as South Africa, there is a difference between national law and international law. International law needs to be translated into national law, and without this translation, the international law does not apply (Legg, 2013). So there must be a piece of national law that explicitly incorporates the international law, otherwise it does not become part of national law and citizens cannot rely on it nor can judges apply it and national laws that contradict it remain in force (Legg, 2013; Donnelly, 2013).

The UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)

The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) was ratified by South Africa in 2004 and came into force in 2005. South Africa is one of 168 parties to the convention, which means that it accepts the terms of the convention and is legally bound by its provisions. Under UNCAC, South Africa is also obliged to help other parties to prevent and fight corruption by providing technical assistance if necessary.

Some of the key features of the UNCAC are the requirements to take decisive action to:

- Prevent corruption
- Criminalise corruption
- Co-operate with other countries in the fight against corruption, and
- Recover assets corruptly acquired.
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These are not going to happen by themselves, says the UNCAC – parties must ensure that certain steps and processes are in place so that everybody can get involved. These requirements include the promotion of active participation of individuals and groups, including civil society and community-based organisations (CBOs), in the prevention of and fight against corruption; codes or standards of conduct for public officials; and appropriate training so that they can perform their functions effectively and honestly.

These anti-corruption policies must comply with the rule of law, and foster integrity, transparency and accountability;

Whistle-blowers are also covered under the convention, which states that parties should consider incorporating measures into their domestic legal systems to provide protection against unjustified treatment of persons who report corruption in good faith (ISS, 2013). South Africa's obligations in terms of this convention find expression in

domestic legislation such as the Prevention and Combatting of Corrupt Activities Act; the Prevention of Organised Crime Act; the Protected Disclosures Act (also known as the Whistle-blowing Act); and the Criminal Procedure Act, among others (Legg, 2013).

The AU Convention against Corruption

The African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption was adopted in 2003 and came into force in 2005. In 2004 South Africa signed the convention and ratified it in 2005. It has a number of provisions similar to those of the UN Convention against Corruption. The AU convention requires signatories to establish, maintain and strengthen independent, national anti-corruption authorities or agencies.

The OECD Anti-Corruption Convention

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Anti-bribery Convention establishes legally binding standards to criminalise bribery of foreign public officials in international business transactions. Under the OECD convention, parties must take measures to establish that, under their own laws, it's a criminal offence for any person to bribe a foreign public official to obtain an improper benefit in international business. Parties must ensure that such action is punishable.

The SADC Protocol against Corruption

The Southern African Development Community's Protocol against Corruption was adopted by heads of state at the August 2001 summit in Malawi. This was the first sub-regional anti-corruption treaty in Africa. The SADC Protocol against Corruption provides for the prevention, detection and punishment of corruption. It also covers co-operation between states, and corruption in both the public and private sectors. The protocol recognises that demonstrable political will and leadership are essential in the fight against corruption. It affirms the need to garner public support for initiatives to combat corruption. Given the gravity with which corruption is treated in most African countries, most of these countries have enacted domestic legislation in order to give effect to the commitments enshrined in these conventions. However, compliance with the dictates of these provisions is another thing, as it has become common for high-ranking public servants to be involved in corrupt practices.

IMPACT OF CORRUPTION ON DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

The World Bank (1992; 1994) has presented the African

continent as one riddled with corruption, violence and undemocratic institutions of governance and consequently not prepared for good governance. In much of Africa, the limited 'good governance, has been epitomised by predictable, open, and enlightened policymaking, a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos, an executive arm of government accountable for its actions; and a strong civil society participating in public affairs; and all behaving under the rule of law' is difficult to implement because most (if not) all these prerequisites are absent (World Bank, 1992; 1994). It should however be acknowledged that dictatorship is common on the continent, characterised by high levels of corruption, electoral manipulation and fraudulent electoral processes, all tantamount to corruption. Consequently, corruption has tended to hold the continent's democratic journey at ransom. Andrade (2002:2) has described corruption as "the cancer of democracy, the enemy of citizens, and a friend of dictators". This implies that it is not the general populace who benefit from corrupt tendencies by the political elite. As a result citizens' welfare is under threat due to corruption at different levels of the democratic and governance processes. In this regard, Andrade (2002:3) has further noted that it is becoming abundantly evident today that corruption is not simply an economic or developmental impediment, but also a threat to people's wellbeing and existence". Furthermore corruption has both political, economic and social connotations and costs that society as a whole has to pay. Consequently it can be argued that corruption has presented a burden on democratic institutions, governance processes and society at large. Although it can be acknowledged that the cost of curtailing corruption are great, but in some cases the practice of 'whistle-blowing' becomes important as those who reveal corrupt practices are sure to be rewarded, especially in countries where even the criminal justice systems are also corrupt.

In a corrupt society, lawlessness reigns, compromising the rule of law. Andrade (2002:4) presents an elaborate summary of the adverse effects of corruption on democratic governance which include:

a reduction of equal opportunities among citizens; limits representation and participation meaning that a few individuals take control of over state's affairs; erodes the institutional capacity of government by creating networks of influence and connections and undermines government's legitimacy as it ceases to serve the public.

In addition to adversely impacting on citizens' consciences, attitudes and conduct, corruption leads to the evolution of a leadership that is arrogant, divorced from the populace and behaves with impunity and total disregard to the majority's needs (Kunaka and Mashumba, 2002:23). Such a scenario creates a restive

populace whose alignment to the political establishment is unpredictable, especially given dis-connect between the political leadership and the general populace. Consequently in such a case, corruption creates and promotes political, economic and social chaos and instability, which situation defies democratic governance. To reinforce the debilitating impact of corruption on democratic governance, Andrade (2002) has coined a theory and scientific formula $C=P+M-R$ and A , in which Corruption is equal to Power plus Monopoly minus Responsibility and Accountability. Simply put, the formula means despot leadership assumes power and monopolises public institutions and is not responsible or accountable to the general populace. However this formula defies democratic practice taking into cognisance that democracy and good governance embrace sound ethical principles and standards, good and positive consciences, attitudes and conduct of political leadership. Democracy and good governance are practices that do not hold in constrained societies where corruption thrives, and civil and political liberties are restricted. Given that corruption is abuse of power, it leads to repressive practices, robs citizens of their inalienable right to participation in the governance and democratic processes. Subsequently corruption can be attributed to undermining of foundations, values and morals of democratic societies.

In addition, corruptions impacts negatively on other tenets of democratic governance, notably rule of law, political processes, governance as well as civil society. There can be no talk of democracy without the involvement of civil society. In this paper elements of democratic governance include good governance, rule of law and civil society. Therefore a discussion on the impact of corruption on the rule of law, political processes, good governance as well as civil society is undertaken below.

Rule of Law

The rule of law is one of the most vital pillars of democratic governance as it ensures that the operations of government are within the confines of existing laws. Just like in most African countries, there is no clear boundaries and distinction between the party and government, let alone office-bearers. This recycling of personalities between party politics and government functions has impacted negatively on governance. The judiciary has been the most affected by this lack of separation between political party and government structures and this has opened doors to corrupt practices within the judiciary, where in most cases, high ranking party functionaries get away with crime. It has been noted that corruption in the judiciary derives from its weak institutional functioning, with a number of judges coming

from within the ranks of political party, with no adequate training, but party loyalty and militancy (Kunaka and Mashumba, 2002:24). This situation has tended to compromise the capacity of the judiciary to make informed judiciary decisions, let alone against fellow party functionaries. What has further fuelled corruption is the poor working conditions, working under rudimentary conditions and getting poor remuneration. Consequently, where poorly qualified judges with no ethnics to talk about working for poor incentives, they are bound to become easy prey for corruption and are more likely to abuse their office for personal gain. This misuse and abuse of power breeds corruption which negatively impacts on the existence of the rule of law. With so much power bestowed upon most public servants, chances of engaging in illicit and corrupt activities are high. The holding of too much power in the hands of a few creates a situation where the judiciary system simply exists to serve individual interests to the detriment of the majority (Isaac, 2002:24).

In most countries, the legislature and the judiciary have become hostages of the executive who decides in what form draft bills should be submitted for ascension by the executive. With the executive and other high ranking party functionaries wielding much power and existing above the law, the judiciary no longer functions as the nation's legal and constitutional guardians but becomes a vehicle for corruption and injustice, having succumbed to the whims of the powerful politicians and the rich in society. With corruption in high places, the moral and ethical authority of the judiciary system becomes questionable, thereby rendering the judiciary powerless, ineffective, insufficient, and lacking in credibility (Kunaka and Mashumba, 2002:25).

With rampant corruption allowed to prevail, it gives the public an impression that some people are above the law and that all principles of equality before the law, right to life, protection and equal treatment are just myths. Eventually the public loses confidence in the judiciary system as well as the political dispensation. That has a negative impact on democratic practice. While the enforcement mechanisms may be difficult, but political commitment and community participation in fighting corruption within society can go a long way in minimising corrupt tendencies, especially by public officials, in addition to the 'whistle-blower' concept. Law enforcement agents should also be well-paid to be able to overcome the temptation of engaging in corruption.

Political Processes

One of the most devastating effects of corruption has been on the political processes. Most political processes in Africa have earned notoriety through manipulation of legislation and legal instruments, electoral fraud and in

some case vote-buying. Despite the existence of multi-parties, their existence does not translate to democracy because citizens' affairs continue to be presided over by the same political elites, some for more than four decades. Corruption is at the epi-centre of such long existence in the political centre stage. The constant division and factionalism within major opposition parties leads to the suspicion that the old colonial tactic of divide-and-rule is at play as the ruling elites incite opposition political parties against each other, thereby making chances of coalition among opposition parties remote (Kunaka and Mashumba, 2002:27). The more divided and fragmented the opposition is, the better opportunities and chances the ruling elites are able to perpetuate their reign (ibid). Consequently the political playing field becomes uneven, taking away any opportunity for equal political participation and representation. Corruption by the ruling elites through manipulation of the political process creates imbalances between competing parties and unfair to those seeking to stand as candidates for their respective parties.

Monopolisation of state power enables the ruling elites to control the economic and governmental instruments and mechanisms (Kunaka and Mashumba, 2002:28) as they turn the monopoly of the political process into a privilege and exclusiveness of an elite who dominate the political process and rule undemocratically (Makumbe, 1998:14). Given that those in power have the necessary networks and connections at their disposal, they are able to decide on the electoral and participatory regulatory framework on behalf of the general populace, making genuine citizen participation a pipe dream. Given that most ruling parties, especially in Africa wield much economic power, they are able to manipulate the political process to their advantage and perpetuate their dominance over the political scene (Isaac in Kunaka and Mashumba, 2002:28). It is therefore not surprising that most ruling parties in Africa are not new in the political scene with some having been in power for decades.

For opposition political parties, these are ill-resourced and as such do not possess both political and economic power. With meagre resources at their disposal, opposition political parties do not stand a dent of a chance to stand against the ruling party in elections. Resources create opportunities and those that have more resources have more opportunities to reach out to the voters and according to Makumbe, (2010:17) "are even able to rig the election results if they know they are going to lose". In the end opposition parties depend on government subsidies. However, the opposition's dependence on government subsidies makes them vulnerable to manipulation and corruption (Kunaka and Mashumba, 2002:29) and this compromises their confidence, even on the face of evident victory.

Political corruption has bred politicians who join the ruling party to get rich quick. Promotion is based on

which political party one belongs. Those who happen to belong or are connected to ruling party find themselves controlling the economy of the country, with most of such politicians becoming executive directors of parastatals, CEOs and consultants of companies. The incumbents do not only have political power, but economic power as well. However it is unfortunate that most of the politicians-cum-executive directors do not, in most cases, technical or professional expertise, but it by virtue of being members of the ruling party that they got such appointments. The corrupt part is that there are more professionally-qualified individuals who can take up such important position, but because they do not belong to the club of the ruling elites, they do not have access to such influential positions. Therefore politics has become the launching pad to economic and social power and prosperity. This means that political participation becomes meaningless as corruption continues to make political participation unfair, uneven by excluding the great majority of the people. Political patronage creates the gap between those who control political and economic power and the controlled. It has been argued that in countries where corruption is systematic, grand and organised, the majority of citizens find themselves completely alienated from politics and have resigned themselves to fate (Mandaza, 1991:21; Makumbe, 2010:14). This could possibly be the reason and intentions of corrupt power to make people resign themselves from political participation so that the ruling elites continue to manipulate and control the political process for their selfish ends. This shows that political power perpetuates the monopoly and control of power by the elite. At the same, it stifles political competition, social transformation and voices of the ordinary people as well as participatory political processes. However, political parties that stay in power longer than is necessary tend to be blurred by power and lose political sight, especially given that the development of democracy and respect for civil and political liberties require a periodic power change that allows participation and political competition on equal basis.

Good Governance

Debates around the practice of good governance and democracy have indicated the existence of a symbiotic relationship as it stands to reason that there can be no 'good governance' without democracy, especially given that democracy is a guarantee for good governance (Gutto, 1990:13; Graham et al, 2003:53; Okafor, 1997:37). In reality 'bad governance' is no governance and signifies the end of government and a threatened or total collapse, as is evident in many African states (Mandaza, 1991:11). Graham *et al*, (2003:53) have identified eight components of good governance which are that it is: participatory,

consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law; in addition, that it minimises corruption and takes the views of the minorities into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society (Graham, 2003:53). It is vital to take note of relation between democracy and corruption from this assertion. Governance is not only about where to go, but also about who should be involved and in what capacity (Nye & Donahue, (2000). As a result the practice of governance involves citizens and draws from their experiences and participation.

It has been noted that most governments have highly politicised governance systems where most public servants hold senior posts in the ruling party (Isaacs, 2002:30). In jostling for senior party posts which would eventually lend incumbents senior government posts, corruption is rife. The same goes for local governance where those bestowed with the authority to make decisions are political party functionaries whose appointment is based on party militancy and not on educational qualifications and expertise. This has tended to fuel corruption as the incumbents feel increasingly insecure and promote party patronage and benefaction for them to remain relevant. Such an arrangement has also helped in obliterating the divide between party policies and government policies. Consequently what happens in such an arrangement is at a tangent with the normative elements of good governance as corruption takes away and/or erodes the basic elements of good governance as stipulated by Graham et al (2003).

Corruption destabilises the good governance equilibrium by creating loss of values, and credibility of the establishment in the eyes of the populace. Just like in political party systems, new structures and institutions are corruptly created to justify corrupt appointments and practices. For example, public servants, due to greed for money end up “providing personal, self-seeking public services and creating bureaucratic inconveniences (Isaac, 2002:31). Similarly corruption provokes mutations and overlapping of duties causing chaos and confusion (ibid). In essence, overlapping of duties is inefficiency of the highest order as it renders service delivery ineffective and expensive. On the same note, once overlapping has taken root, the good virtues of governance are eroded leaving citizens with a loss of good will and corrosion of services that serve the common good.

Corruption also contributes to the creation of cliques of ruling elites who amass and confine power within family relations. Entry into such cliques guarantees a wealthy lifestyle and exclusion from such cliques guarantees benefits befitting of those in the periphery. Family tie among the ruling elites become stronger at the expense of connection and proximity with the citizens.

Consequently, few families, races and ethnic groups are strategically placed to exercise control over key government and public posts (Donnelly, 2013). The eventual accumulation and concentration of power by a few will create a blockade in the implementation and execution of policies (Isaac, 2002:31). Such is the impact of corruption on governance as the more powerful, influential become embark on accumulation of wealth coupled with the vices of buying off people’s support and silence due to the absence of genuine support from the people. With the public administration infested and infected with corrupt practices, public services are mutilated to such an extent that citizens are unable to get services or bribe officials to get such services, with officials being able to abuse power granted by law for illicit and personal gain.

The Impact of corruption on civil society

To a varying degree, corruption exists in almost all countries. However, the degree to which it impacts the common people’s lives and increases poverty is directly proportional to the level of this scourge and how widespread it is in society. A country’s development depends on how much of the States resources are lost through illicit practices. In a country where corruption is limited to a small number of projects and where common people do not encounter it on a daily basis, the adverse impact tends to be marginal and does not jeopardise the welfare of its people (Ahmad, 2014). In contrast, in poor countries, it has a significant impact. A recent World Bank report lists corruption and lack of transparency as the two core reasons that hamper economic development in most parts of Africa. However, these indices do not convey the terrible pain and sufferings that the brutal practice of corruption has caused to the common people (Narsoo, 1991).

Once cannot talk about democracy without making reference to civil society. Civil society organisations (CSOs) seek to enhance democratic space among citizens as well as contributing to the creation of an informed citizenry. Without a vibrant civil society democracy is rendered defunct as government cannot effectively reach out and conscientise citizens. And without the participation of citizens in governance processes, there is no democracy. As a result civil society plays a crucial role in cultivating and inculcating a democratic culture through citizen enlightenment by providing a communication link through which citizens can channel their grievances to the state for responsiveness (Bracking, 2005:6). However given that corruption creates despondency within the citizenry, and loss of confidence on the state, such illicit practice equally impacts on democracy. This means that civil society can operate in a stable environment and violent

situations impedes the efficient and effective operation of civil society. It is commonplace that corruption is associated with organized crime. Organised crime involves violent criminal activities under which civil society cannot effectively operate. Therefore violent situations impede the operation and existence of a vibrant civil society and consequently the crippling of democratic institutions. Where formal citizenship rights are not well-entrenched, it is civic groups that provide the channels through which citizens can make their voices heard in government decision-making, thus helping to promote transparency and accountability, curb corruption and build a social consensus in favour of political and economic reform (Azarya, 1992:25).

The media has been torn between informing citizens on events and developments in the country. However corrupt high ranking officials have been at war with the independent media for unearthing corrupt practices perpetrated by public officials in high places. In an effort to stifle the independence of the media, some governments have enacted restrictive media laws that curtail the free flow of information and gag journalists. In the end the media becomes an instrument at the mercy of the ruling elite who determine what should be published and what should not. This is a violation of citizens' right of access to information. In some cases "corrupt officials try to buy off the media or infiltrate it with agents" (Kunaka, 2002:33). Individual journalists can also become targets of smear campaign with a view to discredit them through both electronic and print media. Through corrupt public officials, different vices and intimidation are perpetrated against the media. Corrupt regimes do not favour nor support organized civil society and a strong independent media for fear of being exposed, hence in most cases these are either marginalized, harassed or banned through a set of restrictive legislation. Despite organized and carefully planned campaigns against independent media houses by the state, any organized civil society has always prevailed, with some CSOs transforming into political parties and going on to win elections, for example in Zambia in 1991 and in Zimbabwe in 2008. This has proved that an organized civil society has the propensity to become a champion of democracy and good governance. In some cases, civil society has been able to take over from conventional oppositional politics, which in most cases is inhibited by corruption and lack of financial resources to confront the ruling parties in electoral contests.

Given the wide ranging powers that most government officials possess, it can be countered by a fearless and vibrant civil society. Whenever corruption exists, civil society becomes crippled and portrayed as the enemy of the people. The development of a strong civil society and organized civil society coupled with an efficient media is intrinsically connected to the rule of law and open political

processes (Makumbe, 2010); good governance and institutions that promote and defend democratic values (Nye & Donahue, 2000); and freedom of expression and association as well as the right of citizens to be informed (Gutto, 1990).

Political parties harbour different ideologies which they then feed on the gullible citizens, either through persuasion, by coercion or buying off. Isaac (2002:35) has noted that "political parties divide people into ideological dogmas and political utopias, ethnic, racial and religious loyalty". This has tended to divide the citizens around these different political ideologies. CSOs and the media come in to unite the people common concerns, interests and needs (Narsoo, 1991). CSOs become unifier and promoter of democratic practice and good governance.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that corruption has a huge adverse effect on democratic processes and impedes good governance. It has been noted that corruption tends to flourish where governance is weak and where institutions of accountability are marginalised. A culture of corruption also undermines public confidence in public institutions. Corruption distorts policy, leads to poorer public services and infrastructure, reduces spending on public services such as health and education and creates budgetary problems. Similarly, corruption distorts the political process, substituting patron-client relationships for policy-focused political competition. With regards to the allocation of resources, it has been noted that corruption reduces political competition because oppositional political parties are ill-resourced therefore reducing their chances of enticing the electorate. Corruption reduces the state to a monopoly of elite families and ruling party members and pushes the majority to the margins of the governance process. Finally due to its role in stifling the independent media, corruption impedes and persecutes alternative sources of information, thereby violating the rights of freedom of expression and the right to information on the part of citizens.

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Legal Instruments

- The UN Convention Against Corruption.
- The AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption.
- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s Anti-Bribery Convention.
- The SADC Anti-Bribery Convention.
- The SADC Protocol Against Corruption.