



Southern China International MUN

Security Council: On measures to eradicate political corruption
Agenda overseen by: Jane Li

1. Description of the Issue

Political corruption has existed since millenniums ago, and continues to persist globally in almost every country. Levels of corruption have significantly increased since 20th century's mass global economic growth, and annual international bribery stands at over US\$1.5 trillion, according to The World Bank; this is more than 2% of global GDP, and accounts for over 10 times funds in global aid.¹ There are various forms of political corruption, but the most common types include bribery, extortion, cronyism, and nepotism.

1.1 History of the Issue

Bribery: Direct and Indirect

Bribes are usually made in order to convince an official to help the briber circumvent legislation or escape legal consequences, and may be demanded to bypass rules or regulations. Bribery is an extremely common form of political corruption and can happen from an individual level to affecting an entire organisation or system.

In Saudi Arabia, bribery is considered one of the most frequent types of corruption. In March 2020, Nazaha, Saudi Arabia's National Anti-Corruption Commission, announced that it had arrested around 300 government officials on political corruption cases such as bribery and embezzlement, involving a total of over \$100 million. Nazaha stated it would press charges on government officials, including military personnel, who were detained. Among those held in custody were eight defense ministry officers and nearly thirty interior ministry officials, which included a major general and three colonels.² Furthermore, two national court judges, along with nine officials at the Riyadh's Almaarefa University, were also detained and accused of corruption and receiving bribes.

Political corruption in France is also extremely common, and the politician often goes unpunished, especially when they hold mass political power. Former France president was sentenced to a year in prison for trying to bribe a court judge for confidential details on

lawsuits filed against him, and has faced allegations of creating a system of “...fake bills to hide epic overspending on his failed re-election campaign in 2012.”³

According to a report created by the Southeast European Leadership for Development and Integrity network, “Albania has the highest pressure and involvement in corruption in the Western Balkans for all indicators, such as seeking bribes, giving them, acceptability of corruption, falling prey to it and even state capture by businesses.”⁴ Within the Western Balkans region, the country most impacted by the highest political corruption is Albania, where “...57% of citizens being asked for bribes at least occasionally and 47% actually participating in corruption transactions.”⁴ Albania remained under the control of the Ottoman empire until it became an independent state in 1912. Albania’s history of political systems ranged from one of the most totalitarian communist states to a democratic rule. However, during the rule of the Democratic Party, the perception of this new democracy as unrestrained freedom led to low civil moral, which weakened state legitimacy and created a culture of acceptance for political corruption. As a result, the society transformed into one that was dependent on personal relationships and connections rather than objective professionalism. “In 1997, a widespread corruption and extensive pyramid schemes pushed a large portion of the population into ruin and the whole country in deep crisis.”⁵ After the democratic government collapsed, international support and intergovernmental organisations had to intervene. However, even after the Socialist party received power to rule, corruption in the public sector still continues to be one of Albania’s most difficult corruption challenges. For instance, bribes are used for healthcare visits or school enrollment, and are extremely commonly given in cash form. “Almost 30% of bribes paid are actually offered by citizens themselves, while in more than half of cases, they are paid in response to an indirect request by a public official and for almost 15% they refer to an explicit request by a public official or a third party.”⁵ While corruption reforms and investigations are being increasingly carried out, corruption remains a challenge to investigate and is seen as a major barrier to growth in Albania in terms of foreign direct investment and political stability and transparency.

Extortion and Blackmail

Extortion and blackmail can be used both buy and against a government official. Blackmail is considered a form of extortion, and is often used as a threat to convince officials to take specific legal action or help prevent legal consequences to benefit the blackmailer.

Recent cases of alleged political blackmailing have emerged in the United Kingdom as a senior conservative politician has stated the British government intimidated and attempted to blackmail those who rebelled against prime minister Boris Johnson’s rule. Christian Wakeford, conservative lawmaker, claimed “the government had threatened to withhold funding for a new school in part of his constituency if he refused to vote with the government.”⁶ After declarations of feeling no confidence in the Johnson, Senior Conservative William Wragg revealed that he had been threatened with a loss of funding for their constituencies, and blackmailed by Johnson loyalists threatening to leak embarrassing stories about rebellious lawmakers to the press.

Extortion cases threatening government officials appear commonly all over the world. In countries like China, countless officials have been mailed images and videos involving their seemingly immoral or dishonest actions with a threat that they will be released to the public if money is not paid to the sender. The images often involve the officials "...engaged in a sordid encounter with a woman who is not his wife."⁷ In Shuangfeng in the Hunan Province, dozens of blackmailers were arrested by authorities, "...some of whom have used officials' actual transgressions to demand payments and some of whom have simply used electronic manipulation to make misdeeds up."⁷

Cronyism and Nepotism

The term cronyism can be used interchangeably with crony capitalism, and was initially used to during the 1997 Asian financial crisis to point out states where family members of political leaders were exceedingly wealthy without there being any non-political justifications.

Cronyism is rooted within the United State's history of political and economic conduct. The government has long passed policies to benefit cronies, special-interest politicians, and businesses at the expense of the public. The Central Bank's selective credit expansion, foreign policy amendments, business subsidies, and discriminatory taxes are only a few examples of cronyism that have led to the benefits of increased profits or greater authority and power for businesses and individuals.⁸ Media has recently shed light on former US President Donald Trump's multiple efforts to benefit his cronies, contributing largely to the United States' embodiment of crony capitalism where in exchange for campaign contributions and funds, political leaders have abused their authority to extend protection and benefits to cronies and businesses, whether that be through protection against importing competitors through tariff exemptions, or tax breaks and funding that help businesses reach monopoly status.⁹ With a crony-capitalist system, equal treatment under the law becomes lacking, which can result in the deterioration of economic performance and growth, especially in countries with ample natural resources with opportunities to gain wealth through cronyism arrangements, while the system continues as political leaders can buy public acquiescence through cronies.

In Brazil, nepotism first appeared during the colonial and imperial times in the Letter of Pêro Vaz de Caminha written by Pero Vaz de Caminha, where the king orders his son to administer the new territory discovered. Then, in the Sarney Government's during the 6th republic, nepotism accusations towards José Sarney emerged, stating that he favoured friends with concessions on radios and media interviews. Furthermore, there are abundant cases of nepotism in Brazilian courts: a total of 63 relatives of Paraná Regional Labour Court judge Severino Marcondes Meira worked as staff in the court. The judge allocated the highest salaries to his children and wife, resulting in a total of almost \$250,000 in monthly income of the Meira family.¹⁰ However, after former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso passed a law that prohibited staff of "federal courts to be coworkers of relatives 'up to the third degree' (which would include parents, spouses, children, siblings, grandparents,

grandchildren, first cousins, nephews and nieces, as well as in-laws or step-relatives in those categories), nepotism in federal courts saw a decrease.”¹⁰ In recent times, after Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro’s announcement to nominate his son as the ambassador of Brazil in the US, Donald Trump stated that he would support a trade agreement between the US and Brazil, triggering concerns about corruption, and specifically nepotism, in Brazil at this key moment in relations between the two nations.

Causes and Effects

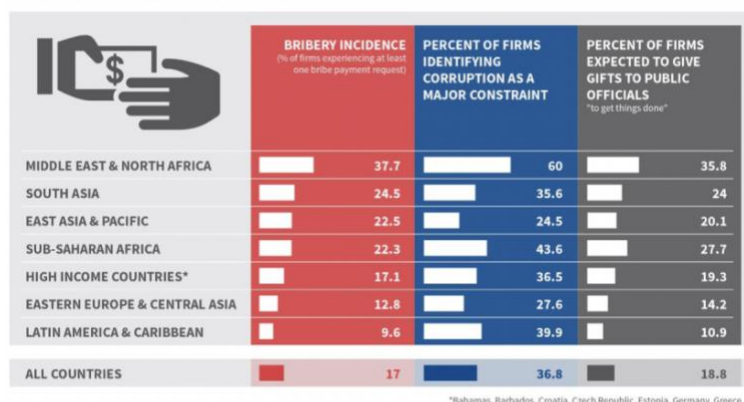
Weak governance is one of the most common and fundamental causes of political corruption. The strength of the government, the implementation of legislation, and the power and economic opportunities provided in political systems all influence the conditions where political corruption can appear. The centralisation of power in the state and court can serve to be dangerous in terms of the delegation of authority and the possibility of corruption. Corruption tends to be more prevalent in neo-patrimonial political systems, where politics revolve around personalism, vertical relationships such as patron-client relationships, and identity-based relationships such as ethnicity and religion have more political power. There is “... weak separation of the public and private spheres, which results in the widespread private appropriation of public resources.”¹¹ Furthermore, nations experiencing a political transition can be especially susceptible to increased rates of political corruption due to the lack of order.

Due to varying customs and traditions, different nations and cultures can have different attitudes towards corruption. For example, Northern Europe is much more intolerant towards corruption compared to Southern Europe where political corruption is common and almost considered a socially normal phenomenon. Countries with a more democratic past tend to traditionally prosecute political corruption more than former socialist nations where corruption within the system “was a part of the folklore tradition.”¹¹ Considering culture and sociocultural norms of a country is essential for understanding corrupt behaviour, and main findings have been discovered from this type of research: “there is evidence that the public sector in some Sub-Saharan African countries is undergoing a process of ‘informal privatisation’,”¹¹ which is characterised by the setting of complex norms that contradict formal rules and create an unclear boundary between legal and illegal actions. Moreover, it is difficult to draw the line between politically corrupt practices and other actions as corruption is often integrated into everyday practices that aren’t inherently corrupt but more so enable or endorse corruption. Social behaviour, which includes whether an action is perceived as being corrupt or not, relates to the scale and circumstance of a political situation: “favouritism in public services is widely denounced, but is perceived to have social legitimacy. Illegitimate corruption is therefore often that which transgresses social perceptions relating to excess, greed or selfishness.”¹¹ Thus, it must be understood that the level of corruption partly depends on what is perceived as politically corrupt or socially acceptable in a country’s culture.

The type of political regime may also impact levels of political corruption. “There is a positive and long-term correlation between established democracy and higher quality of governance, including lower levels of corruption in developed countries”...“a long-term association also exists between a free and independent media and reduced corruption,”¹¹ and research has shown a strong causal relationship between press freedom and decreased political corruption rates. Electoral systems are also a significant component of determining political corruption. Certain types of electoral systems may facilitate an environment conducive to corrupt practices such as vote-buying and bribery. “Proportional representation (PR) systems, especially closed-list ones, tend to be more susceptible to corruption than plurality systems,”¹¹ which is because corruption is easier to hide in a system that builds indirect and weaker accountability links between voters and political candidates. However, it is important to note that there is no perfect electoral system for all countries, and that there will always be political trade-offs included.

Political corruption can bring significant economic losses. Because high-level officials have opportunities to receive bribes for public expenditure manipulation, public investments increase along with corruption, but at the expense of private investments. Furthermore, public benefits for the population’s development can decrease as public expenditure for health and education decreases with corruption as more funds are budgeted towards private efforts and unnecessary projects. Thus, the overall infrastructure and benefits from public investments decrease in a country. There are also studies that have presented arguments on a positive correlation between high military expenditure and corruption, which can result in lower levels of overall economic growth. Corruption can impact businesses differently, depending on the size of the firm. Larger businesses are often politically protected and can avoid taxes more easily, while it is much more difficult for start-up and middle-sized firms to survive. Considering economic growth in the form of foreign direct investment, corrupt countries, due to less transparency and stability, are much less attractive for investors. This effect be detrimental to developing countries that are highly in need of foreign investment to kick start the economy in terms of increasing employment and economic development.

COSTS OF CORRUPTION AT FIRM LEVEL



CORRUPTION **INCREASES** THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS BY UP TO **10%** ON AVERAGE (OECD report 2013)

Sources: World Bank Enterprise Survey, <http://www.enterpriseurveys.org/Data/ExploreTopics/corruption>
 OECD (2013) The rationale for fighting corruption. Background Brief, <http://www.oecd.org/etp/etp/09693613.pdf>

... can increase level of government budget and national income, high-corruption countries achieve lower literacy rates, have higher mortality rates and overall achieve worse human development outcomes.”¹¹ This can further result in reduced trust in the government and public institutions, as well as decreased public engagement from citizens.

In terms of trust and conflict within a country, substantial evidence supports a negative correlation between confidence in public institutions and political corruption levels. Additionally, “corruption has a negative impact on political participation, undermines belief in the political system and the legitimacy of democracies and may also raise tolerance for the use of violent means to achieve political ends.”¹¹ However, considering the re-distributive effects corruption can have on income, some have also argued political corruption in the short term can defuse conflict dynamics.

1.2 Recent Developments

Recent cases of any form of corruption can be found in various countries. Considering the current COVID-19 pandemic, multiple cases of political corruption schemes related to COVID-19 have occurred. For example, there has been more evidence pointing towards corruption and price gouging in the Russian Direct Investment Fund’s (RDIF) offering of exclusive resale rights to the UAE “...to provide Sputnik V doses to five countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East at inflated prices.”¹² In another instance, in 2020, under accusations of embezzlement of budget allocated towards COVID-19 crisis support, “...the former Minister of Health from the Democratic Republic of Congo was placed under provisional arrest...”¹² Furthermore, the Human Rights Watch reported that instead of supporting the most vulnerable citizens, politicians were using Kenya’s cash transfer program to support and fund family and friends and there was a significant lack of transparency in carrying out the program. This corruption has further benefited those already in power, and combined with the slow pace of investigations by anti-corruption committees, has only made situations worse.

However, recent developments made towards eradicating political corruption are also worth highlighting. Countries such as Malaysia and Pakistan have created and marketed digital applications that help verify COVID-19 vaccination certificates to prevent the spread of faulty or fake vaccination cards. In African countries, non-profit and non-governmental organisations have been working to hold their governments accountable in areas where political corruption rates were high and difficult to address. The strategies used “... ranged from raising awareness through theatre and comic books and recognising journalists who were investigating corruption [...], and participating in a number of multi-stakeholder forums in South Africa to improve the handling of corruption reports.”¹² Some other countries have

tightened their consequences towards politically corrupt practices: in 2021, China's anti-corruption agencies increased penalties on corrupt practices such as giving and receiving bribes. In the past, corruption monitoring in China was mainly focused on government officials, but there has been much more recent development towards efforts to decrease corruption on an individual and business level. The increased penalties include monitoring by third parties of individuals and companies under accusations of bribery, as well as a black-list system that restricts the market access and business operations of bribe-givers.¹³

Key Terms

Direct Bribery - When an offender receives a gift or promise and agrees to perform or does indeed perform or refrain from a political act.¹⁴

Indirect Bribery - When an offender receives a gift or promise for the purpose of convince them to perform or refrain from a political act; "it is not necessary that the officer should do any particular act or even promise to do an act."¹⁴

Extortion - "the wrongful use of actual or threatened force, violence, or intimidation to gain money or property from an individual or entity."¹⁵

Blackmail - "an act of coercion using the threat of revealing or publicizing either substantially true or false information about a person or people unless certain demands are met."¹⁶

Cronyism - a specific form of favouritism that implies "buying and selling favors, such as votes in legislative bodies, as doing favors to organizations, giving desirable ambassadorships to exotic places, etc."¹⁷

Nepotism - "the act of using one's power or influence to get good jobs or unfair advantages for members of one's own family."¹⁸

2. Emphasis of the Discourse

2.1 Left Wing Approach

Before addressing the stance of left-wing and right-wing approaches, it's important to mention that there is no standard criteria for defining a country as left or right-wing, and that most countries are often mixed with a different ratio of both approaches. The left often have characteristics of advocating for equality, which is contrasting from the effects of political corruption. Progressive social movements and anti-corruption protests are a large part of what shapes the left-wing approach to political corruption. Corruption is a strong threat to liberal democratic institutions: it can lead to decreased confidence of citizens in liberal democracy, which can popularize other party alternatives. Furthermore, increased

corruption can result in reluctance of parties and governing bodies to cede power, “...both because the administration’s leaders and cronies will lose their illicit revenue streams, and because losing power may increase their exposure to potential investigation, prosecution, and punishment.”¹⁹ This contradicts with a main ideology of the liberal democratic regime: peaceful transfer of power.

2.2 Right Wing Approach

Some have argued that a right-wing government may be more prone to political corruption. The two-way uncertainty of corruption must be overcome in order for corruption to prevail, that is, politicians performing corrupt practices must be able to trust their beneficiaries won’t reveal their actions; beneficiaries and bribers need to trust the politicians to do as stated in the deal, since in the perspective of bribery, the agreed action is not guaranteed under legal constraints. Right-wing politicians tend to have more trustful relationship with private sector representatives: “Across a number of countries, there is evidence that right-wing parties usually receive more funding from corporations and small firms compared to left-wing parties that are sometimes to a high degree financed by labor unions.”²⁰ Thus, sometimes it can be difficult for right-wing politicians to turn down or report bribes offered by firms that regularly donate to the political party as doing so can jeopardise future support for the party. A research report produced in 2011 found that “...countries with right-wing governments *ceteris paribus* suffer from about a 10% higher level of corruption as perceived by survey respondents.”²⁰ However, this doesn’t mean that the right-wing is supportive of corruption. For example, in 2018, anti-corruption protests were largely used to support far-right politician Jair Bolsonaro, who advocated for cracking down on corruption as a main part of his campaign.

2.3 Stance of Intergovernmental Organisations

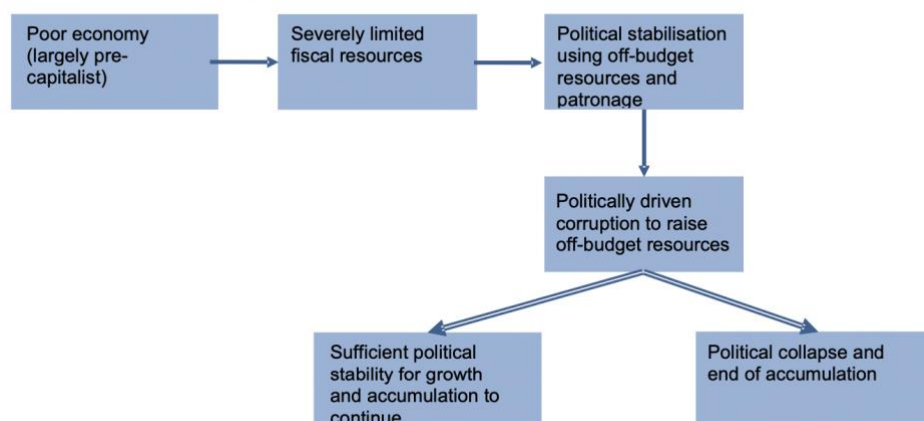
Intergovernmental organisations such as the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** have increasingly developed their roles in combating global political corruption. For example, in 2018, the **IMF** launched a global anti-corruption framework, aiming to achieve macroeconomic stability and eradicate severe corruption that threatens the state of the economy. The framework is more comprehensive in addressing the links between corruption, loss of trust and confidence, and inequality. The fund stated the goal of the framework was to combat corruption “systematically, effectively, candidly, and in a manner that respects uniformity of treatment”²¹ in reviewing the political corruption status of its member nations and identifying as well as addressing corruption. The **United Nations** has also expressed ambitions towards eradicating corruption through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 16 “peace, justice, and strong institutions” includes commitments to mitigate political corruption and improve transparency in legal institutions. The UN has expressed that corruption is a major barrier to development and the other SDGs as it increases inequality, depriving marginalised groups’ access to needed resources, and negatively impacts economic growth.

In 1997, OECD member nations signed the convention against foreign bribery, which focuses on the supply-side of international corruption and bribery. The convention “...establishes legally binding standards to criminalise bribery of foreign public officials in international business transactions and provides for a host of related measures that make this effective.”²² OECD countries have expressed their belief in the importance of fighting international bribery in business in order to increase development, boost consumer and business confidence, and reduce poverty.

2.4 Stance of Developing Countries

Corruption is commonly more widespread in developing countries. Firstly, the state is likely to play a crucial role in developing economies as key and infant industries often require the support of targeted subsidies and financial assistance, making the buying off of those excluded common. This can result in increased rates of both economic and political corruption. Furthermore, maintaining political stability with limited resources is also an added challenge for developing countries. Keeping stability and cohesion in a population often requires delegating resources and budget to those who are marginalised or are in great need. However, developing countries often lack the ability for this resourcing and distribution to take place. This is when relationships between clients and patrons shape, as those in need receive redistribution of beneficial resources and finances in change for their political support. This network, though extremely common in developing countries, is a form of corruption as it implies offering resources to benefit those outside of legal channels of public or private sector spending.

Figure 1: Drivers of corruption embedded in political settlements in countries with a limited fiscal base



Source: Khan (2006 [TC and P; OBS, descriptive statistics and regression analysis]).

Department for International Development. Why Corruption Matters: Understanding Causes, Effects and How to Address Them. 2015. Cuadrado, Daniela Cepeda. “Covid-19 Corruption in 2021: August–September.” U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, 1 Nov. 2021, www.u4.no/blog/covid-19-corruption-in-2021-augustseptember. Accessed 23 Dec. 2022.

2.5 Stance of Developed Countries

It can be easy to assume that corruption is only common in developing countries with unstable political systems. However, the abuse of power leading to unpunished political corruption happens at a certain extent in any country, and established political systems can

sometimes create an environment that makes corruption easier. In countries with more developed economies, corporate practices often involve ungoverned corruption: large companies like Starbucks, Apple, Google, and many more have been found to avoid taxes. It is in these countries that are trying to accelerate their economic growth where corruption for the benefit of business can go purposely unnoticed. Political corruption is very common in the US and Europe: for example, in 2022, many British Parliament members such as John Penrose and Lord Agnew resigned in protest of corruption and fraud in the political system and by the UK's prime minister.²³

Many politicians in developed countries have realised the massive long-term costs and threat to law of global corruption, as well as the harm it poses to countries' economies and citizen-governor relationships. Moreover, corruption in developed countries is also negatively impacting the access to public goods and services of those in developing countries. A combination of foreign bribery, transnational tax evasion, and other illicit financial transactions "...deprive developing countries of over US\$1 trillion per year".²⁴

3. Possible Solutions

3.1 Pertaining to Developed Countries

Strengthening and anti-corruption institutions through putting more emphasis on hiring and preventing corruption and misconduct within the anti-corruption institutions, funds to make it more strict.

More developed countries often have anti-corruption institutions in place, and have more ability to fund and focus their resources towards these institutions. The reliability and objectivity of anti-corruption institutions is the first step towards eradicating political corruption. Governments and political institutions can contribute to this through firstly, ensuring the full independence of anti-corruption institutions in its conduct and selection of staff. Secondly, this full independence should be coupled with giving powers to anti-corruption institutions to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption. However, with all this power, anti-corruption institutions can still become corrupt itself and engage in misconduct. Thus, developed nations must ensure there is independent oversight for anti-corruption institutions, whether that be through parliamentary oversight or a committee of professional groups and non-profit organisations. As developed countries with larger budgets, more resources can also be delegated towards enhancing the function and power of anti-corruption institutions, and making it easier to investigate cases of corruption. In turn, anti-corruption agencies must be stringent and objective in their prosecution of those involved in corruption, and must ensure their staff are transparent in their work and are committed to values of anti-corruption.

Developed countries can also assist developing countries in anti-corruption through financial support and sharing of experience. Furthermore, developed and developing countries can

work together to establish an international definition of political corruption to establish a clear idea for both citizens and anti-corruption agencies of what is considered illicit.

3.2 Pertaining to Developing Countries

Developing countries that often have weaker or less stable political systems can work to make bureaucracies more transparent and efficient. Public sectors in developing countries that often have vague legislation can foster an environment where misconduct is easy. Bureaucracy can be streamlined in ways such as condensing the population of committees and political groups to reduce the opportunity of collection bribers, or simplify tax codes to reduce fraud and tax evasion.

Many citizens in developing countries re-elect corrupt politicians without realising their corrupt practices, and those officials often stay in office for long as they gain power through corruption. Increasing the transparency of political conduct in terms of election transparency and tax transparency can pose as beneficial. In elections, citizens can be provided information on each candidate's past actions and qualifications in order for the citizens to understand what their vote will entail. In taxing, bribery and corruption is often the result of tax administrators wanting to profit off taxes while taxpayers hope to pay the least. The creation of automated tax administration systems can keep electronic records of tax transactions and only allow access to the sides involved in the transactions. This advancement towards transparent tax systems can be paired with increased education and raising awareness to citizens of ways to reduce their risk of being involved in corruption.

In mentioning education of citizens, those in developing countries often are more vulnerable to being used in corrupt practices as many are less educated and informed. Developing countries can increase education of citizens in the understanding of duties of political officials and helping them understand their political rights and ability to combat corruption around them. Moreover, as some forms of corruption are seen as normal in certain developing countries, governments must focus on the education of morality and rules of conduct for citizens, and anti-corruption institutions can also engage with citizens on a community-scale to educate them on the consequences of corruption and the importance of preventing it.

4. Keep in Mind the Following

During the research process, it is crucial for delegates to have background knowledge about how political corruption manifests in their country, as well as their country's current situation and history of corruption. Moreover, when developing ideas for solutions, delegates should keep in mind the economical, political, and social status of their country, as well as to what extent is the solution feasible and in coordination with their country's stance. Below are some guiding questions delegates should consider answering in their research process:

1.) *What is the current situation of political corruption in the delegate's country? What are the main factors contributing to it?*

2.) *How has the delegate's country engaged in anti-corruption practices? How have they spoken out about combating political corruption?*

3.) *What types of solutions does the delegate's country have the ability and willingness to implement? What effects will these solutions have on funding towards mitigating other issues?*

4.) *What types of solutions can various countries in the UN, whether they're developed or developing, adopt to eradicate global corruption in the long run?*

5.) *In the delegate's country, what groups of people are negatively impacted by political corruption the most? What groups positively?*

6.) *How can countries in the UN establish a clear agreement on what political corruption is? Or is there no need for an agreement?*

5. Evaluation

After millenniums, societies today still continue to endure political corruption. Corruption happens in all countries, and further increases inequality and marginalisation, and prevents both human and economic development. Leading politicians of a country involved in corrupt practices can pose significant challenges to eradicating corruption, and doing so without a clear idea of what constitutes corruption can lead to further confusions. Global corruption can be caused by an influx of various political, social, and economical factors, and delegates must remember that the causes and suitable solutions will be different for every country. Corruption continues to deprive citizens of their rights and further increase the divide between the rich and the poor. It is of utmost importance for delegates to come together to address this multi-layered issue, and to find a balance between solutions to mitigate urgent major corruption schemes and establish stability in the long-term. Delegates are encouraged to develop innovative ideas outside of the established framework of approaches, as it can become crucial components of properly addressing this lingering issue.

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