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Defining corruption in context

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We would particularly like to acknowledge the input from our colleagues at the Centre for the Study of Corruption, who have contributed insight and challenge to our conceptual framework and the detail of the sub-definitions; and to colleagues in other universities and faculties with whom these issues have been discussed over many years, including those who attended our online presentation of an early draft and gave invaluable feedback.

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[1] House of Lords Debate on Corruption in the United Kingdom: Hansard Volume 824, Thursday 13 October 2022, Lord Sharpe at 3.57pm.

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Authors' note: Defining corruption is contentious territory. We are publishing our approach as a working paper to generate debate and feedback that we can use to refine the paper prior to submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

Contents

Summary

Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain which harms the public interest, typically breaching laws, regulations, and/or integrity standards.

A definition of corruption is presented here which builds on the long-standing definition used by Transparency International and others of "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain". In addition, this paper provides an elaboration of each key component and embeds the definition in an understanding of the public interest. The paper explains how the definition can be applied sequentially in practice to assist those involved in research and anti-corruption programme design and policymaking.

1. Introduction

The conceptual framework outlined in this paper provides a theoretical background to a definition of corruption that can be applied to real-life scenarios and not simply abstract debate. It is intended primarily for use by anti-corruption policymakers but is also a useful framework for corruption research and analysis.[2]

While the literature on defining corruption is extensive, there is no firm consensus on a shared definition and this often means that policymakers fall back on legal terms and corruption offences, which tend to be narrowly defined (Philp 1997, 2006; Nye 1967; van Klaveren 2002). Such legalistic approaches contradict much of the social science work on corruption which concludes that conduct may be corrupt even if it does not explicitly break laws or rules. Significantly, any definition reliant on the legal framework or institutional norms is likely to be inadequate because laws or institutions themselves may be corruptly influenced or captured (Thompson 1995; Lessig 2011; Kaufmann and Vicente 2011; Dávid-Barrett 2023). Moreover, a non-legal definition of corruption can be used to raise awareness of corruption risks, and to situate them within wider debates about ethics and social norms.

There are several reasons why researchers, policymakers and practitioners would benefit from an elaborated definition of corruption, which provides clarity, with an underlying theoretical basis, on what kinds of situations, practices and behaviours are ruled in and out of a conception of corruption.

First, although there will necessarily be ongoing debate about whether a definitive definition can ever be established, the precision provided by this elaborated definition is important for researchers. Not only does it offer transparency on the strengths, shortcomings, and implications of their own definitional approaches, but also helps to locate their position (or approach) in relation to the work of others. Clarity over precisely what is included or excluded from analyses helps to ensure that we are not working with an incomplete understanding of the manifold forms corruption can take in different contexts and settings, which in turn can skew our understanding of where corruption exists as well as how and why it happens. Understanding how different forms of corruption connect and contrast can assist in identifying where corruption is most prevalent and damaging to society, the economy, institutions, or organisations. Such granular evidence leads to better-informed decision-making and the design of more effective anti-corruption policies and practice.

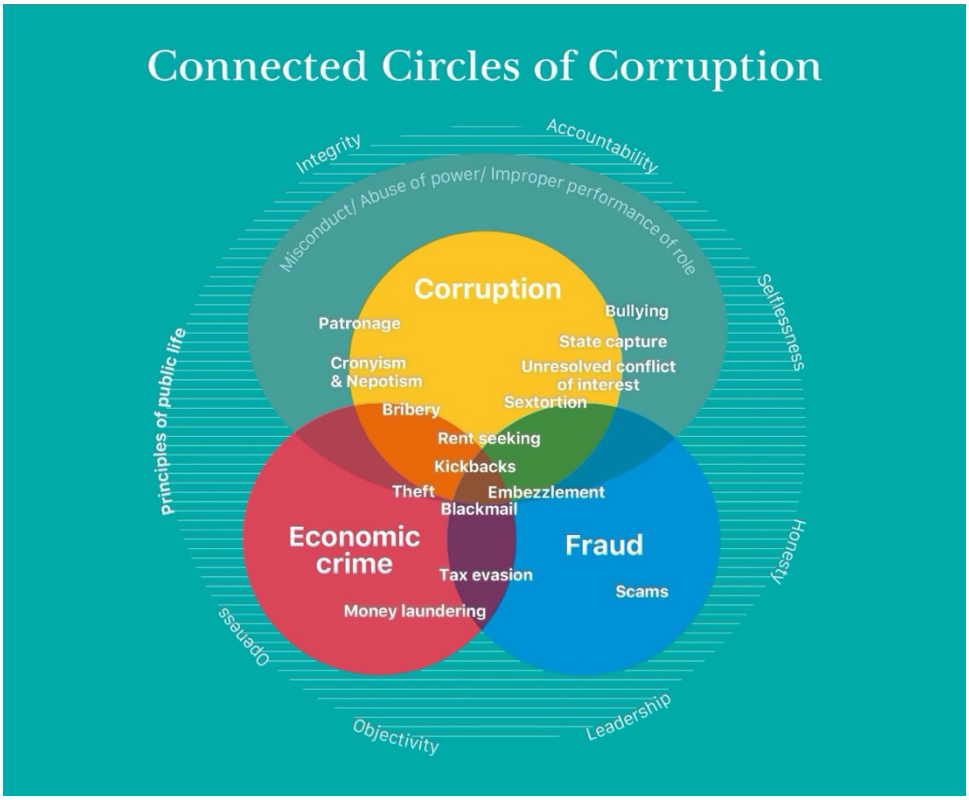
Second, it is important to be clear about what is *not* corruption, as well as what is. The term 'corruption' is often used as a catch-all for many different types of behaviour, but equally sometimes other terms such as 'fraud' or 'economic crime' are used when corruption might be more accurate. Widening the definition too far or fudging the definition—for example, by seeking to incorporate fraud or other areas of economic crime—can result in talking at

[2] This elaborated definition was developed with reference to the UK context, and the UK's approach to tackling corruption – but the authors believe it has broader application.

cross-purposes or collecting inconsistent or non-comparable data. This can mean that attention and resources are diverted elsewhere, to more observable or measurable forms of economic crime, while corruption gets overlooked in areas of society and the global economy where it poses a grave risk. The overlaps among these terms and complexity of the universe of corruption types is illustrated in Figure 1. Clarity on the definition of corruption and its relationship with other phenomena helps government and civil society professionals working on corruption to demarcate the scope of their activities and provide a baseline against which to design effective strategies for tackling corruption in sectoral, functional, or regional contexts. It also helps to locate anti-corruption policy within the mandate of different ministries and agencies and to ensure consistency of approach across government departments.

Finally, this elaborated framework aims to be applicable in both global and local contexts, helping to structure meaningful and necessary debate about the nature, prevalence, significance, and impact of corruption around the world. Our definition and analysis draw on a range of perspectives to enrich our understanding of corruption; in doing so we aim to avoid the typical problem of definitions existing in disciplinary or institutional siloes, which means that they are not applicable or comparable more broadly (see Ellis 2019).

Figure 1. Connected Circles of Corruption[3]



[3] References: Committee on Standards in Public Life, www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life; Jancsics, D. 2019. "Corruption as resource transfer", Public Administration Review, 79 4): 523–537. Note: categorisations and positioning within circles are illustrative not definitive.

We have found that in the UK context, definitional ambiguity has arguably led government, accountability institutions and law enforcement agencies to be somewhat ambivalent towards tackling corruption; meaning that they do not invest adequate resources in prevention and detection, which has ultimately led to a lacuna in our knowledge about how corruption manifests in the UK at the national, regional, local, and sectoral levels. It is unlikely that the UK is unusual in this respect; hence the aspiration that the approach outlined here will help to support grounded and evidence-based explorations of corruption in varied contexts.

We intend this to be a working definition that can usefully guide both academics and practitioners as they navigate corruption in different practical situations, as a changeable and varied phenomenon related to a range of other complex processes. It certainly will not prove to be the definitive definition as this is an ongoing debate among scholars and practitioners of many disciplines.

2. The definition

We propose the following definition and elaborations:

> *Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain which harms the public interest, typically breaching laws, regulations, and/or integrity standards.*

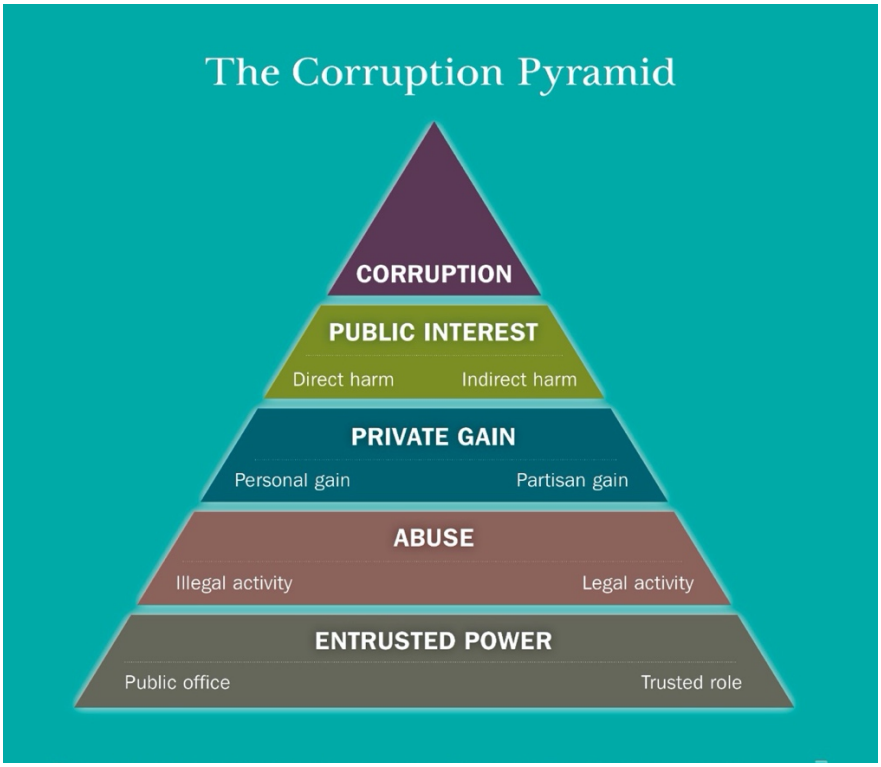
- "**Entrusted power**" is the power vested in a trusted role (in public office, the private and non-profit sectors, or religio-cultural institutions) held by an individual or institution that exercises discretionary power in relation to another person or entity.
- An "**abuse**" is a violation of the duties or misuse of the power associated with the trusted role, either through action or inaction. The abuse does not necessarily have to be illegal to be corrupt and can include a breach of regulations and/or integrity standards. It can comprise a pattern or aggregation of activities which amount collectively to abuse.
- "**Private gain**" involves (financial and non-financial) personal gains that accrue to the individual(s) or their personal acquaintance(s) and partisan gains that benefit a particular group or institution; it may include the avoidance of losses, or gratification gained through inflicting harm on others.
- Harm to the **"public interest"** can include direct harms to the intended beneficiaries of the entrusted power, as well as indirect harms caused by a) undermining the rule of law and/or the purpose of an institution, profession, or other relevant body; b) failure to perform a function whose *proper* exercise is in the public interest; and/or c) violating the established rights of individuals or groups.

Not all failures to act in the public interest are corrupt, only those that constitute an abuse of entrusted power for private gain. From a public policy perspective, the public interest may also provide the grounds for government interest or intervention.

2.1 Structuring the definition

The Corruption Pyramid illustrates the scope of each dimension of the definition. The Pyramid should be read from the bottom up.

Figure 2. The Corruption Pyramid



Entrusted power is the first dimension and forms the foundation of the definition. The next dimensions to be considered in turn are the abuse, then private gain and finally public interest; each has their own scope for interpretation, discussed in detail below.

This definition is adapted from the definition of corruption used by Transparency International (TI): "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain", which itself is rooted in the approach of predecessors such as Nye (1967) and Huntington (1968), and the World Bank's "abuse of public office for private gain". The TI definition has the advantage that it is widely known and applied by researchers and anti-corruption practitioners. Not only is it recognised globally owing to its association with the work of Transparency International and other global civil society organisations, but it has also been adopted in varying forms by governments around the world; for example, it is referred to by the UK government in its Anti-corruption Strategy for 2017-22 (HM Government 2017).

However, TI's approach leaves considerable scope for the interpretation of its constituent parts (Pozsgai-Alvarez 2020); and indeed, TI does not provide guidance on how to apply the definition in practice.[4] There has been a tendency to narrow the application of the definition to transactional forms of corruption, rather than viewing the problem systemically or as institutionally embedded.

3. Our contribution

The contribution of this paper is five-fold. Above all, the paper seeks to provide a resolution to certain recurring questions around definitions centred on public office or entrusted power, by giving a clear interpretational direction to the key concepts.

3.1 Grounded elaboration of the constituent parts of the definition

We provide an intellectually grounded elaboration of each of the constituent parts of the definition—entrusted power, abuse, private gain, and public interest. We detail a framework for understanding the scope of each element and elaborate on the ways in which it can be interpreted in different contexts to identify the range of practices and processes which could be labelled corrupt.

We identify our own position on each of these dimensions and justify our reasoning, but the aim here is not to prescribe a particular interpretation for others to follow. Rather, we contend that understanding the range of interpretations of corruption is important, regardless of the position taken by any individual institution, policymaker, or researcher. Each should be able to understand where their approach to corruption stands in relation to others. For example, policymakers should be able to understand how their working definition of corruption is related to but differs from more restrictive legal definitions, used by legal practitioners for proving and punishing criminal activity.

3.2 Sequential application of the constituent parts

We argue that the four dimensions of the definition—entrusted power, abuse, private gain, and the public interest—need to be considered in turn and in a set sequence (see Figure 2). Each element is structured as a test, cumulatively assisting in identifying cases or examples of corruption. This suggests analysing corruption as a set of conditions that build, layer upon layer, on one another. In previous interpretations of corruption definitions, such as Pozsgai-Alvarez (2020), these elements have been understood as overlapping, rather than as a series of sequential steps.

The sequential approach to these tests is a key innovation of our approach. Entrusted power as a relationship between parties is considered first, as this provides the context in which

[4] The U4 Anti-corruption Resource Centre does provide a brief elaboration of the definitions: https://www.u4.no/topics/anti-corruption-basics/basics.

corrupt activity is understood to take place. Abuse is considered second, because the breach of trust in that power relationship is the critical next stage to understanding corruption. Not all abuses are corrupt or corrupting and so they need to be considered within the context of entrusted power relationships. Private gain is considered third, because private gains are only corrupt if they flow from the abusive activities of those in positions of entrusted power. Public interest is considered fourth, because the first three tests—entrusted power, abuse, and private gain—can still leave researchers and practitioners with ambiguous cases, which the public interest test can assist in resolving.

3.3 Specification of the scope of abuse

We specify the scope of abuse as the breach of laws, regulations, and/or integrity standards. All such breaches interfere with the fulfilment of a particular role or duty entrusted to the individual or institution. The "abuse" element in traditional approaches to defining corruption is sometimes described as "empty" (Rothstein 2021, 6), in the sense that it can be filled with any subjective idea of what is considered abusive. This is a practical addition, therefore, intended as a reminder that what constitutes abuse is not wholly subjective, but that our understanding of abuses can vary in relation to the role of the individual or institution involved or over time.

3.4 Systemic, institutional, and transactional corruption

One of the prominent critiques of the public office account of corruption, from which the Transparency International definition is derived, is that it focuses on transactional and individual forms of corruption and obscures more systemic or institutional forms. A whole field of study—often annexed from "pure" corruption studies—has developed to explore those more institutionally embedded forms of corruption (Thompson 1995, 2013; Lessig 2011, 2013).

We have sought to bring the notion of systemic and institutional corruption into each dimension of our definitional approach. First, entrusted power is envisaged to be both institutionally and individually relevant: institutions and institutional roles as well as individuals can have delegated power and act on behalf of another entity. Second, the term abuse can describe institutional practices where a pattern or aggregation of activities amount to a collective abuse. Third, private gains can encompass institutional gains, not only those that accrue to individuals. Fourth, the public interest is by its nature non-individual and oriented towards the health and wellbeing of society.

3.5 Incorporation of the public interest within the definition

We incorporate the concept of public interest into our corruption definition. Our approach is not alone in doing so; recent years have seen the development of several definitions, which incorporate the public interest into more traditional approaches (see for example Philp 2015; Miller 2017). However, definitions that rely on the public interest are often disparaged in the political sciences because they are thought to muddy the water and make

comparisons between contexts more difficult (Kurer 2015; Stephenson 2014). Yet reluctance to incorporate public interest into the definition may itself cause confusion because the concept is central to why we care about corruption.

Our framework does not require that the public interest is defined in advance, but only that it is considered as the context in which the three other elements of the definition are applied. In particular we argue that the public interest is useful in contexts where the nature of entrusted power is ambiguous, the activity which might seem *prima facie* to be "corrupt" or abusive in fact promotes a public good, or where the private gain is negligible, but the harm caused is significant.

We therefore argue that corruption cannot be understood simply through the observation of actions or practices, but also requires a consideration of the context in which these activities take place, their meaning and outcomes, including the harm inflicted by them. Ideally, motivation would also be considered, and this is implied in the phrase "for private gain" embedded in the definition. However, since the motivations of any process or action are very difficult (if not impossible) to observe or verify, we advocate for considering outcomes or potential outcomes in the form of harms to the public interest as an alternative test.

4. Elaboration of the definition

4.1 Entrusted power

> *"**Entrusted power**" is the power vested in a trusted role (in public office, the private and non-profit sectors, or religio-cultural institutions) held by an individual or institution that exercises discretionary power in relation to another person or entity.*

The notion of 'power' forms the backbone of all widely adopted modern definitions of corruption. In our definition, 'entrusted power' provides the foundation on which a series of subsequent tests is built. If no relationship of entrusted power is established, then the appropriate label for what is observed or experienced is not corruption according to this definition. It is the centrality of this entrusted power relationship that distinguishes corruption from other forms of economic crime, fraud, criminality, or more straightforward abuses of power.

The verb "entrust" has two meanings in the *Oxford English Dictionary* – both of which are invoked in the concept of entrusted power. These are:

> *To assign responsibility for something valued or important to (a person, organisation, etc.); to put one's trust in (a person, organisation, etc.) with regard to a particular task or responsibility.*

> *To place (a person, thing, matter, etc.) in the care, custody, or charge of a specified person, organisation etc. … Also: to commit the safety of (oneself, one's property, etc.) to the care or protection of another.*

In the first meaning, power is assigned or delegated to an individual or an organisation/ institution in relation to a specific set of tasks or responsibilities; but in the second, power is placed in the care of another, implying a much broader transfer of responsibility to make decisions on behalf of and in the interests of another party. In each instance the entrusted party is acting as a *representative*.

This distinction parallels competing theories of political representation, in which representation can be understood either as a system by which representatives act as delegates of those they represent, or as trustees of their interests (Dovi 2018). This distinction holds in contemporary thinking and politics: the potential tension between the two positions was demonstrated aptly by the debates that took place in the UK following the EU Referendum in 2016. These centred on the question of whether the UK Parliament as the elected sovereign institution was duty-bound to uphold the will of the people as expressed in the referendum (subscribing to the delegation model), or whether it held sovereign authority to decide based on its own assessment of the best interests of the nation (the trustee model). However, in the every-day practice of politics these two types of representation tend to become "fused" and function simultaneously, particularly in liberal democratic states (Grant and Keohane 2005, 33).

When considering administrative (or non-elected) roles in society—such as those of civil servants or professionals such as lawyers—the convention has been to consider entrusted power in terms of the delegation model of representation; in line with what is commonly known as the "principal-agent" relationship. This has also been used as the basis for widely-used theories of corruption control, which seek to align the incentives of principals and agents through weakening the information asymmetry and improving oversight (Rose-Ackerman and Palifka 2016). This holds in certain contexts where direct instructions are given, such as in a private contract between a lawyer and her client or in the implementation of explicit policy decisions.

However, in other administrative contexts, where individuals or groups have high levels of expertise or knowledge (e.g., judges or doctors) or play active roles in "making" rather than "implementing" policy, the entrusted power relationship more closely resembles a trustee model of representation (Grant and Keohane 2005, 32). As such the dual form of representation—or entrusted power—can be identified not only in political contexts, but in a range of other public and private settings. In the context of contemporary governance where decision-making and public service delivery is widely dispersed, often involving private sector actors, the boundaries between different forms of representation (or entrusted power) become increasingly blurred. This poses a challenge for the analysis of corruption in context, and the design of accountability mechanisms, particularly for those who emphasise the importance of distinguishing between administrative and political forms

of corruption (Amundsen 2019). However, for the practical purposes of this definition, it suggests that entrusted power, in both its guises, applies in a range of contexts beyond the narrow contingent of formally elected or appointed public office holders (i.e., those with powers entrusted either by the public or parliament).

If we look beyond public office to others who hold entrusted power, our definition therefore also locates corruption outside the public sector such as in the private sector, the not-for-profit sector, or religio-cultural institutions.[5] This is contrary to many academic interpretations of the universe in which corruption can occur. For example, Rothstein (2021, 17) argues decisively that it is corruption's location in the public sphere that distinguishes it from theft or other breaches of trust seen in the private sector; indeed, this is the implied position of any approach based on what Heidenheimer (1970) classified as a public office definition of corruption. Others disagree with this limitation, however, and in purely practical terms we are very familiar with the idea that corruption can and does exist in the private sector, although the meaning of private sector corruption is not settled, even by those who ostensibly recognise it.

Argandoña (2003, 4) understands corruption in the private sector as occurring where there is a relationship—such as between lawyer and client or employer and employee—that mimics the principal-agent relationship in the public sector; what might also be considered more broadly as a breach of a fiduciary duty (Newhouse 2014). There is, however, an even broader interpretation, which exists in the practical application of the law in many jurisdictions. As Martini (2014, 1) argues, many laws enacted to address private sector corruption:

> *… aim to ensure that individuals working in the private sector do not make decisions for their own benefit, which could potentially have severe impact on a country's economic development, distorting markets and hampering employee morale and integrity*.

This broader interpretation highlights the role and power of private companies in markets and society and is accepted by many policymakers and global civil society; the private sector is included, for example, in both the UK's Anti-Corruption Strategy and the US Strategy for Countering Corruption. Indeed, in legislating against corruption, many countries focus on bribery, which often involves interactions between private sector and public sector actors, in addition to breaching laws and rules about conduct in public office. The tacit reason for doing so appears to have less to do with the formal granting or delegating of power by one to another, which constitutes entrusting in the strictest sense, but rather reflects the recognition that considerable power resides in the private sector and that with power comes a responsibility to the wider society. We regard this power as having been entrusted

[5] A small number of activities, such as sport, might not fit neatly within a discrete sector, but are covered by these general descriptions.

because the formation of a company implies taking on responsibilities to society, for example by operating within the rule of law.

Building on this approach, we therefore interpret entrusted power to mean any power vested in a trusted role held by an individual or institution that exercises discretionary power in relation to another person or entity and where its abuse potentially harms the public interest. This includes relationships where one party is empowered to act on behalf of another, in the sense of a fiduciary duty established between parties; and, relationships where the role entails broad responsibilities to society, for example those employed in public interest entities and/or companies responsible for critical national infrastructure (in the UK context see, BEIS 2021; s.172 Companies Act[6]) and/or companies that are responsible for delivering public services. One of the clearest manifestations of how the definition applies to the private sector is when individuals or institutions are entrusted to perform their roles in ways consistent with public interest responsibilities.

There is scope here to cause confusion for private sector entities, which may have more than one entrusted power relationship. A private sector company providing public sector services is potentially entrusted first by its shareholders to operate in a manner consistent with the organisation's profit objectives (private interest), while at the same time entrusted by the state to operate in a manner consistent with the public interest. For instance, legal firms might have entrusted powers delegated directly from their clients, but also have responsibilities to public law and the administration of justice.[7] In addition, some entrusted power relationships might be indefinite. For example, there may be a residue of the responsibilities or duties incurred when in an entrusted role that remains once the formal relationship has ended. These could include ongoing responsibilities not to breach confidentiality, or not to trade on insider knowledge.

These are practical considerations, which we argue (below) can be resolved through the incorporation of the public interest into the definition: first, this enables us to prioritise the public relationship over the private relationship; and second, because this enables us to apply to circumstances, such as the revolving door, a framework for considering the extent and duration to which individuals should be subject to restrictions; namely that the public interest should be invoked when determining any constraints on individual freedoms.

The application of the entrusted power test avoids potentially implicating every (subjectively abusive) exercise of power in society. As a result, it does not implicate relationships between individuals in purely private or domestic contexts unless there is a wider public interest at play. For example, the founder and owner of a private, unlisted

[6] 'A director of a company must act in the way he considers, in good faith, would be most likely to promote the success of the company for the benefit of its members as a whole, and in doing so have regard (amongst other matters) to—...(d)the impact of the company's operations on the community and the environment.'

[7] The authors would like to acknowledge Georgia Garrod's MA dissertation (2022) for exploring the implications of this relationship in the legal sector. Garrod, G. 2022. "The enabling of corruption by legal professionals as corruption: Rational choice and new institutional perspectives", MA Thesis, University of Sussex.

company appointing their children to the Board would not usually constitute a case of corruption under our definition, despite this being an example of nepotism. This is because the owner of such a company is not entrusted by any other entity to act on its behalf and therefore this is not an example of the exercise of entrusted power; furthermore, nepotism in this context is unlikely to harm the public interest, even if it might disadvantage some individuals better qualified for that role.

By combining the entrusted power test with the public interest test, our definition of corruption does not over-extend into purely private or domestic settings, but it does allow us to examine whether institutions or organisations invested with fiduciary duties or broader social responsibilities are corrupt or not. This could include private sector companies that are public interest entities (BEIS 2021); religious institutions and their leaders, particularly in contexts where they have a role in formal politics (as in the UK); journalists in situations where they are bound by formal codes of ethics or simply trusted to report honestly; and other professionals such as teachers, doctors and care workers, who are entrusted to undertake various roles essentially on behalf of society itself. Even athletes and sporting organisations could be invested with entrusted power by virtue of their influential place in society and the trust afforded to them by their sponsors, fans, teammates, and opponents to play by the rules.[8]

This raises questions, however, about how to treat contexts where public power has not been formally entrusted to the individuals who are in power (see Johnston 2021). Where power has been seized or is maintained by force and intimidation, we argue that it is the office itself that has the entrusted power, irrespective of the individual who holds the office. In this case, an office that has been seized can retain its entrusted power, in the sense that there remains in place a set of expectations as to how the office will function under both the constitution and internationally recognised principles. The holder of a seized office—such as the president after a coup—may therefore be liable to charges of corruption. However, in an entirely failed state where power ceases to be structured according to any agreed pattern or arrangement, the notions of constitutional office-holding and the public interest are so weak that we can no longer speak of entrusted power.[9] In these extreme cases, although the term corruption might no longer apply according to a strict definition, the individuals who have seized power might still be considered responsible for other serious violations, such as torture, killing and crimes against humanity.

4.2 Abuse

> *An "**abuse**" is a violation of the duties or misuse of the power associated with the trusted role, either through action or inaction. The abuse does not necessarily have to*

[8] This is not designed to be an exhaustive list, but to give a sense of the kind of relationship and role that we understand as being entrusted.

[9] This is also a consideration in colonial contexts, in which the notion of entrusted power is challenged by the absence of consent given by those ruled over. Thanks to Mark Philp for this observation.

be illegal to be corrupt and can include a breach of regulations and/or integrity standards. This can also include a pattern or aggregation of activities which amount to a collective abuse.

The second test involves identifying an abuse. What constitutes an abuse can be limited to an illegal action, or it can encompass a whole spectrum of activities that undermine the trust invested in a role or institution. Some scholars have noted that this leaves open and ambiguous a key aspect of the definition (Rothstein, 2021, 6; Johnston 1996). However, we argue that such openness about the interpretation of abuse is necessary given that perceptions about standards of conduct—what is abusive or appropriate—vary and are subject to change over time, as well as across different contexts and countries. To allow for change is not to collapse into relativism, but rather to acknowledge that standards of conduct are social constructs and thus inevitably open to change and interpretation.

The question then arises, what standards can be used to assess an abuse? Scott (1972) argues that judgements can be based on legal norms, the public interest, or public opinion. Using legal norms as the basis for assessing corruption is an approach favoured by several prominent scholars, for example Della Porta and Vannucci (2012), as well as international organisations such as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, which is responsible for the administration of the *UN Convention against Corruption*. We argue that legal norms in the strictest sense are too restrictive to form the sole basis for establishing whether an abuse has occurred. A reliance on laws and law enforcement to identify corruption places great confidence in the process of law-making itself. It assumes that laws are comprehensive, and that law-making is immune to corrupt manipulation, despite the many risks of improper influence over policy formation often characterised as state capture or legal corruption (Dávid-Barrett 2023). It also puts too much weight on the role of law enforcement to investigate, collect evidence and prove corruption, a costly exercise perhaps best reserved for the most serious individual abuses.

Other norms proposed in place of legal norms usually focus on abuse as a violation of a democratic norm or public office norm, such as equal participation in political decision-making (Warren 2004) or impartiality (Rothstein 2014; 2021). These are more akin to ideals, with any judgements as to whether they are fulfilled likely to be so broadly contested as to be impractical for a working definition.[10]

Scott's other proposed benchmarks for determining whether abuse has occurred are public opinion and the public interest. Since it is not practical to check every case or scenario against public opinion nor possible to agree in advance on the definitive nature of the public interest, we suggest that the application of the term abuse must be decided in some other way. It is important to note that while we do bring to the fore the notion of public interest in our definition, we do not use it as the basis for identifying the abuse in the first instance.

[10] This point is discussed at greater length below.

Our solution follows from an understanding that breaches of trust distort the fulfilment of a particular role or duty—whether by action or inaction. This is closely related to Johnston's (1996, 331) articulation of a neo-classical definition, in that it concerns itself with the political/ public order and consensus over what this entails as the basis for identifying the abuse, and this can clearly vary according to context:

> *"The abuse, according to the legal or social standards constituting a society's system of public order, of a public role or resource for private benefit."*

Therefore, we argue that an abuse is a violation of the duties or misuse of the power associated with the trusted role, either through action or inaction; and that it typically involves breaches of laws, regulations and/or integrity standards. While laws and regulations tend to be codified in some way, integrity standards associated with a particular role have a broader scope. They may be embedded in codes of conduct, which are typically not legally enforceable but rather represent a form of self-regulation within a particular professional community, or simply looser norms or duties associated with a role.

Yet an abuse, for our purposes, does not simply encompass any kind of minor misdemeanour by any individual in a position of entrusted power. The abuse must constitute a violation of the duties or misuse of the power that is *associated with the trusted role*: it is only in the exercise of entrusted powers (powers enacted on behalf of another) that lies the potential to be corrupt. Expressed in the language of institutional corruption, abuse diverts the institution (or role-holder or duty-holder) from fulfilling its purpose (Lessig 2011, 2013), whether that is, for example, to impartially regulate private sector companies, deliver public services, or manage critical infrastructure. In the language of the UK Bribery Act 2010, this might be described as "improper performance of a function" (Section 4). A similar approach is to consider the overall aims or purpose of the norms and duties associated with a role. On this reading, behaviour that obeys the letter of the rules but violates its spirit could be considered corrupt.

4.3 Private gain

> *"**Private gain**" involves (financial and non-financial) personal gains that accrue to individual(s) or their personal acquaintance(s) and partisan gains that benefit a particular group or institution; it may include the avoidance of losses, or gratification gained through inflicting harm on others.*

The third test involves identifying private gain. There is often confusion about what constitutes private gain. Must the gain accrue to the individual perpetrator of corruption (as in personal gain), or should it be acknowledged that one can gain as part of a collective, and thus benefits to political, religious, family, or ethnic groups, or to favoured cronies, can be a relevant motivation for corruption? We argue that the notion of private gain should include partisan gain to a particular group or institution with which the powerholder is associated. The use of the term partisan is adapted from Philp (2024, forthcoming), who uses this term to describe corruption in political settings; we take a broader view and use it to describe

group or institutional gains that might otherwise be overlooked by focusing on the individual.

Furthermore, the gains derived from corruption do not necessarily have to be directly transactional, *quid pro quo* or immediately received. In the case of cronyism, the individual does not necessarily benefit materially from favouring the crony but may gain social standing or status within an informal network or create an undefined reciprocal obligation that might be 'cashed in' at some future date (Jancsics and Jávor 2012). For individuals in certain roles, private gain might involve the simple accumulation or consolidation of power, with no specific purpose other than gratification from exercising that power. Indeed, in some cases, such as some cases of sextortion, the gratification of the individual(s) involved is the primary form of private gain. There may or may not be financial gain. Our sub-definition also encompasses cases in which the benefits might not be apparent, but losses to others can more readily be identified, including breaches of individual or group legal rights. We argue that these cases should fall within the definition of corruption, and therefore include the phrase 'the avoidance of losses, or gratification gained through inflicting harm on others.'

A further complication is that in private sector institutions, private gain is usually intrinsic to the organisation's purposes, and this can make it more difficult to determine when generating private gain on behalf of such an institution should be considered corrupt. This complexity is exemplified by cases where an individual is permitted or encouraged by their organisation to pay bribes on its behalf; in such cases, it seems less appropriate to regard the individual as abusing their entrusted power, and more appropriate to focus on the company's role in knowingly breaching anti-bribery legislation.[11]

Following the logic of our definition, we can identify the individual who pays the bribe as being in a position of power entrusted by the company, and indeed the individual is likely to secure a private gain as a result of paying bribes on the company's behalf (for example, through a performance bonus, or enhanced career prospects). Nevertheless, the company's private gain may be the primary motivation for the abuse and hence the company is more easily identified as corrupt. The fact that the law-breaking act of bribe-paying is condoned or even urged by the company may also be seen as grounds to diminish the culpability of the individual employee.

Equally hard to assess are instances where the gains from an abuse of entrusted power are difficult to frame straightforwardly as "private gain". For example, where breaches of rules or integrity standards are motivated by a wish to achieve efficiency or resource benefits for a public sector organisation, government department or political institution. This is an area that institutional corruption theorists have grappled with in the context of the US Congress.

[11] There is an abuse of entrusted power if the bribe is paid to an official – public or private – for improper performance. However, for example, the UK Bribery Act also places responsibility on the individual who has offered a 'financial or other advantage'; they break the law if they 'intend' to induce or reward the improper performance.

A partial solution to this problem is to argue that, where short-term benefits serve to undermine the long-term goals or purposes of the institution concerned, they are overall contrary to the public interest (Thompson 1995, 2013; Lessig 2011; 2013).

In June 2021, the independent panel report into the 1987 murder of Daniel Morgan, which analysed the activities of London's Metropolitan Police regarding the case over a 30-year period, identified what it called "a form of institutional corruption". This related to failures uncovered which "cannot reasonably be explained as genuine error and indicate dishonesty for the *benefit of the organisation*" (Daniel Morgan Independent Panel 2021, emphasis added).[12] The argument is that the failure to investigate and the attempted cover ups were aimed at protecting the reputation of police officers, their senior officers, and the police force as a whole, not that police officers were directly involved in or beneficiaries of Morgan's murder. The Morgan case highlights a distinction between actions undertaken in the interests of a public institution and those undertaken in the interests of the public. What is significant here, is that any notion of private gain is absent; instead, the concept of public interest is necessary to identify the wrongdoing as being corrupt. In this case, the reputation of the Metropolitan Police (a public entity) conflicted with its public interest mission, which is to "keep London safe for everyone … [and] achieve the best outcomes in the pursuit of justice and in the support of victims".[13]

So-called noble cause corruption (Miller 2017) requires neither private gain nor institutional gain for its identification. An example of noble cause corruption would be where police officers falsify evidence or break rules in other ways to secure a conviction of someone they are certain is guilty. Although private gain might sometimes be identified in this context, sometimes there will be no private gain. In such circumstances according to our definition, we would not categorise what is traditionally described as "noble cause corruption" as a form of corruption. However, there may still have been an abuse of entrusted power that may breach other rules, laws, or standards.

Private gains can also be negligible in terms of both gain and harm—so small as to demean the notion of corruption. The theft of a paperclip for example, or the use of the company resources for non-work-related activities, or simply not working at full capacity or coming late for work. Each of these could be understood as an abuse of entrusted power for private gain; but none of them on their own or in isolation appear to warrant the extreme judgement of corruption either on the part of the individual or the institution. There are complexities here, however. Persistent lateness or failure to attend work or 'absenteeism' is often described as a form of corruption, particularly where the individual is performing other paid work whilst absent from their primary job. This is common in some lower-income

[12] The Panel's interpretation does not fall directly within the scope of the academic definitions of institutional corruption, which suggest that the institution is structured in some way that makes corruption inevitable and not necessarily related to individual abuses (Thompson 1995, 2013).
[13] See: https://www.met.police.uk/police-forces/metropolitan-police/areas/about-us/about-the-met/vision-and-values/

countries, chiefly in the education and health sectors, although some scholars also urge against describing it as corruption since it frequently occurs in circumstances where the 'offending' individuals are paid below-subsistence wages or where salary payments are delayed for many months. In such circumstances, while there are entrusted power, private gain and harm to the public interest, the identification of an abuse is not straightforward if the person who is absent is simply seeking a substitute income having not been paid; this might not therefore fall within our definition of corruption. However, there may have been an abuse of entrusted power that led to the absenteeism (e.g., a health official embezzling the budget that should have paid staff salaries).

On a practical level, while many minor abuses can add up to significant losses and can undermine the institution's ability to carry out its functions, it is useful to have the ability to distinguish between cases for the sake of proportionality. We argue that these can be distinguished by reference to the public interest and consideration of the impact of corruption – if harm to the public interest can be identified then the activities concerned do have a corrupting effect, and therefore fall into a definition of corruption; if there is no harm to the public interest, then they fall outside the definition.

4.4 Public interest

It is evident from the discussion above that there are several grey areas that constitute challenges that the concepts of entrusted power, abuse and private gain alone cannot resolve. Therefore, we propose that judgements need to be embedded within a consideration of the public interest.

> *Harm to the **"public interest"** is useful in determining which abuses of entrusted power constitute corruption. Corruption can harm the public interest in various ways, including direct harms to the intended beneficiaries of the entrusted power; and indirect harms caused by a) undermining the rule of law and/or the purpose of an institution, profession, or other relevant body; b) failure to perform a function whose proper exercise is in the public interest; and/or c) violating the established rights of individuals or groups.*
>
> *Not all failures to act in the public interest are corrupt, only those that constitute an abuse of entrusted power for private gain. From a public policy perspective, the public interest may also provide the grounds for government interest or intervention.*

We incorporate the public interest into our definition not purely as a theoretical concern, but because the concept engages with the complexity of decision-making in the real world. This final test of public interest is designed to help resolve outstanding ambiguity following application of the first three tests. It is not, as proposed by others, used as the sole standard by which a judgement about an abuse should be made (Scott 1972). It is effectively a tiebreaker for cases in grey areas, although we believe that in most cases the first three tests – entrusted power, abuse, and private gain – will be sufficient.

Nevertheless, we acknowledge that there are also strong arguments against incorporating the public interest into a definition of corruption, which we address here.

The main criticism levelled at corruption definitions which include the public interest relates to their essential subjectivity. In Kurer's (2015, 34) critique, he argues that incorporating public interest into corruption definitions "prejudges the result of corruption", so that it is always "detrimental", and constitutes an attempt to "resolve an essentially normative or ideological question by definition". The fundamental objection is that by making considerations of public interest a necessary component of the corruption definition, judgements about it in context come to "depend on the observer's judgement as to whether a particular policy is or is not desirable" (Heidenheimer 2002, 9). However, this criticism contains within it two assumptions about the "public interest" that do not necessarily hold for those who advocate including it.

The first assumption is that the range of public interest considerations is necessarily disputed, particularly within a given context. While the boundaries between public and private might be fuzzy, they are not wholly subjective. Indeed, there are many examples of the public interest being invoked in the public sphere successfully (e.g., Nolan Principles). There are also some areas of life where what is in the public interest is not contested, such as clean air to breathe, safe water to drink and a fair system of justice. To understand public interest as purely subjective and ideological is to make it indistinguishable from private interests either individually or in aggregate, which may ultimately lead to the conclusion that it does not exist at all. This argument is not absent from the literature (see for example Rand 1966), but it represents an extreme and relatively marginal (if politicly influential) approach in political philosophy. An alternative perspective—and ours—sees the public interest as central to politics and the ultimate expression of the political process (e.g., Rhodes 1994, 150).

The second assumption is that the public interest is operational in the same way as a public policy, which can be either good or bad from the perspective of the observer. This supposes that the public interest is understood purely in relation to outcomes as they are experienced (or viewed) by an individual affected by them. This can be translated into a thin conception of the public interest. Indeed, Heidenheimer acknowledges that certain acts—such as those "made according to the wishes of the highest bidder"—can be regarded as contrary to the public interest, regardless of the felicity of the outcome or whether a particular conception of the public interest has been articulated in advance (Heidenheimer 2002, 9).[14] An individual may win in one instance if their individual interests happen to be in line with those of the "highest bidder", but unless they can guarantee that this will always be the case, they still have cause to object and reason to recognise that the public interest, broadly speaking, is undermined.

[14] Heidenheimer is in turn referencing Lowenstein 1990.

A thicker conception of the public interest, however, would argue that it is not an individual judgement or set of individual judgements about a particular outcome. Rather it constitutes a collective judgement—knowledge even—about the *kinds of outcome* that actions and processes result in. This is articulated in Reich's (2018, 22) elaboration of what he calls the public good:

> *[W]e must agree on basic principles—such as how we deal with our disagreements, the importance of our democratic institutions, our obligations toward the law, and our respect for truth—if we're to participate in the same society. It's our agreement to these principles that connects us, not agreement about where these principles lead*.

The significant point here is that the public interest or the public good is not articulated in concrete terms in advance. It is the *principles* that are articulated in advance, and it is against these principles that outcomes are judged.

There remains a danger, however, ever-present in political contexts that the appeal to the public interest can be abused and underlying principles can be misapplied, manipulated or in conflict. Disagreements about the substantive content of the public interest are present in all societies and this constitutes the very essence of politics. But where there is deep polarisation and division, this can lead to disputes about the interpretation of the principles themselves, including the rights and responsibilities that underpin a just society, and who is entitled to their protection. Populist rhetoric, for example, is replete with claims that its leaders are acting in the greater interests of the public.

How do we then distinguish between the use of public interest claims as an "excuse" for corrupt activity and the use of the public interest to help identify situations in which activities should be disqualified from being identified as corrupt?

This challenge is illustrated by the example of political corruption, involving the undermining of a legitimate democratic process (see Navot 2016, 551-2). This might include excluding political opponents from a decision-making process or inducing them in some way to manipulate the outcome, for political gains (i.e., votes). So far, so corrupt, as most definitional approaches allow for political gains to count as private gain. However, what if the apparent corruption of the democratic process serves to further the enfranchisement of an excluded or discriminated against group—women or an ethnic minority— or to pass legislation that increases freedom or rights, such as anti-slavery legislation? In these cases, Navot (2016, 552) argues that these actions should not be construed as corrupt, because the motivations behind them are benevolent:

> *The crucial point is that when agents' actions are motivated by the duty or the desire to reduce injustice, these actions do not constitute political corruption …*

We have argued above that agents' motivations are never possible to determine with certainty; and regardless of the motivation behind an action there can also emerge private gains or benefits for the agent and harms to the public interest, even if these are incidental

or unintended. For example, in the case above, the enfranchising parties are likely to benefit politically from the support of the newly enfranchised group; and the precedent of undermining democratic procedures could fatally undermine the legitimacy of the democratic process in the long-term. And yet, we acknowledge that there is a natural reluctance to condemn acts resulting in the abolition of slavery or the enfranchisement of women, as corrupt. Indeed, we argue that in excluding these groups in the first place, the system (especially a democratic system) itself could be described as fundamentally flawed (or corrupted), and so not living up to the principles of political equality it espouses.[15]

This is not a simple puzzle to solve. Many approaches do so by annexing the notion of public interest altogether,[16] and returning to the three-dimensional approach of the "abuse of entrusted power for private gain". In such cases, the "public interest" cannot be used indiscriminately to excuse all corrupt behaviour, but neither can it be used to identify examples such as Navot's; or to make any of the clarifications for which we have advocated its use above. Therefore, we judge that the advantages of including the public interest significantly outweigh the disadvantages, and by looking at the combination of process (the abuse) and outcome (the harm) it is possible to make clearer judgements about what is and what is not corrupt. Indeed, if we acknowledge that corruption is "political" and can be engaged in by political agents, then we must also engage with the nature of the political and the public interest, which is understood to have been corrupted. This is in line with Philp's (1997, 446) argument that:

> ... *we are forced to accept that to identify political corruption we must make commitments to conceptions of the nature of the political and the form of public interest*.

As such, we argue that, while there are acknowledged challenges to incorporating the public interest into the corruption definition, there are also many benefits to incorporating it which are practically and operationally useful:

First, it helps to resolve ambiguities inherent in applying the concept of entrusted power. In the framework of modern public service provision where the line between public and private is blurred, the lines governing the entrusted power relationship are also blurred and potentially compromised. A private sector company or employee may be entrusted by its board and investors to make profit, but also be implicated in an entrusted power relationship with a public sector commissioner of services: which of these should take precedence? A public sector employee leaves their trusted position in the public sector to

[15] See for example the hypocrisy of the US Constitution's statements on the equality of all men co-existing with the practice of slavery.

[16] A good example of this is Rose-Ackerman's (2018) definitional approach: "Corruption occurs when an official charged with a public responsibility operates in his or her own interest in a way that undermines the program's aims, whatever they may be. Officials who administer public programs without gaining personal benefits are not corrupt, in my view, even if the programs' values are abhorrent and immoral."

enter the private sector: to what extent do the responsibilities and expectations of their previous position transition with them? The application of the public interest test helps to resolve these ambiguities, by explicitly prioritising the public over the private. Furthermore, without this test, the definition of corruption provides ample space for corruption to thrive unchecked in grey areas, including failing to capture the behaviour of facilitators of corruption, such as legal professionals, who may be complicit when entrusted by corrupt clients to act on their behalf.[17]

Second, failure to consider the public interest means that activities that might appear *prima facie* to be abusive (including an abuse of entrusted power for private gain) but are also either of benefit to the public interest or do not cause it harm, could be erroneously construed as corrupt. For example, this might include a whistleblower selling his or her story (private gain), including divulging confidential information (abuse of entrusted power), to a newspaper or publishing a book on their experiences. There are several such examples in the literature (see Miller 2017; Navot 2016, 551-2; Rose-Ackerman 1978, 9), with scholars coming down on different sides in terms of their interpretation. For Rose-Ackerman (1978, 2018), corrupt acts remain corrupt regardless of whether they have positive social outcomes or motivations; whereas for others it would be inconsistent to apply an explicitly value-laden and negative term to behaviours with positive social and political outcomes, even if some kind of incidental private gain is identifiable. The application of the public interest test helps to resolve this kind of ambiguity.

Third, the notion of private gain is often insufficient to resolve ambiguous cases. Private gain might not be apparent, or in cases such as the Daniel Morgan case described above, private gain does not enable us to distinguish between gains for public institutions and the losses to the public, democratic values, or the rule of law. The application of the public interest test helps to resolve this ambiguity and make this distinction.

Furthermore, retaining sight of the harm to the public interest typically caused by corruption is critical to understanding why we should care about this phenomenon and encourages us to recognise that there are victims of corruption, even if they are not always easy to identify. This is in line with both legal and policy accountability approaches, which emphasise the public interest, albeit usually exclusively in the public domain. The concept of the public interest is frequently used to guide public sector decision-making and practices, as a reminder that ultimately it is this standard to which public officials are accountable. In the UK context it is central to the Nolan Principles (Selflessness: Holders of public office should act solely in the public interest), the UK guidance for public servants that has been adopted and adapted across the globe (CSPL 1995; David-Barrett 2015); and in the UK context at least, public interest is a defence in the proposed criminal definition of corruption in public office by the Law Commission (Law Commission 2021).

[17] See Garrod 2022.

Considering the public interest, therefore, can assist in establishing: whether an apparently corrupt act or process which results in increased justice or fairness (public goods) and no harm should be classified as corrupt (usually no); whether an act that occurs in a context where the entrusted power relationship is ambiguous should be classified as corrupt if it causes serious injury to the public (usually yes); or whether cases that do not involve straightforward private gain, but entail institutional gains that lead to public losses or damage, should be considered corrupt (usually yes).

5. Conclusion

There are strong arguments for drawing the boundaries of the concept of corruption very precisely. It suits social scientists to be clear about their concepts and avoid ambiguity; it suits legal scholars and criminologists to define corruption narrowly so that evidence can be used to identify malpractice conclusively; it suits politicians who may be concerned that their own long-standing practices might be labelled as corrupt. However, in the world of policy and practice in multiple fields, ambiguity and exceptions are the everyday reality. For example, the concept of human rights, a central component of a liberal democracy, remains hard to pin down.[18] This does not make the concept of human rights less necessary or less important as a guiding principle.

Our framework aims to strike a balance between a definition that is too tight and one that is too loose. By incorporating the public interest test, advocating the sequential application of each of the dimensions, providing detailed sub-definitions and grounded elaborations, including specifying the scope of an abuse, we aim to provide practical guidance for researchers as they design their corruption studies and to policymakers as they formulate and implement anti-corruption plans, strategies, or programmes. Moreover, by elaborating the complexity of the concept of corruption, we hope to encourage more granular and nuanced understanding of a multi-dimensional and contextually specific problem.

[18] For example, there is currently lively public debate in the UK about the scope of the Human Rights Act.

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Annex 1: List of commonly cited definitions

The following commonly cited definitions were provided for discussion at an expert workshop convened in February 2021 by the Centre for the Study of Corruption at the University of Sussex.

Economic Crime

"Economic crime refers to a broad category of activity involving money, finance or assets, the purpose of which is to unlawfully obtain a profit or advantage for the perpetrator or cause loss to others. This poses a threat to the UK's economy and its institutions and causes serious harm to society and individuals. It includes criminal activity which:

- Allows criminals to benefit from the proceeds of their crimes or fund further criminality
- Damages our financial system and harms the interests of legitimate business
- Undermines the integrity of the UK's position as an international financial centre
- Poses a risk to the UK's prosperity, national security and reputation."

(HM Treasury &Home Office, Economic Crime Plan 2019-2022, 1.11 – see also section 1.12 which notes that this definition incorporates "*fraud, terrorist financing, sanctions contravention, market abuse, corruption and bribery, the laundering of proceeds of all crime.*")

Fraud

"Fraud can be broadly defined as the deliberate use of deception or dishonesty to disadvantage or cause loss (usually financial) to another person or party."

(Fraud Advisory Panel, An introduction to UK Legislation, December 2015)

Note: Fraud Act 2006 includes fraud by false representation (Section 2), fraud by failing to disclose information (Section 3), and fraud by abuse of position (Section 4).

Corruption

"The abuse of public office for private gain." (World Bank)

"The abuse of entrusted power for private gain." (Transparency International)

"Corruption is a crime committed by officials (public or private) abusing of their role to procure gain for themselves or somebody else." (UNODC)

"Corruption in politics occurs where a public official (A), violates the rules and/or norms of office, to the detriment of the interests of the public (B) (or some sub-section thereof) who is the designated beneficiary of that office, to benefit themselves and a third party (C) who rewards or otherwise incentivises A to gain access to goods or services they would not otherwise obtain." (Philp 2015)

“(1) It is an offence for a public office holder to use, or fail to use, a power or position of his or her public office for the purpose of achieving a benefit for himself or herself, or a benefit or detriment for another person, if: (a) a reasonable person would consider the use or failure seriously improper, and (b) the public office holder knew that a reasonable person would consider the use or failure seriously improper. (2) It is a defence if the public office holder can prove that the conduct was, in all the circumstances, in the public interest.” (Law Commission 2020, draft clause for Offence of Corruption in Public Office)

“Behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence.” (Nye 1967)

“The abuse, according to the legal or social standards constituting a society’s system of public order, of a public role or resource for private benefit.” (Johnson 1996)

“Corruption occurs when an official charged with a public responsibility operates in his or her own interest in a way that undermines the program’s aims, whatever they may be. Officials who administer public programs without gaining personal benefits are not corrupt, in my view, even if the programs’ values are abhorrent and immoral.” (Rose-Ackerman 2018)

“[W]e will conceive corruption in terms of a civil servant who regards his public office as a business, the income of which he will, in the extreme case, seek to maximise. The office then becomes a "maximising unit".” (Van Klaveren 1957)

“Non-compliance with the principle of the arm's length relationship, which states that personal or family relationships ought not to play a role in economic decisions by private economic agents or by government officials. [This principle is essential for the efficient functioning of markets.]” (Tanzi 1994)

“The pattern of corruption can be said to exist whenever a power-holder who is charged with doing certain things, i.e., who is a responsible functionary or office holder, is by monetary or other rewards not legally provided for induced to take actions which favour whoever provides the rewards and thereby does damage to the public and its interests.” (Friedrich 1966)

“Acts of appropriation and exchange that undermine, subvert, or repudiate the collectively agreed upon organisational missions or institutional roles for non-collective ends and purposes.” (Zaloznaya 2014)

“Corruption is a complex social activity in which money, goods, or other resources that belong to a public organization are exchanged or transferred covertly in a way that benefits particularistic actors instead of the organization or the general public.” (Jancsics 2019)

“Corruption involves a holder of public office violating the impartiality principle in order to achieve private gain.” (Kurer 2005)

"Corruption of democracy is a violation of the norm of equal inclusion of all affected by a collectivity (unjustifiable exclusion)." (Warren 2004)

"Corruption will be used… in its widest sense, to include not only all forms of improper or selfish exercise of power and influence attached to a public office or to the special position one occupies in public life, but also to the activity of the bribers." (Myrdal 1968)

"Political corruption takes place whenever individuals use public power in a manner that violates the ideal of non-domination (the more behavioural approach); or when institutions, systems and regimes violate this ideal, or do not provide conditions that allow citizens to promote their freedom in a way that is consistent with other citizens' rights to non-domination (the structural approach)." (Navot 2014)

"Corruption … describes the capture of a human being by evil." (Underkuffler 2013)

Institutional corruption

"Institutional corruption is manifest when there is a systemic and strategic influence which is legal, or even currently ethical, that undermines the institution's effectiveness by diverting it from its purpose or weakening its ability to achieve its purpose, including, to the extent relevant to its purpose, weakening either the public's trust in that institution or that institution's inherent trustworthiness." (Lessig 2013)

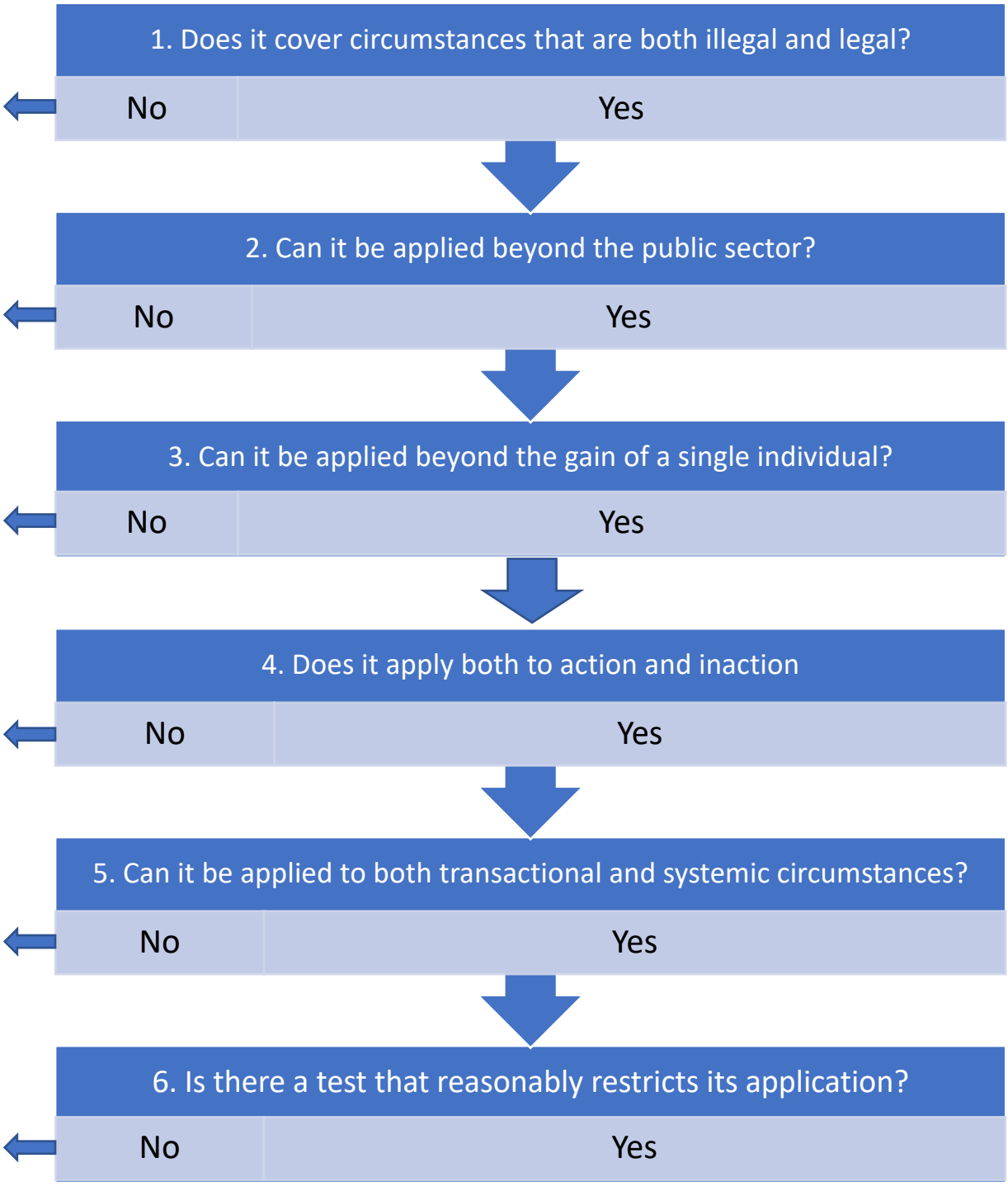
"Institutional corruption occurs when an institution or its officials receive a benefit that is directly useful to performing an institutional purpose, and systematically provides a service to the benefactor under conditions that tend to undermine procedures that support the primary purposes of the institution." (Thompson 2013)

"Institutional corruption involves influences that implicitly or purposively serve to distort the independence of a professional in a position." (Gray 2013)

Bribery

"An inducement improperly influencing the performance of a public function meant to be gratuitously exercised." (Noonan 1984)

Annex 2: Flow-chart: 6 components of a corruption definition



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