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The Fightback of Corruption: A Key Driver of Systemic Corruption in Africa

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Abstract

While extensive scholarship has examined corruption as a barrier to development, less attention has been given to how entrenched elites and institutions actively resist, adapt to, or subvert anti-corruption initiatives in Africa. Through a mixed methodological approach with emphasis on case studies, literature reviews, document analysis, or content analysis, which also incorporates quantitative perception data, this study interrogates the phenomenon of the fightback of corruption as a critical driver of systemic corruption in Africa. The theoretical framework, namely political settlements theory, principal-agent-client theory, and collective action theory, significantly validates the findings of the study. Cataloging selected cases or incidents of how corruption fights back against anti-corruption measures or initiatives, this article has provided empirical evidence that serves as an eye-opener for policymakers. The findings (selected cases/incidents) reveal an urgent necessity for a paradigm shift in the ongoing struggle against corruption in Africa. Conclusively, it argues that this shift, which hinges on the genuine commitment of African governments, must transcend the superficial implementation of anti-corruption policies or strategies. It recommends that the fight against corruption should focus on a robust framework that not only safeguards but also champions the rights and protections of anti-corruption campaigners, whistleblowers, activists, and advocates, who often operate under the shadow of peril.

Keywords: *Anti-Corruption measures, Corruption, Fightback of Corruption, Systemic Corruption*

13

Introduction

In the unrelenting battle against systemic corruption plaguing Africa, a growing number of scholars have delved into the myriad factors fueling this dire sociopolitical crisis, which deeply erodes the continent's stability and prosperity. Taking a critical stance, Kieh (2023) framed Africa within the broader narrative of the Global South, pinpointing elite pathologies, fragile institutional frameworks, and the urgent need for sweeping legal and institutional reforms as principal culprits behind the entrenchment of corruption. Dodoo (2025) expanded on this, highlighting the detrimental impact of inefficient legal infrastructures and obstructed reforms that exacerbate the problem, forming a vicious cycle of impunity and decay.

Furthermore, Agbiboa (2025) traced the roots of this pervasive issue to a confluence of weak institutional structures, glaring economic disparities, and ingrained cultural norms that echo the haunting legacies of colonialism. In a stark condemnation, Transparency International (2024) shone a spotlight on the complicity of Western financial institutions, which have become conduits for illicit financial flows and abuses in trade finance. Their findings revealed a staggering $3.7 billion in stolen African assets sprawled across 74 jurisdictions, including notorious tax havens like the British Virgin Islands, Panama, and Seychelles. This wealth, illicitly siphoned off, is often funneled into luxurious real estate and hidden bank accounts in prominent global financial centers such as France, the UK, the UAE, Hong Kong, and the United States.

Adding to the discourse, Jiya & Kali (2025) presented empirical evidence underscoring the lack of political will as the foremost barrier to overcoming systemic corruption, suggesting that without a decisive commitment to change, the cycle of corruption is likely to continue unabated.

Unquestionably, these reasons or causes that have garnered extensive academic attention are fundamentally genuine. However, the most recent Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) characterized Africa as the most corrupt, based on regional average scores (Transparency International, 2025), highlighting the urgent need for further research that could enrich the discourse. Observations seem compelling regarding another factor responsible for systemic corruption in Africa. This factor pertains to how corruption pushes back against efforts to combat it, often discussed under related concepts like elite resistance, project capture, and backlash. In other words, this sociopolitical phenomenon rarely appears as a standalone topic in academic literature. For this reason, this article aims to contribute to understanding this phenomenon as a key factor fueling systemic corruption in Africa.

The paper is organized into three sections. The first section addresses academic criteria and consists of two parts. The initial part introduces a theoretical framework that emphasizes three pertinent theories within the African context: Political Settlements Theory, Principal-Agent-Client Theory, and Collective Action Theory. These theories elucidate the mechanisms through which corruption persists, not only due to individual initiatives but also through the coordinated actions of elites and institutional actors aimed at preserving systemic advantages. This segment concludes with key constructs and definitions related to corruption, corruption fightback, and systemic corruption. The second part shows empirical cases of resistance against corruption globally, with a particular emphasis on Africa. This focus indicates that this sociopolitical phenomenon is one of the significant contributors to systemic corruption in Africa. The final section of the paper provides concluding remarks and recommendations.

Methodological Approach

Given the complexity and political sensitivity surrounding corruption dynamics, a mixed-methods approach is advisable. This should center on qualitative methods, such as case studies, literature reviews, document analysis, or content analysis, while also incorporating quantitative perception data. Such an approach would likely rely on secondary data to enhance the interrogation of the topic.

Contribution to Knowledge

In the domains of political science, public administration, development studies, and African governance, this article holds the potential to enhance understanding in several key ways.

Firstly, it aims to present a fresh perspective on anti-corruption efforts. While most studies concentrate on strategies to combat corruption, this article shifts the focus by exploring how corruption itself can resist and retaliate. It introduces the concept of "corruption fighting back" as an active, systemic process, shedding light on the dynamics, actors, and mechanisms employed by corrupt elites or institutions to subvert reform efforts.

Furthermore, it provides a context-specific analysis by examining the political and socio-economic landscapes of Africa. Lastly, it offers empirical insights into the reasons many anti-corruption initiatives on the continent fail or even exacerbate the issue.

Theoretical Framework

This article employs three essential theories that provide distinct perspectives on how and why corruption counteracts efforts to combat it. These theories are Political Settlements Theory, Principal-Agent-Client Theory, and Collective Action Theory. Let's see what each of these theories offers.

Political Settlements Theory (PST)

Introduced by Mushtaq Khan as a key proponent, the political settlement theory (PST) posits that corruption is not merely the result of weak institutions but also serves as a political strategy employed by elites to either sustain or contest power (Khan, 2010). In other words, Khan argues that the dynamics of corruption, rent-seeking, and governance failures are shaped by the distribution of power among elites, rather than being solely attributed to institutional weaknesses or a lack of capacity. This fundamental idea elucidates why anti-corruption reforms can disrupt established political arrangements, potentially provoking violent or institutional resistance. In this context, the PST offers insights into why such reforms may elicit backlashes, particularly in fragile or post-conflict societies, including those in Africa. Khan (2017) observes that in Africa, anti-corruption initiatives frequently threaten the interests of powerful elites, leading to a "fightback" aimed at preserving rent-seeking networks. Simply put, the Political PST refutes the notion that corruption resists efforts to combat it due to weak institutions and infrastructure. A notable example validating this claim is the "state capture" scandal that occurred during President Zuma's administration (2009–2018), particularly involving the Gupta family. Anti-corruption institutions, such as the Public Protector, were systematically undermined or co-opted to safeguard elite agreements and patronage networks. This fightback was evident through the dismissal of officials, such as Finance Minister Nhlanhla Nene, the

intimidation of whistleblowers, and the manipulation of public procurement processes (Lodge, 2019).

Similarly, Kenya serves as another significant case that substantiates Khan's argument. Historical documentation reveals numerous anti-corruption initiatives (such as those under Presidents Mwai Kibaki and Uhuru Kenyatta) that have encountered elite resistance. Tactics used to counter these efforts included ethicizing accountability measures, rotating elite personnel (reshuffling rather than sanctioning), and obstructing legal processes (Cheeseman, Lynch, G & Willis, 2016).

Adding to this discourse, Levy (2014; 2022) incorporates the concept of political settlements into his analysis of governance and institutional reform, particularly in fragile or developing states. He emphasizes how different types of political settlements influence the feasibility of reform and impact state capacity. Furthermore, Levy acknowledges both the positive and negative implications of these settlements, with the adverse effects reinforcing Khan's assertion that efforts to combat corruption often provoke violence or institutional resistance.

Shortcomings of the PST
The PST's overemphasis on the strategy used by political elites to counter anti-corruption measures inadvertently overlooks or ignores corruption at the grassroots level, where the problem also persists. Another flaw in this theory is a contradiction regarding institutional weakness. The current argument is that institutional weakness is not a factor that explains corruption's resistance to anti-corruption efforts. However, this paper contends that institutional weakness is actually part of the deliberate strategy designed by the same political elites. In other words, when overt violent means, which often raise suspicion, are not used, the weakening of institutions, shown by reduced budgetary support and repealing of legislation, becomes a harmless option that does not attract public scrutiny. Consider the case of Professor PLO Lumumba in Kenya. During his tenure, Lumumba encountered significant pushback from Parliament and other influential entities. Members of Parliament united to have him removed, accusing him of exposing their actions to public scrutiny, leaking information to the media, and disregarding established decorum, among other grievances. Thus, while his departure may seem like a resignation, it was essentially mandated by the reconstitution of the anti-corruption body, compounded by heightened political resistance at the time (Ohito, 2011).

Another pertinent example is President Yoweri Museveni's lengthy rule, characterized by periodic anti-corruption campaigns that often falter when they threaten key political allies. In this context, Museveni employs a "survivalist settlement," co-opting or shielding powerful elites, particularly military and political figures, despite the looming corruption allegations against them. This resistance is evident in his appointment of loyalists to oversight agencies, protection of allies from prosecution (as seen in the Global Fund scandal), and implementation of legal reforms designed to insulate the presidency (Hickey & Golooba-Mutebi, 2017). In both examples, these strategic tactics to counter anti-corruption efforts received relatively less public scrutiny compared to overtly violent methods.

While the Political Settlement Theory has notable limitations in accounting for resistance to anti-corruption measures, it nonetheless provides important analytical value by illuminating how power configurations and elite bargains influence reform trajectories.

The Principal-Agent-Client Theory (PAC)
From a broad view, PAC offers a detailed understanding of corruption, especially in situations where anti-corruption efforts are met with resistance or are undermined (Ackerman, 2004; 2005). It expands on the traditional Principal Agent (PA) model by adding a third player: the Client (often the public or citizens), to better explain why anti-corruption measures sometimes fail or have unintended consequences. Proponents argue that anti-corruption measures may provoke backlash due to conflicting interests among principals (leaders or institutions), agents (bureaucrats, officials), and clients (citizens, interest groups) (Marquette & Peiffer, 2015; Khan, 2017; Kelsall, 2011).

According to Marquette and Peiffer (2018), in many developing or authoritarian environments, the principal, such as political leadership, may be complicit in corruption or reliant on corrupt networks for political survival. Consequently, anti-corruption measures can be perceived as threats to political stability or existing elite agreements, leading to intentional sabotage or merely superficial implementation.

Regarding the agents involved, Persson, Rothstein, and Teorell (2013) argue that those tasked with implementing reforms might benefit from the status quo and, therefore, resist enforcement, particularly when monitoring is lax or incentives are misaligned. They may also leak, delay, or distort reform policies, especially when such enforcement jeopardizes patronage networks or opportunities for rent-seeking. For instance, in 2004, Cameroon enacted a decentralization law aimed at transferring power from the central government. However, the implementation was sluggish: rather than empowering local institutions, the government established the role of "government delegate," who was appointed by the president to oversee and control these local entities (Check, 2024; Mbuagbo, 2012). It can be argued or inferred that this intentional delay and distortion of policy execution illustrates how reform initiatives can be undermined when they pose a threat to established patronage systems. Similarly, despite progress in anti-corruption, Rwanda still faces significant transparency and procurement issues. Notable examples include the Kigali Convention Centre and Rwanda Biomedical Centre, where public procurement irregularities, fund diversion, inflated costs, and construction delays occurred (The East African, 2020; Ntarindwa, 2023).

Arguably, these distortions and enforcement gaps highlight how agents may leak, delay, or misdirect reform when monitoring is insufficient, or when incentives are misaligned

In terms of how clients may support corrupt actors, Booth (2012) suggests that in patronage-based systems, citizens may prefer corrupt leaders who deliver results, even if they engage in corruption, over rule-bound bureaucracies that fail to meet their needs. Consequently, anti-corruption initiatives can be viewed as elitist, externally imposed, or politically selective, which may lead clients to oppose or disregard them. For example, Lesotho's anti-corruption body, the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences, faces significant challenges, a lack of resources, political interference, and internal corruption that blunt its effectiveness (Lesotho Times, 2018). In the eyes of the public, such initiatives as hollow or selectively enforced, reinforcing cynicism and potentially discouraging support for reforms (Mpesi, 2024).

In summary, PAC theory accounts for the retaliation by entrenched corrupt actors, who utilize their networks to undermine reformers,

impede investigations, or even target whistleblowers and anti-corruption officials. This is especially evident in cases of systemic corruption, where reform efforts are perceived as threats to established power structures. British whistleblower Ian Foxley, for example, exposed a longstanding bribery scheme involving the Ministry of Defence related to arms deals with Saudi Arabia. In retaliation, the Ministry disclosed his identity to contractors, causing significant harm to his career and forcing him to flee Saudi Arabia for his safety (The Guardian, 2025). This case exemplifies how deeply entrenched networks can respond decisively to silence or punish those who challenge them. Similarly, when Nigeria's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) was empowered to audit government finances, entrenched interests aggressively fought back. In some instances, documents were destroyed, and even government offices were targeted, deliberately obstructing the PAC's oversight function (Englebert & Mbaku, 2001).

Shortcomings of the PAC

While PAC theory provides valuable insights into the resistance faced by anti-corruption measures, it also has limitations when addressing the retaliatory actions of corrupt actors against reforms. Its focus on formal accountability structures, such as laws, contracts, and oversight, may undermine the importance of informal institutions, which are essential in the fight against corruption. As a result, retaliatory actions frequently manifest through informal networks, patronage systems, ethnic alliances, and organized criminal groups. For example, in Kenya, anti-corruption agencies have been weakened not only by legal challenges but by informal elite pacts to shield allies (Maina, 2019; Nzomo, 2024).

This article highlights that the PAC theory adopts a narrow definition of "Client." Specifically, it views clients as passive recipients of services who are capable of holding principals and agents accountable. However, in practice, citizens may actively support corrupt actors if they perceive short-term benefits, even opposing reforms. Thus, this paper posits that the PAC does not fully recognize how "clients" can become complicit in defending corrupt systems. This is concerning because "clients also play significant roles in resisting anti-corruption initiatives. Research has shown that certain rural communities in Nigeria have opposed anti-corruption investigations into local leaders who provide patronage resources (Briggs, 2015). In this example, these local communities are equated to "Clients" who are aiding the fight against corruption.

The PAC theory effectively elucidates information asymmetry, yet it is deficient in its explanation of how physical coercion, intimidation, and legal harassment are employed to counteract reformers. As a result, it tends to downplay the role of fear, not merely misaligned incentives, in perpetuating systemic corruption. Tshishonga (2018) highlights a case in South Africa where anti-graft investigators faced sidelining or threats from political allies of those under scrutiny, illustrating tactics aimed more at silencing than manipulating information. Similarly, a report by The Economist Intelligence Unit (2020) recounts instances where key investigators were either removed or intimidated to hinder investigations into political corruption.

In conclusion, while the PAC theory provides valuable insights into why corrupt actors resist anti-corruption measures through the lens of incentives and relationships, it does not adequately address scenarios characterized by highly politicized, coercive, and informal power, contexts in which corruption aggressively retaliates. For this reason, scholars frequently integrate PAC with political settlements theory to more effectively capture the systemic and retaliatory dynamics at play.

Collective Action Theory

The theory, originating from Mancur Olson's work, elucidates how individuals or groups collaborate to achieve a common objective, particularly when there are incentives for free-riding or defection (Olson, 1965). The paper suggests that this theory can be viewed as a double-edged model. It posits that while governments, civil society, the private sector, and citizens collaborate to hold corrupt actors accountable, there is also a counter-response from these actors, who form coalitions to resist reforms that threaten their interests (Persson et al., 2013). Often, these corrupt actors comprise a powerful network of government officials, including former officials, whose wealth is allegedly derived from embezzlement. From the literature review, this article learns that in Kenya, political elites accused of corruption have used their networks in the legislature and judiciary to delay, dilute, or derail reform efforts. This resistance often involves threats against reformers, selective enforcement, and manipulation of investigations, as documented in Githongo's whistleblowing case and subsequent political backlash (Elischer, 2017).

Shortcomings of the Theory

While the collective action theory (CAT) provides valuable insights into how groups collaborate to address issues such as corruption, it also has significant limitations in explaining or responding to the pushback against anti-corruption initiatives.

CAT primarily emphasizes the challenges individuals or groups face in cooperating against a common problem, like corruption, particularly due to free-rider issues. However, it often downplays how entrenched power structures and elites actively resist change by leveraging resources, influence, and coercion to obstruct or undermine reforms. Bratton & Masunungure (2008) highlighted that

In Zimbabwe, efforts to implement anti-corruption reforms were met with harsh repression. Mugabe's regime used coercion, control over security forces, and political patronage to maintain a corrupt status quo, illustrating how entrenched power structures actively resist change.

Furthermore, there is a notable lack of attention to non-cooperative and adversarial behaviors. This observation suggests that CAT is more focused on fostering cooperation but is less effective in addressing deliberate sabotage, threats, or violence against reform advocates, which are prevalent in high-stakes battles against corruption.

Additionally, CAT offers limited explanations for systemic corruption and elite resistance. This simply means that while the theory accounts for collective inaction due to individual incentives, it struggles to elucidate how powerful coalitions of elites systematically organize resistance to anti-corruption reforms. As a result, CAT is less adept at analyzing how these coalitions coordinate their collective pushback. According to research yet to be verified independently, in Uganda, elites have maintained corruption through strategic appointments and control of anti-corruption institutions, collectively resisting reforms that threaten their interests, indicating a coordinated elite effort rather than isolated individual incentives (Tripp, 2010).

In summary, although collective action theory effectively highlights the difficulties of achieving cooperation in the fight

against corruption, it tends to underestimate the strategic and coordinated resistance posed by entrenched corrupt actors, as well as the complex institutional contexts that shape this opposition. This is why other frameworks, such as political settlements theory or principal-agent-client theory, are often integrated with CAT to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the menace called corruption.

Key Constructs and Definitions

The final thematic coverage within this first segment provides a brief overview of key constructs and definitions related to corruption, the fightback against corruption, and systemic corruption.

Corruption

Considering the emphasis on Africa as the contextual landscape, it is appropriate to frame corruption within the normative framework established by the African Union, which is also in alignment with the United Nations' standards regarding corruption.

As defined in Article 1 of the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC), adopted in 2003, "corruption" is broadly characterized as acts and practices, along with associated offenses, that are prohibited under this Convention (Africa LI, 2003).

To clarify the scope of this broad definition, Article 4 of the Convention, as examined by legal experts, provides specific examples of "acts of corruption and related offenses," which include:

- ✓ Offering illicit payments;
- ✓ Acts or omissions by public officials aimed at obtaining a bribe;
- ✓ Fraudulent diversion of property belonging to the state by public officials or others;
- ✓ Offering, giving, promising, soliciting, or accepting undue advantages in the private sector;
- ✓ Using or concealing proceeds from any of the above corrupt acts;
- ✓ Participation, whether as principal, accomplice, or instigator, in conspiracies to commit such acts.

As of 14 February 2023, 48 AU member states have ratified or acceded to the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (African Union, 2023). This ratification suggests that the national normative frameworks of the 48 countries align with the AUCPCC.

The AUCPCC Alignment with the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC)

The AUCPCC is fundamentally aligned with the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Both frameworks adopt a similar approach by refraining from establishing a singular, abstract definition of "corruption." Instead, they define corruption through a specific enumeration of offences and corresponding measures.

Concerning the UN/UNCAC approach, the United Nations Convention against Corruption intentionally avoids providing a definitive definition of corruption, choosing instead to focus on criminalizing specific behaviors. These include the bribery of national and foreign officials, embezzlement and diversion of funds, trading in influence, abuse of functions, illicit enrichment, private-sector bribery, money laundering, and obstruction of justice (Gallo, n.d.; UNODC, n.d.).

In short, the bottom line of alignment is that the UNCAC does not fix a single definition but enumerates offences, and AUCPCC does the same. The AUCPCC's conception of corruption aligns with the UN/UNCAC model of treating corruption as a set of criminalized behaviors (plus prevention, enforcement, and cooperation duties). As of 28 February 2025, 191 States Parties have ratified (or otherwise become parties to) the UNCAC. This figure includes 186 United Nations member states, plus the Cook Islands, Niue, the Holy See, the State of Palestine, and the European Union (United Nations Treaty Collection, 2025).

The Fightback of Corruption

In the opinion of this paper, a more functional definition would be the organized covert or overt strategies, resistance, or counteractions by corrupt actors and systems aimed at obstructing, weakening, or reversing anti-corruption reforms, policies, and accountability measures to preserve the existing status quo inimical to national development. This fightback against corruption manifests in the following forms:

Defensive tactics (blocking reforms, exploiting loopholes, delaying investigations). For example, in Nigeria, Abdulrasheed Maina led a Pension Reform Task Force that implemented an e-pension system, removing over 73,000 ghost pensioners and saving N4.2 billion monthly from one agency. However, a Senate Committee chairman allegedly blocked their efforts—accusing the task force of diverting funds and effectively shutting them down. The episode included attempts to discredit Maina and even assassination attempts by a disguised assailant (Maina, 2015). Similarly, in Sierra Leone, when anti-corruption agencies brought charges or secured convictions, supporters of those accused sometimes organized rallies, chanted, and protested, effectively opposing and undermining anti-corruption efforts. The media has also been used as a tool to discredit or pressure anti-corruption authorities when influential interests are threatened (Kaitibi, 2017).

Offensive tactics (attacking reformers, discrediting anti-corruption bodies, manipulating narratives). For instance, in Ukraine, the government blocked the appointment of Oleksandr Tsyvinsky, an independent detective selected to head the Economic Security Bureau, replacing him with a loyalist. Critics say this was aimed at weakening anti-graft enforcement (Financial Times, 2025).

Adaptive strategies (shifting corruption practices to new forms when old ones are exposed). For example, in Mexico, a corruption network embezzled funds via hundreds of shell companies tied to social programs. When traditional detection methods began closing loopholes, the network shifted its structure, creating new layers and legal personas, so it could persist under scrutiny. This illustrates how corruption can adapt structurally, becoming more complex to survive exposure (Luna-Pla, I., et al., 2020).

Systemic Corruption

In the context of this article, systemic corruption refers to corruption that is not merely isolated or incidental, but rather deeply embedded within the structures, institutions, and norms of a system. This definition suggests that corruption goes beyond individual actors or isolated incidents; it is thoroughly ingrained within the operations and frameworks of an organization, system, or even an entire society. This perspective extends beyond petty bribery or singular instances of fraud, highlighting a condition where corrupt practices become the standard, influencing decision-making at various levels. It also indicates that such practices are

normalized, widespread, and reinforced by the prevailing political, economic, or social order (Sustainability Directory, 2025).

On the flip side of the same coin, the definition suggests that systemic corruption is an abstract concept because it is a theoretical construct used to describe and analyze a real-world phenomenon. It helps scholars, policymakers, and activists frame the issue as being structural rather than individual. One might argue that this abstraction raises questions about the reality of systemic corruption as a tangible occurrence. While this academic viewpoint certainly opens up a space for discussion, there are relatively few concrete examples that substantiate the concept as a genuine phenomenon in the real world.

Under President Blaise Compaoré's long rule (1987–2014), corruption became deeply entrenched across the judiciary, health, education, and other branches. Bureaucratic practices such as nepotism, clientelism, and suppression of dissent created systems of rewards tied to loyalty, not performance. This normalization of corrupt governance helped spark the popular uprising that ultimately toppled his regime (Koné & Koné,
2023; Chouli, 2015; Bassey, 2015).

Another classic example to cite is the Democratic Republic of Congo. Characterized as a "violent kleptocracy," the Democratic Republic of the Congo operates in a manner where ruling networks systematically extract resources through corruption and violence. The state functions efficiently, but only for the ruling elites and their associates, while neglecting public services and repressing opposition. This structural capture of institutions reflects corruption as a foundational and violent mechanism of governance (Lezhnev, 2016).

Mozambique's $2 billion "Tuna Bonds" Scandal is also worth mentioning. This scandal involved the systematic misuse of borrowed funds, ostensibly for maritime infrastructure, by high-level officials, including the finance minister. The scheme included false underwriting, kickbacks, and the concealment of massive loans from institutions like Credit Suisse and VTB Capital. Its collapse triggered a default, destabilized public finances, and harmed national development, highlighting institutional complicity beyond mere bribery (Holmes, 2019).

Arguably, the above examples collectively highlight how systemic corruption in Africa goes far beyond the occasional bribe or scandal; it becomes an ingrained, normalized mechanism of governance and institutional functioning.

Empirical Cases/Instances of How Corruption Fights Back
This section serves as the core of the paper, drawing on secondary data and sources to examine global instances of how corruption retaliates against anti-corruption efforts. Specifically, it addresses the overt and extreme manifestations of this phenomenon, with a primary focus on the African context.

Global Context in Brief
The Case of Sergei Magnitsky (Russia, 2009)
Sergei Magnitsky was a Russian tax lawyer affiliated with Hermitage Capital Management. In 2008, he uncovered a significant tax fraud scheme involving Russian officials, in which $230 million was misappropriated from state funds. Instead of prosecuting those at fault, Russian authorities arrested Magnitsky in November 2008 on fabricated charges of tax evasion. He was held in pre-trial detention for nearly a year under brutal conditions, denied necessary medical treatment for pancreatitis and gallstones,

and subjected to repeated mistreatment (Ostaptschuk, 2013). On November 16, 2009, he died in Moscow's Matrosskaya Tishina prison (BBC News, 2013). Reports from human rights organizations and Russia's Presidential Human Rights Council suggested that his death was a consequence of deliberate neglect and possible physical abuse. His case garnered international attention, leading to the U.S. Magnitsky Act of 2012, which imposed sanctions on Russian officials implicated in human rights violations, later evolving into the Global Magnitsky Act to address abuses worldwide (Weber, 2021).

The Case of Daphne Caruana Galizia (Malta, 2017)
An investigative journalist and blogger who relentlessly exposed corruption via the Panama Papers, linking prominent Maltese politicians and business figures. She was assassinated in a car bomb as she drove away from her home on 16 October 2017. Her death was met with outrage across Europe, and embroiled Malta's ruling Labour party in a political scandal. Evidence later showed how the state fostered a "culture of impunity" that allowed her murder to occur (Tondo & Reuters, 2021).

The case of Herliyanto (Indonesia, 2006).
In 2006, Herliyanto, a freelance journalist, investigated corruption among local officials in East Java, Indonesia. He was followed by six men on motorcycles and murdered; his camera and notes were stolen (Reporters Without Borders, 2006).

The Case of Fernando Villavicencio (Ecuador, 2023)
In Ecuador, in 2023, an anti-corruption presidential candidate and investigative journalist was assassinated at a campaign rally less than two weeks before the August 20 presidential election (Daily News, 2023).

The Case of Viktoria Marinova (Bulgaria, 2018)
A television journalist who had recently reported on an investigation into EU fund corruption. She was found raped and murdered; although authorities claimed the crime was not work-related, press freedom groups called for a thorough investigation, citing her journalism as a likely motive (Quackenbush, 2018).

African Context in Brief
As the prime focus of the article, this segment highlights several cases or incidents that exemplify how corruption retaliates against anti-corruption efforts in Africa.

The Incident of Babita Deokaran (South Africa, 2021)
Babita Deokaran, a senior financial official in the Gauteng Department of Health, played a pivotal role as a whistleblower in an investigation into fraudulent COVID-19 PPE contracts amounting to millions. Tragically, she was assassinated outside her home, enduring multiple gunshots. Her murder ignited widespread outrage and calls for enhanced protection for whistleblowers. Subsequently, six perpetrators were arrested and convicted (Magome, 2023).

The Incident of Ernest Manirumva (Burundi, 2009)
In Burundi, Ernest Manirumva, the Vice-President of the anti-corruption NGO OLUCOME, exposed high-level police corruption and illicit arms deals. His courageous actions ultimately led to his murder at home in Bujumbura, a case that remains unresolved and illustrates the political interference that can hinder sensitive investigations (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

The Incident of Martinez Zogo (Cameroon, 2023)

In Cameroon, journalist Martinez Zogo, known for exposing corruption, was kidnapped and later discovered dead, his body mutilated, on January 17, 2023. His investigations into significant embezzlement involving close government officials ultimately cost him his life (Sembe, 2024).

The Incident of Soopramanien Kistnen (Mauritius, 2020)

Soopramanien Kistnen, a contractor turned whistleblower, was about to reveal a corruption scandal related to PPE procurement. Initially ruled a suicide, his half-charred body was later determined to be the result of murder, raising serious concerns about the safeguards for whistleblowers (Chelin, 2022).

The Incident of Ahmed Hussein-Suale (Ghana, 2019)

Ahmed Hussein-Suale, an investigative journalist focused on corruption in football, was assassinated by gunmen on motorbikes outside his home. This heinous act was facilitated by the public disclosure of his personal information by a local lawmaker (Nebe, Mahachi, & Okachi, 2024).

In summary, the incidents mentioned above, particularly those from Africa, illustrate the deadly risks faced by truth-tellers, including journalists, whistleblowers, activists, and officials, who expose corruption. These cases underscore the urgent need for better protection for individuals who stand up against corruption.

Conclusion

In delving into the intricate dynamics of the fightback of corruption against anti-corruption measures as a distinctive standalone theme, this paper has adeptly fulfilled its primary goal. The robust theoretical framework, bolstered by concrete empirical cases, vividly illustrates the ways in which corrupt forces actively erode the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies and initiatives across Africa. This exploration not only enriches the existing body of knowledge but also unveils critical empirical insights into the myriad factors that lead to the disheartening failure of numerous anti-corruption endeavors on the continent, thereby exacerbating an already frail socio-political landscape.

The revelations drawn from these documented incidents stand as pivotal insights for policymakers, anti-corruption advocates, and government officials. They underscore the urgent necessity for a paradigm shift in the ongoing struggle against corruption in Africa. This shift, which hinges on the genuine commitment of African governments, must transcend the superficial implementation of anti-corruption policies or strategies. It should evolve into a robust framework that not only safeguards but also champions the rights and protections of anti-corruption campaigners, whistleblowers, activists, and advocates, who often operate under the shadow of peril. In doing so, a more resilient and unified front against corruption can be forged, one that empowers society to confront and dismantle the corrupt systems that hinder progress. Simply put, it's now time for the continent to focus its attention on protection as the viable alternative for fighting corruption.

Disclaimer

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