PRESENTATION/APRESENTAÇÃO

Corruption and how to fight it: state of the art and analysis perspectives

A luta contra a corrupção: o estado da arte e perspectivas de análise

La lucha contra la corrupción: el estado del arte y perspectivas de análisis

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Corruption as an object of study in the Social Sciences has recently shown a significant growth, contributing to diversify empirical objects as well as theoretical and methodological tools. A brief review of scientific production in the last decades indicates a renewal and expansion of research.[3] The increase in production results, on the one hand, from the disclosure of major scandals involving cases of corruption, thus allowing media and public opinion attention to be drawn to the problem. On the other hand, it results from theoretical and methodological challenges that contribute to its understanding, since it is a phenomenon difficult to conceptualize and observe, even if we adopt different disciplinary lens. Despite the constant efforts of a growing group of researchers, there is no general consensus on any broad and shared definition of what corruption is. We could even agree on the Transparency International's statement that corruption is "an abuse of entrusted power for private gain", which has been adopted in the methodology for the elaboration of the Corruption Perception Index, aimed at an international comparison on its diffusion.[4] Nevertheless, as soon as we "unpack" different analytical notions of what can be considered as *abuse*, to *entrust*, *power*, *private* (versus *public*), and *gain*, we are forced to admit that both analytical intension and empirical extension of the concept of corruption may vary largely, depending on approaches and research objects.

The theme, however, is already the object of a long scientific tradition, standing out as an important area of investigation and a legitimate object of research that has raised divergent questions, research problems and theoretical and conceptual approaches. If in classical political theory the term has been used to indicate certain characteristics and processes negatively affecting political systems as a whole, associated with a normative judgment

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[3] Among the diversity of works that we certainly do not intend to exhaust, we can mention: Bezerra (1995, 2017) Della Porta and Vannucci (1999, 2007a, 2007b,2012); Della Porta (2001); Della Porta, Sberna, and Vannucci (2015); Guarnieri and Pederzoli (1997); Mancini and Guerli (2018); Musella (2002); Pizzorno (1998); Pujas (2000), Sberna and Vannucci (2013), Torsello (2009); Vannucci (1997, 2009, 2012, 2016).

[4] See Transparency International Italia. 2014. *Corruption Perceptions Index.* https://www.transparency.it/corruption-perceptions-index/.

of "good and bad government",[5] in contemporary approaches corruption has come to be perceived as a specific social practice that can emerge in a particular social context.

In this sense, a set of works can be cited as part of efforts to understand this object. We can distinguish at least three major paradigms that emerged in the field of social sciences at different times (Vannucci 2015). The first is the economic paradigm, whose emphasis lies on cost-benefit calculus that structure individual choices and decision-making processes within social, political and economic organizations, whose operations are obviously affected by them. The second is that associated with the culturalist approaches, emphasizing how political culture affects individuals moral preferences and normative constraints. The central starting point in this perspective are the processes of social construction and internalization of social norms and the ethical values that frame the actions of social actors. Finally, a third paradigm is neo-institutionalism, focusing on both the mechanisms that regulate interactions in corrupt exchange networks and the role played by formal and informal institutions to shape social actor's expectations and beliefs.

Starting from the pioneering work of Rose-Ackerman (1978), the economic paradigm tends to focus its analytical efforts on how the structure of incentives operating at the micro-individual level - offered by the system of institutional/organizational opportunities - contribute to the choice of actors to be (or not) involved in corrupt activities. Under these conditions, individual decisions to participate (or not) in corrupt exchanges are based on the expectation of possible risks of punishment and possible penalties on the one side, and potential payoffs and profits on the other, since

Corruption is a crime of calculation, not of passion. People will tend to engage in corruption when the risks are low, the penalties mild, and the rewards great. [...] Incentives at the margin are what determine the calculations of corrupt and potentially corrupt officials and citizens. Change information and incentives, and you change corruption (Klitgaard, Maclean-Abaroa and Parris 2000, 27).

Risks (or rewards) of corruption tend to be increased (or lowered) by the institutional and organizational design of each state apparatus. Thus, expected costs and profits tend to limit or guide participation in corrupt practices. In this sense, as in any market choice accepting to participate in these exchanges does not imply the satisfaction of fundamental needs concerning one's socially constructed identity, but an ex-ante rationalization of the consequences and expectations of the benefits involved around mere self-interest. In this perspective, individuals involved in corruption perform a sterile calculation, maximizing results while assessing whether the benefits outweigh the costs.

One of the main social and institutional issues emerging from this perspective is how institutions – through the incentives produced – guide and affect individual choices, both with regard to public and collective decisions and those that involve private interests and oriented to individual benefits (Rose-Ackerman 1978, 2010). In this process, when institutions fail in the control and deter corrupt decision-making processes, a network of privileged individuals can emerge. Conditions as State monopolies, lack of transparency and accountability, and an excessive discretion of decision-makers in public procedures tend in fact to create favorable opportunities encouraging participation in corrupt practices (Klitgaard 1988).

The rational-choice paradigm on corruption gained momentum in the course of the 1990s, dominating scientific research and contributing to

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[5] From Aristotle to Machiavelli, the discussion of corruption revolved around the principles of the *polis* and the importance of distinguishing private advantages from the common good. In this direction, superimposing personal advantages (desires/passions) on the collective interest would make the government corrupt, producing a "bad government". Thus, corruption presents itself as the lack of a *"public spirit"* capable of preserving the collective interest. In Machiavelli the theme takes center stage in the understanding of the Republic, the role of the State and the political community for the formation of a public ethics and a *virtù* – i.e. civic virtue (Maquiavel 2007a, 2007b; Skinner 1988, 1996).

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stimulate a set of institutional and state reforms in the fight against corruption established – coherently with a neo-liberal market ideology – by multilateral institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank (Filgueiras 2006, 2012), OECD and other international agencies. Several policy recommendations and guidelines for national governments of less-developed countries were promoted as a condition for international investments and support. Among them, we can mention the attempt to reform public institutions in order to increase formal accountability; the dismantlement of public monopolies (not avoiding the creation of even less accountable private monopolies, however); the creation of mechanisms to reduce the freedom of the State's administrative agent in the decision-making process; the containment and simplification of state bureaucracy and red-tapes; the harshening of criminal penalties, among others.

One of the main criticism addressed towards the policy implication of the economic perspective is that it starts from an ideal liberal-democratic scenario and tends to place corruption as a problem of institutional design, while ignoring other crucial variables. At the same time, it tends to identify corruption as a problem limited to or prevalently affecting societies with weak and less-developed institutions, or permeated by institutional disorder. The blatant failure of anticorruption reforms promoted in the last decades by international agencies in developing countries and the persistent manifestation of sophisticated forms of public and private corruption in many industrialized countries, in spite of their advanced democratic institutions, rule of law and market economy, clearly shows the limits of this perspective.

Among the costs of corruption, however, we have to consider those of a moral nature. Such costs function as "normative barriers" that implies an interiorized sense of guilt associated with a violation of rules and trust, in addition to the challenges of keeping crimes secret and the consequences given by the justice system. Some authors included the "moral costs" of corruption

among the factors orienting the rational calculus of corruption, but it such concept clearly belongs to a different analytical realm: when ethical preferences enters into play, corruption becomes also crime of passion, not only of calculation. In other terms, social and cultural values matter.

Within the culturalist paradigm emphasis is placed on the way in which social norms and moral values are shaped and transmitted within a particular political culture. In general, this perspective tends to connect corruption to the meaning of interactions established in their reciprocal recognition and judgement by social actors, playing different roles in the social and institutional context, as well as to the value system that works as motivators or obstacles to the permanence of traditional elements, such as clientelism, patrimonialism and nepotism. In the culturalist perspective not only calculation, but also passions become relevant, since they are the expression of a system of ethical values and cultural norms concerning constraints and objectives of actors operating in the political arena. Among the problems pointed out by this approach, we can mention: how the system of values of a society guides the action of institutional actors shaping a determined political culture (Lipset and Lenz 2000); how culture and "social capital" can become a factor of development or a blocking element in collective relations, corporate action and the formation of a civic sense (Almond and Verba 1963; Almond and Coleman 1969; Banfield 1958; Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti 1993); how the experience in acts of corruption can contribute to destabilize the public spirit, leading the citizen to value individual gains to the detriment of those of a collective nature, therefore with negative consequences for civic behavior (Hirschamn 1982); how the "moral costs" of corruption vary according to the economic and political actors socialization within certain "circles of social recognition" (political parties and enterprises, among them), and the degree of congruence between the value systems dominating in those circles and those underlying the operation of State's institutions (Pizzorno 1992). Among the methodologies that

stand out are observation and comparative studies in order to identify differences between groups, social contexts or periods.

This set of models of analysis aims, in general, at demonstrating to what extent normative barriers, defined by a society's value system, contribute to shape individuals' consideration of the opportunities for corruption. As Elster (1989, 158) puts it: "Although it is difficult to prove [...], the variation in corruption among countries is explained largely by the degree of public-spiritdness of their officials, not by the cleverness of institutional design". Political culture, "public spiritedness", "sense of the State" and even religious references were considered as variables that contribute to forming the framework of ethical references of the actors potentially involved in acts of corruption (Vannucci 2015).

One of the main limitations of these approaches is, however, that there is a strong tendency to associate corruption with the presence of traditional values that have not broken with cultural patterns and long-term established practices. Cultural values, it is more or less implicitly stated, are not a "variable" at all if not in a very long-term horizon, since they evolve trough slow, complex and unintentional social processes; therefore analysts should consider them as a parameter, a fixed component of the social environments. While a drastic transformation in the values shaping traditional (patrimonialistic, nepotistic, clientelistic, etc.) political cultures could be recommended in certain societies, it becomes difficult if not impossible to address policies aimed at modifying such cultural environment, whose outcomes are anyway expected to be long-term and largely unpredictable. Moreover, this perspective tends to establish an implicit hierarchy between societies, making corruption a pattern of behavior mostly typical of societies that did not incorporate western principles of modernity and development.

This perspective influenced many analyzes made on Italy, but also on Brazil, leading to an understanding of the origins of corrupt practices and the effects of this on the formation of a national character, an ethics, a social and political way of being. Edward Banfield's work (1958) on a small town in southern Italy, for example, had an huge impact not only on the research produced in this country, but also on the application of the model built by the author to understand other societies, thus opening path to a set of analyzes of political culture (Vommaro and Combes 2016). Banfield focuses his research on the formation of an "ethos"[6] encouraging the emergence and dominant permanence of clientelistic practices that inhibit cooperation, economic and social development. One consequence of this study was the understanding of a traditional political culture with a clientelistic base in which personal, familiar and particularistic interests overlap and prevail over collective and public ones, leading to a separation between Italy – or, at least, certain regions of it – and the so-called developed democracies. Joseph La Palombara(1964), for instance, applied this explanatory model to single out the main constraints to the political development of the Italian society.

In Brazil, a series of works began to focus on the thesis of patrimonialism and the weight of personal relationships. The works of Faoro (2001) and Holanda (2016) contributed to frame the diffusion of corruption as an effect of the problems emerging from Portuguese colonization and, with this, the difficulty in separating the public from the private spheres, crystallized a national political culture formed without a break with the traditional practices. Along this direction, a State and an entire institutional apparatus formed incorporating, on the one hand, part of the modern principles of bureaucratization, rationality and impersonality, on the other, a political elite incapable of placing collective goods above their private, particularistic or partisan interests.

Finally, a third paradigm - called neo-institutional - analyzes not only economic or cultural variables, but also the mechanisms for regulating corrupt exchange networks and their effects on the beliefs

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[6] The author called this "ethos" of amoral familism whose central characteristic is the prevalence of material advantages of the nuclear family – or any other closed clique – to the detriment of any kind of collective interests and principles.

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and expectations that frame – both in terms of incentives and values – the conduct of agents involved in it. In this perspective, research focuses on the mechanisms of interaction between formal and informal institutions, the latter being taken as architectures of non-written codes and rules that can regulate and coordinate corruptors and corrupt activities within hidden networks of corrupt exchanges. The analysis of corruption is therefore centered on its internal dynamics and mechanisms of functioning, where often – especially in organized and systemic corruption – a complex division of tasks, skills formation, and internal hierarchies can be observed. Different governance structures may in fact provide, in addition to a certain degree of stability and regularity of illegal and therefore potentially instable and fragile exchanges, through regulation, enforcement and sanctioning mechanisms which keep the system functioning, reducing transaction costs, uncertainty and the risks of defection (Della Porta and Vannucci 1999, 2012).

One of the main challenges pointed out in neo-institutional approaches is to take political corruption as a specific social practice that - despite putting at stake the mobilization of different logics (of favor, of exchange, of the market) - has its own conceptual structure and mechanism of reproduction. While corruption is analytically diverse from other social practices such as clientelism, patrimonialism and nepotism, it is deeply interconnected and sometimes partly overlapping with them, potentially feeding each other's through positive-feedback dynamics (Vannucci 2012; Della Porta and Vannucci 1999).

In general, these paradigms of analysis of corruption allow different approaches to corruption as an object of analysis. Undoubtedly, the emergence on the public scene of the Italian operation, known as "Mani pulite" (Clean hands), in the course of the 1990s, played a significant role in the growing scientific interest towards corruption – and the fight against it, since it transformed political corruption into the main topic of public debate within an advanced democracy. The scandal, brought about by a judicial investigation,

dominated not only the Italian media political scene, but also contributed to give visibility to hidden aspects inherent to the political realm, challenging mainstream views on the capability of democratic institutions and the rule of law to effectively prevent distortions and abuses in the exercise of public power. "Mani pulite" inquiries provided also a considerable amount of empirical data that fostered a set of research on the subject (Della Porta and Vannucci 1999).

In Brazil, despite the constant presence of corruption in the political scenario and in the social imaginary, the topic did not attract a significant attention of social scientists as an exclusive object of investigation. Some exceptions can be cited even though they are completely antagonistic. On the one hand, the work of José Arthur Rios (1987) with a focus on the relationship of corruption as a phenomenon linked to Brazilian social formation and institutional and historical weaknesses. On the other hand, the works of Marcos Otávio Bezerra (1995, 2017) that emphasize the weight of personal relationships (kinship, friendship) in regulating corrupt practices. The latter brought as a contribution the need to think of corruption as a practice that involves the combination of personal logic and institutional principles. However, similarly to what happened with "Mani pulite" in Italy, the recent impact of the Lava Jato operation has contributed substantially to a transformation in the analysis of this object, previously directed almost exclusively to the study of clientelism and patrimonialism.

In order to contribute to the analysis of the theme and to encourage debate, this special issue aims to gather articles that analyze the phenomenon of corruption from an interdisciplinary perspective, aggregating various objects, approaches and research techniques. In this sense, we seek with this effort to offer a wide range of analytical tools and mechanisms of scientific inquiry and to contemplate a research agenda with different themes that allow attending the complexity of the object. This will present some of the important challenges for this field of research.

Since normally corruption scandals emerge

due to judicial inquiries, scholars had to focus on a problem which both in Italy and Brazil was observed, i.e. the relationship between the judiciary power and the political class. The Italian experience can be considered a laboratory on the role that the judiciary in the institutional crisis following cases of grand (i.e. systemic) corruption, allowing the emergence of comparative studies between different historical contexts. Several works focused on: a) the role of the judiciary's independence and institutional autonomy in the fight against corruption (Della Porta 2001; Pujas 2000;); b) the formation among judges of a new model of professional excellence, of an ethos, in constant transformation, founded on the experience of crimes of corruption and aimed at promoting the judiciary as an instance capable of defining the rules of the political game (Briquet 2002; Cazzola and Morisi 1995;Della Porta and Vannucci 2007a; Guarnieri 1995; Pizzorno 1998; Roussel 2002); c) the effects of judicial investigations on the political system (Guarnieri and Pederzoli 1997a, 1997b; Morisi 1994).

In the article opening this special issue, by Dallara, Guarnieri and Sapignoli, the authors call attention to the significant increase in legal investigations involving political actors in Italy. However, such an increase does not, in the vast majority of cases, result in a conviction. To understand this situation, the article presents a set of explanatory factors, among them: the configuration of political competition and the relevance of instrumental uses of corruption charges in political competition; the structure of Italian law and criminal procedure, which involves a set of resources that can be used during the investigation; and, finally, the institutional dynamics of the justice system that provides magistrates, judges and prosecutors with a high degree of independence, thus allowing greater maneuvering conditions than in other European countries.

Jacopo Paffarini's article, on the other hand, analyzes how legal investigations on corruption impacted the political system in Latin America, leading to a new activism by parliaments. In this sense, the author demonstrates how the reinterpretation of constitutional provisions, especially those associated with impeachment processes, legitimized a change in the government's agenda. One of the main consequences of this was the increase in political tensions, the emergence of new instabilities and the imbalance between powers.

With similar concerns, the article by Da Ros, Bento e Londero, analyzes the conditions that affect legal decisions to condemn politicians and impose the respective penalties (more or less severe). Based on a set of cases judged by the Court of Justice of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, in Brazil, the author examines the impact that a set of variables can have on the criminal conviction of mayors. Among the variables analyzed are the profiles of the mayors, the socioeconomic characteristics of the cities, as well as the functioning of the justice system.

In the same direction, Lopes, Albuquerque e Bezerra analyze the relationship between judicial activism against corruption and electoral accountability. Taking the 2018 Brazilian presidential election as empirical reference, the authors shows, on the one hand, the anti-corruption and anti-system narrative produced by the Lava Jato operation and its effects on the political system. On the other hand, he highlights how the candidate Jair Bolsonaro knew how to capture the speech produced by the referred operation, presenting himself as a genuine heir to the anti-corruption fight.

Another relevant issue to be highlighted is the role of the media system in the dissemination, definition and characterization of corruption. This line of research emphasizes not only the construction of the political scandals, but also the consequent influence of media coverage in the political process (Brunetti and Weder 2003; Hallin and Mancini 2004; Mancini, Marchetti and Mincigrucci 2017). In this sense, Paolo Mancini, starting from an extensive literature on corruption and media, presents a typology of the corruption scandals portrayed by the media. The author takes into account the different contextual, social and political conditions under which the scandals emerge. In addition, a special attention is also given to the way journalism deals with each type of scandal and the procedures

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adopted by the media system.

In addition to these problems, another line of investigation that has stood out aims to analyze all those practices that are socially conceived as corrupt, with an emphasis on the "moral grammars" of corruption and the aspects associated with their language in daily interactions among actors involved in it. With ethnographic works, different researches highlight the meanings attributed to corruption and how it can affect citizens' access to State resources (Bezerra 1995; Gupta 2005; Torsello 2009). In this sense, David Torsello's article highlights, from an anthropological perspective, the different normative and moral aspects of corruption. Based on interviews, his contribution explains how moral standards can help to justify and make the participation of social actors in corrupt exchanges individually and socially acceptable.

It is particularly important to focus attention on corruption as a socially constructed practice. In this direction, an approach that has become prominent is one that focuses on the analysis of the informal rules effective in the underneath world of corruption, as well as its invisible governance and power structure, behavioral models. When corruption is systemic and not sporadic, in the networks of actors involved a careful division of tasks, specialization of functions and development of the skills required for the exercise of designated functions can be observed. Among the issues that stood out are those that focus both on examining the informal governance mechanisms of the market for corrupt exchange and its effects on anti-corruption policy. Alberto Vannucci's article is located within this perspective. The objective of his contribution is to demonstrate the relationship between the "dark" side of politics, involving corrupt exchanges as well as other informal and hidden interactions among political actors, and the so-called "clean" side of institutional politics, focusing on the resulting impact on anti-corruption policies. To this end, the author uses several empirical sources to demonstrate the widespread diffusion of corruption in Italy, showing how the very dynamics of corruption in the Italian political system interfere and influence the politicization of the anti-corruption issue, and therefore the effectiveness of anticorruption policies.

Likewise, Fernanda Petrarca's contribution takes as its starting point the governance structures of the hidden exchange networks and the mechanisms for regulating and protecting the corrupt system. Taking as a reference the Brazilian case and data from the Lava Jato operation, the author describes a complex network of exchanges that is constituted from an informal system of rules of behavior. In the opposite direction of the narrative presented and widely disseminated by the Brazilian operation, it is clear that the Brazilian corruption case is constituted by a polycentric system, with a high capacity to develop autonomous and occasionally competitive networks.

An analytical development that has shown strong growth in recent decades is one that focuses on analyzing the emergence of the anti-corruption movement (Della Porta 2017). Among the questions that stand out in this broad approach are: the process of social construction of corruption as a public problem and the perception of its nature among the public; the role of the international sphere and transnational agencies in addressing anticorruption efforts; the emergence of supranational bodies of law (prosecutors, investigators) from international anti-corruption agencies; the advancement of a sort of "anti-corruption industry" and its effects on national political systems (Bratsis 2017; Bryane 2009; Sampson 2010). Some authors see this moment as a new type of authoritarism and colonialism, that is, a new strategy for most powerful countries to dominate other states, controlling their economies and influencing their policies and institutional equilibria (Maria 2005, 2008).

In this perspective, Wilson José Ferreira de Oliveira's article analyzes the emergence of corruption as a public cause, emphasizing its relationship with the political system. Taking as a reference the wave of protests that took place in Brazil between 2013 and 2018, the author points out that the strong appearance and visibility of these movements are associated with a crisis in the "alliance system" that reached the political system. In this direction, the fight against corruption appears as a resource to restore political alignments.

We hope that this special issue, thanks to the

multifaceted variety of aspects discussed within the articles gathered, will encourage researchers having different cuts, methodologies and approaches to consider the importance of a better comprehension of the nature, inner logic and mechanisms of corruption: such understanding is not only a relevant objective for the advancement of our scientific knowledge, but also as a crucial challenge in order to address more effective political and social reforms.

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