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& Culture

Crime as a Cultural Problem

The Relevance of Perceptions of Corruption to Crime Prevention. A Comparative Cultural Study In the EU-Accession States Bulgaria and Romania, the EU-Candidate States Turkey and Croatia and the EU-States Germany, Greece and United Kingdom

Sappho Xenakis

The View from Above:

Interviews with Corruption Experts in the UK



Sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission
Specific Targeted Research Project



Email: crimeandculture@uni-konstanz.de | Project Website: www.uni-konstanz.de/crimeandculture/index.htm



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Dr. Sappho Xenakis is Fellow in International Relations at the London School of Economics, and Research Associate at the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP). She is co-editor (with Leonidas Cheliotis) of *Crime and Punishment in Contemporary Greece: International Comparative Perspectives* (Peter Lang AG, forthcoming 2009).



Introduction

This paper offers an overview and analysis of perceptions of corruption in the UK, as gathered over the course of 2007; the second year of the Crime and Culture research project. Attitudes towards corruption were recorded during in-depth interviews with participants who held an expert position within the following ‘target groups’: media, judiciary, the police, business, NGOs, and politicians. Collecting official or representative statements of the target groups that indicated group-typical perceptions of the nature, extent and cause of corruption, as well as of the effectiveness and cause of effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts, formed the mainstay of the second year of research. The context in which the interviewing took place is highly pertinent, as interviewees were undoubtedly influenced by the high profile corruption scandals that were dominant in the public discourse that year; in particular, the Loans for Peerages affairs of 2006-7, and the al-Yamamah scandal (2007-). This paper therefore begins with an outline of the developments that preceded and proceeded simultaneously with the interviewing phase of research. An explanation of the methodological approach to the research is then outlined, before the analysis of the interviews is presented.

This phase of the research project has demonstrated even more emphatically than the first the popularity amongst the target groups of cultural-based explanations for the absence of widespread corruption in the UK, the reasons why British individuals may become involved in corrupt affairs and what form corruption tends to take in such instances. While there was a strong prevalence of cultural explanations (usually in the form of a hybrid systemic/individual level approach) for the perceived lack of corruption in the UK, economic explanations (also mixing systemic and individual levels of analyses) were also often employed to explain corruption where British or foreign nationals were complicit in the arrangement. What the second phase of research also made evident, however, was the common reluctance, cautiousness or outright dismissal of the notion that British attitudes or formal practices relating to corruption could or should be promoted for export. It is important, too, to emphasise two facets of this sentiment: firstly, it as least as often related to economic explanations as to those cultural in assessing varying experiences of corruption of different states; secondly, it also appeared to be underpinned by an admission or awareness that British anti-corruption efforts have not been meeting international standards and therefore were not something that could be proudly promoted elsewhere.



Furthermore, the contemporary British experience of corruption, as evidenced through public discourse and the interviews themselves, offers some points of comparison with continental neighbours; for example, in the common dilemma of how to manage party funding in a way that enhances rather than detracts from democratic values. Despite the recent Loans for Peerages Affair and efforts to address issues that lie at the heart of the matter, the UK has not been able to resolve this dilemma definitively. Equally, British approaches to forms of corruption carried out abroad by national representatives or registered companies has been shown once again to be one fraught with tensions of conflicting interests and interpretations of the nature and significance of corruption (and of the obligation to combat it).

British Corruption Concerns During 2007

Over the course of 1997, a number of corruption scandals were prominently debated in Britain, with considerable significance for the research and pertinence for the interviews conducted during that time. The most important of the scandals were the Loans for Peerages affair and the al-Yamamah scandal. Below are outlined the developments pertaining to each that emerged during the course of the year, whilst the implications of these developments is explored further within the analysis of research findings.

The 'Loans for Peerages' Affair

In 2006, the news broke that a number of large loans had secretly been provided to the governing Labour Party before the national (general) elections in 2005, unbeknownst even to members of the Cabinet, the National Executive Committee of the Party, and its elected treasurer. Four of those who offered the loans (totalling £4.5 million) were subsequently nominated for peerages (i.e. given an honorary title and a seat in the UK's second legislative chamber, the House of Lords). Following a request from a Member of Parliament (MP) of the Scottish National Party, British police began an investigation in March 2006 into whether two laws were broken: firstly, that of 1925 which prohibited the sale of honours, and secondly that of 2000, which directed that all donations to political parties of more than £5000 must be publicly declared. The police soon widened their investigation to include the two other main political parties



(Conservatives, and Liberal Democrats). They also investigated the suspicion of an attempt to pervert the course of justice.¹

The police investigation, which cost £1 million, lasted sixteen months, in which 136 individuals were interviewed, a number of high-profile individuals were arrested (including Prime Minister Tony Blair's chief fundraiser, Downing Street's Director of Government Relations, a business man who was later ennobled, and a head teacher), and MP Blair became the first Prime Minister to be questioned by police in the course of an investigation. The Prime Minister was interviewed three times, but as a witness rather than as a suspect (he was not interviewed 'under caution'). All those concerned in the inquiry denied any wrongdoing, and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) announced in July 2007 that there was "insufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction against any individual for any offence", and thus that no one would face charges.² The 1925 Honours (Prevention of Abuses) Act requires an "unambiguous agreement" to have been made between the parties to such corruption, but without compelling evidence of such an agreement the CPS felt unable to proceed to a charge. The CPS website also noted that some of the seemingly more powerful evidence collected by the police might have been excluded from a trial due to legal rules.³ The Assistant Commissioner of Police (John Yates), who headed the inquiry, said at its end that the investigation took longer due to the necessity of looking into the allegations of a cover-up, which emerged during the inquiry. In a subsequent statement to the House of Commons' Public Administration Committee, Mr. Yates said that "political pressure", but not improper pressure, had been put upon him during the course of the investigation, and he had the sense that the investigation was treated (by politicians) as a political, rather than a criminal, problem.

The Impact of the Case on British Political Party Financing

The immediate impact of the outbreak of the affair was that the government swiftly introduced legislation requiring loans to be disclosed in the same manner as donations, and announced further reform of party funding.⁴ After eighteen months of negotiations, however, cross-party talks on the substance of these reforms broke down in October 2007 when the two largest political parties (Labour and Conservative)

¹ BBC News, 'Q&A: Cash For Honours' (2007).

² BBC News, 'Honours Chief Defends Inquiry' (2007).

³ Silverman, 2007.

⁴ Ewing and Ghaleigh, 2006.



could not agree upon the limits to set for election campaign spending and on the size of donations to be accepted. The opposition Conservative Party was accused of walking away from the negotiating table by the party of government, Labour, and the third largest party (also opposition), the Liberal Democrats. The Conservative Party blamed the Labour Party's intransigence for the breakdown in talks; the Conservative Party wanted donations from Trade Unions (historically supportive of the Labour Party, providing it with over sixty percent of its donation income in recent years) to be subject to the same cap on donations – i.e. £50,000 – as proposed for individuals and for corporations.⁵

In mid-December the House of Commons' Public Administration Committee recommended a number of changes to appointments to the House of Lords, including that control of appointments should be moved from party leaders to the House of Lords Appointments Commission (which currently has an advisory role). By this point, however, a new funding scandal had emerged, when news broke in late November that the Labour Party had received donations of nearly £400,000 (later found to be £663,975) from a property developer who had used proxies to pass on the money to the party (seeking thereby to avoid public recognition).⁶ According to the information of the Electoral Commission, the donor (David Abrahams) has thus been the third largest donor to the Labour Party under Gordon Brown's leadership, but not all high-ranking ministers accused of knowing of the donations admitted to such knowledge (including the Prime Minister himself).⁷ The police began investigating the donations at the request of the Electoral Commission, whilst the motivations and integrity of the donor were questioned by all shades of the media (one broadsheet newspaper also suggested that the donor was acting on behalf of Israel, which was denied by the donor, whilst many raised concerns that the donor may have 'bought' local planning decisions favourable to his business). In early December, the Prime Minister called for all-party support to bring about reforms to the system of party financing as swiftly as possible, but the Conservative Opposition party reiterated that their support would be forthcoming if the government demonstrated genuine commitment to reforming the system of Trade Union donations to the Labour Party.⁸

⁵ Ibid, p.17; BBC News, 'Parties' Funding Talks Suspended' (2007).

⁶ BBC News, 'Abrahams Cash Placed Out of Reach' (2007).

⁷ Woodward, 2007.

⁸ BBC News, 'PM 'Wants Quick Funding Reforms'' (2007).



The Al-Yamamah Affair

This affair concerned a company that had already faced a number of corruption scandals domestically and abroad, but which had nevertheless retained state support (it has been the subject of seven other corruption inquiries into the group's international operations in 2007).⁹ The al-Yamamah affair did not emerge in 2007; the Guardian newspaper had broken a story in May 2004 alleging that the al-Yamamah deal of 1986 to sell 120 British Tornado fighter jets to Saudi Arabia (the largest arms export deal ever secured by a UK government, worth £43 billion), was won thanks to a 'slush fund' by which secret payments totalling £60 million which were made by the British company BAE Systems to the Saudi Ambassador to the US at that time, Prince Bandar. In June 2007, however, these allegations were further elaborated by a BBC Panorama television programme, on which it was alleged that the payments were alleged to have taken place to Prince Bandar for over ten years and that they were made with the implicit approval of the British Ministry of Defence and possibly knowledge of ministers in the Treasury Ministry. The payments were also alleged to have continued after 2002, when new anti-terrorism legislation came into force in the UK, which included a prohibition on the bribing of foreign officials. Prince Bandar denied receiving any improper payments. The Serious Fraud Office (SFO) began its investigation into the affair in 2004, but in December 2006, the British Attorney General, Lord Goldsmith, announced that the SFO had dropped its 2.5 year investigation; the SFO was given information about a specific threat to British security from the potential breakdown in relations with Saudi Arabia that would could ensue from the investigation continuing. The SFO's Director, Robert Wardle, insisted it was his decision to halt the investigation, and not dictated by anyone else (the Attorney General would have the power to make this decision, and Lord Goldsmith had a close relationship with the Prime Minister).

Although it was suggested that the reason why the case was dropped was government concern about the possible loss of British jobs if the Saudi's cancelled their order (at the same time, the Saudi's were negotiating a new contract for 72 Eurofighter Typhoon jets, in a deal worth at least £20 billion), initially the government argued that the dismissal of the case was on the grounds of national security, as Saudi Arabia threatened to stop co-operating on terrorism intelligence with Britain, and because it was apparently doubtful that a successful prosecution was likely (although the SFO were more positive regarding this aspect). In June 2007, however, Prime Minister

⁹ Fortson, 2007.



Blair supported the decision to drop the SFO investigation into the affair by arguing that if not dropped it would have led to “the complete wreckage of a vital strategic relationship and the loss of thousands of British jobs”.¹⁰ Indeed, a PR campaign mounted on behalf of BAE and the Saudi’s was successful in conveying the message through much of the British media that between 50,000-100,000 British jobs could be at risk, even though a study by York University suggested the figure concerned was around 5,000.¹¹ The OECD launched its own investigation into the claims in the wake of the SFO’s decision to drop the case, and senior OECD officials claimed that they were victims of a smear by British diplomats, who put them under pressure to drop their investigation.¹² The SFO subsequently opened inquiries into BAE deals in Tanzania, Chile, South Africa, Romania, Qatar, and the Czech Republic. Switzerland also began an investigation into money-laundering allegations against BAE, whilst the US Department of Justice opened an investigation in late June 2007 into BAE’s compliance with anti-corruption laws with regard to its dealings in Saudi Arabia.¹³

In April 2007 the British NGOs ‘Campaign Against the Arms Trade’ and ‘Corner House’ lodged grounds for a full judicial review of the government’s decision to abandon the SFO investigation, but this was refused by a High Court judge in June 2007. The two NGOs applied for a hearing to renew their application, but meanwhile in late June 2007 the government and Court Service refused to allow the SFO’s defence of its actions in stopping the inquiry to be made public. At this point, an individual campaigner brought a legal action asking that the SFO defence be made public, and was successful in receiving copies of the SFO’s defence four weeks later. The SFO documents revealed that although its Director did not believe the decision to end the investigation broke international law, “this was not for him a critical or decisive matter: the threat to national and international security was such that, even if consideration of those matters had been contrary to that provision, he considered them to be of such compelling weight that he would still have taken the same decision.” Although the Attorney General and the head of the SFO had emphasised to the OECD that they “at all times had regard to the requirements of the OECD’s Anti-Bribery Convention”, the SFO defence implied that the government was prepared to breach its international obligations to terminate the inquiry in any case (as the Corner House said it was “shocked” to discover).¹⁴ For its part, BAE insisted that it did nothing to contravene existing laws at any time. At the same time, it was seeking to expand its

¹⁰ BBC News, ‘Goldsmith Denies BAE Cash Claim’ (2007).

¹¹ CAAT, 2008; Leigh and Evans, 2006.

¹² Woolf, 2007.

¹³ BBC News, ‘US to Probe BAE Over Corruption’ (2007).

¹⁴ Thomas, 2007.



operations internationally, and had already made sixteen business acquisitions in the US.

The Interviews

The project called for semi-structured in-depth interviews to be conducted with expert representatives from each of the above six target groups. It was expected that a minimum of two and maximum of three interviews would be carried out per target group. Potential interviewees were selected according to the proximity of their work with anti-corruption issues as well as their seniority within their organisation, and all those willing to take part were interviewed. Each interview lasted one hour on average, and all, bar the first, were conducted by a single researcher (the first was conducted by both researchers).¹⁵ Interviews generally began with the interviewee introducing themselves, their work, and their experience with corruption/anti-corruption issues. As agreed with the rest of the research consortium, we tried to elicit from them their understanding of what ‘corruption’ is, including by asking them to remark upon the well-known case studies that we had chosen for the research. We asked them for their views on the level of corruption in Britain comparatively to internationally, the successes and failures of anti-corruption efforts, and what stimulated and hindered corruption in Britain. Our questions were thus also to some extent informed by the code families generated in the first part of the research project from representative materials gathered from each of the target groups. Questions were not restricted to these, however, and we were keen to collect interviewee’s assessments respectively of each of the target groups in combating and contributing to corruption, of whether attitudes to corruption had changed, and if so, in what way, how and when. Furthermore, we sought to record the interviewee’s evaluation of Britain’s international standing and overseas efforts combating corruption.

Audio recordings were made of each interview, and were subsequently transcribed. Some early glitches with dictaphones did not cause serious difficulties and were avoided in later interviews by the use of a digital sound recorder. As advocated by the grounded theory that was the basis for the project’s methodology, interview transcriptions were then analysed for ‘codes’; logical formulas underlying stated perceptions in the text, which related to the subject of corruption. With the assistance of Atlas-ti software, a large number of codes had already been generated in the first,

¹⁵ Kalin Ivanov, of the SEESOX team, carried out the majority of the interviews.



documentary phase of the research project. These codes had been allocated to code families that each reflected a common theme or approach to corruption. These codes and code families – in particular the popular and controversial relationships between them – provided an invaluable basis for the analysis of the interviewees' comments.

As noted in the first scientific report from this team, an overarching aim of the research project is to highlight areas where perceptions of corruption between different target groups conflict or agree. Areas where codes converge or compete are therefore of central relevance to this study. Aided by Atlas-ti software, relationships between codes were highlighted in the first stage of the research project, where the logic of perceptions (codes) from different sources relating to corruption appear to be related (are either comparable or contrasting).

To summarise the most popular and controversial code families generated in the first phase of research, which remained influential in this stage of research, they were the following:

1. Anti-corruption and transparency reforms in recent years have helped to restore trust in the political system.
2. NGOs have been important motors of perception and practical change against corruption.
3. Businesses are the victims of negative stereotypes; they do oppose corruption.
4. Standards of public life in the UK are generally very high; corruption is rare and, when it does happen, happens unwittingly, *versus* complicit politicians are just that.
5. Corruption protects British jobs by allowing British firms to win international contracts, *versus* corruption is bad for the British taxpayer.
6. Access does (or does not) equate to influence.
7. The loans for peerages affair increased public disdain for politicians and the political process.

Given the nature of the analysis being carried out for the project, and to protect the identity of the interviewees of the project (some explicitly requested not to be cited), below are listed anonymously the positions of those interviews for the research project according to each of the designated target groups.



Politics

A senior civil servant

Legal System

A Barrister at an independent law firm

Police

A Detective Superintendent

Media

1. A correspondent at broadsheet newspaper 'A'
2. A correspondent at broadsheet newspaper 'B'

Civil Society

1. A member of an anti-corruption NGO 'C'.
2. A member of anti-corruption NGO 'D'.
3. A member of anti-corruption NGO 'E'.

Economy

1. An official of a national trade association
2. A development consultant

Limitations

As evident from the above list, we maintained a shortfall in our interviews for the police, legal, and politics groups. This was not due to lack of effort on our part, as we have been in sustained correspondence with a number of professionals from each group who, due to the commitments of their work, found it necessary to frequently reschedule interviews and some ultimately failed to meet us at all. A second hindrance was the difficulty we found in reaching the right people, as several of our emails received no response whatsoever. Some recipients amongst the police may have been anxious to avoid making statement in light of ongoing and recently concluded controversial cases. Amongst the politics group, it was interesting to note that a number of recipients appeared to decline interviews because – as at least one stated explicitly – they believed the theme of corruption to be irrelevant to their work (even though they worked on national investigative body looking into the condition of democracy in Britain today).



The financial limitations of the project meant that only 2-3 interviews per target group could be carried out. Of course, given the very small number of interviews conducted, the findings from these cannot be interpreted as scientifically representative opinion surveys. Equally, polling of the public could not be included in the research project, and a very important dimension of the construction of national perceptions of corruption was therefore excluded from the parameters of the study. As with the interviews carried out for the target groups, however, previously collected documentary evidence and broader background research from the first period of the project were used to provide a vital explanatory backdrop for analysis of the findings, although always aiming to do so in a way that would enrich the bottom-up perspective gained from analysing the ‘codes’ generated from the first research period findings (i.e. via a grounded theory approach).

Perceptions of Corruption

In this section are summarised the results of each interview, outlined in reference to the earlier outlined code families wherever applicable, and highlighting definitions of corruption used by the interviewees.

Target Group Politics

Interviewee: A senior civil servant

The interviewee emphasised that it was important to distinguish ‘corruption’ as a legal category from behaviour considered inappropriate in public life; ‘standards in public life’ was a phrase to ensure the wider issue of inappropriate public behaviour was treated, and should not be regarded as a devious means of shying away from using the term ‘corruption’. The interviewee also voiced the opinion that some standards are harder for politicians to uphold than for other members of public, however, and that this is indeed positively expected of them (i.e. with regard to telling the truth: “its part of your role, maybe, not to all the time if its not in the public interest”).

The interviewee took a contradictory position on whether corruption was increasing or decreasing in British public life. On the one hand, it was posited that before the 1960s there was an intuitive consensus about appropriate behaviour in public life, “people call it the ‘good chaps’ theory of public life” (see code family 4). Breakdown of the



harmony in public life emerged as there was a decline in deference from the general public to authority, at the same time as public life (i.e. working for the State) “became more porous”, no longer guaranteeing that members would share the same attitudes, practices and expectations. On the other hand, it was argued “things have improved” over the last 10-15, and 30-40 years, mainly due to the codification of standards and establishment of independent scrutiny (code family 4), in addition to that of public pressure via the internet and of NGOs (code family 2), which is helping to “flush out some of these anomalous areas that have been accepted as custom and practice”. It was then posited by the interviewee that “actually standards are very, very good”, and that publicly raising questions about standards of behaviour of public officials can create an unfairly negative portrayal of such to the general citizenry.

The interviewee placed the blame for corrupt practices on individuals rather than systemic level causes, but stated that in light of the party funding scandals, political parties were also partly responsible for public cynicism about their standards (code family 7). Ironically, the interviewee also acknowledged that the public were much likely to hold favourable views of individual politicians with which they are familiar, rather than the political class per se, and this was blamed on negative media portrayals of the political class. Interestingly, the interviewee commented that the media too often ignored the fact that many of the problems facing Britain also faced other countries (e.g. party financing problems afflicting other Western democracies), again painting an unfairly negative picture of the British political class to its public.

Despite initially giving a favourable impression of the impact of codification, the interviewee closely identified a lack of codification with British culture and claimed that there are many benefits from this approach, as well as limits and even dangers inherent in the changes that could be brought about by codification. It was posited that early under-regulation led to a detrimental over-regulation (in areas such as local government). In sum, the interviewee was unsure as to how useful the British model was (in terms of under-codification or codification itself), both in the UK and being proposed as a model for other countries in combating corruption (code family 4). The interviewee was one of the few to emphasise the importance of public opinion to the strength of public institutions, arguing that those who took a cynical view of corruption (that it has always happened) underestimated the importance of tackling it, particularly with respect to public confidence in the state’s institutions (damage to the public’s trust and consent towards them).



Target Group Legal System

Interviewee: A Barrister at an independent law firm

The interviewee argued that the “high-water mark” of British corruption was in the 1960s, referring to corruption between the construction industry and politicians, and then later the issue of police corruption (especially, but not limited to, the 1970s). The interviewee argued that the police had always been a “fairly fertile source of corruption” in the UK but that it is far less rife now than it was 35-40 years ago. The British judiciary were seen as having the highest professional standards, and the interviewee stated that they had never come across an instance of corruption within it.

The British were seen as culturally indisposed to corruption, though not because they were angelic (code family 4). Corruption was seen as something which the British get involved in only “from time to time” and that low prosecutions did not mean low detection rates. The interviewee admitted to having:

“always felt that there’s a natural aversion amongst the British to corruption as a concept. [...] have no empirical basis for this at all, but I have always felt that people [...] don’t like the concept of unfairness, that [one] wins something by [...] underhand means, [...]”

and later added:

“We have a reputation for going out and getting drunk and kicking the shit out of people, out of each other. [...] That’s what we do wrong. But going out and making corrupt payments to people, its just not part of our make-up as a nation. I know, I can’t justify, I can’t prove it.”

Nevertheless, the interviewee was sure that allowing bribes to be paid abroad for the benefit of British Industry was a factor which “has acted upon the minds of those that make the payments” , and that there has been longstanding knowledge of such within government and the higher echelons of the Foreign Office but a ‘blind eye’ has been turned to them – even though the interviewee emphasised that from the legal perspective the giving of bribes is illegitimate and certainly is corruption.

Equally, the interviewee distinguished between times when the laws on corruption should be followed, and when they might not be able to (in reference to the SFO’s cessation of its investigation), admitting that:

“there will be times when it may not be in the national interest for the [corruption] investigation to go on and there will be times when the national interest will have to take priority.”

In general, responsibility for corruption was nevertheless strongly argued to be individual (middle management levels) rather than systemic.

With regard to party funding, whilst the conviction was voiced that those who donate to political parties by and large do so for “proper reasons” (code family 4), the interviewee was critical of the existence of the honours system, which panders to “peoples’ self-importance” and will always therefore be a potential source of relationship that could be misconstrued as corruption.

Success in combating corruption (within the British police) was seen largely a result of stricter regulations and controls, including international agreements such as that amongst the OECD, the UN, and especially pressure from the US’ Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, and better detection and oversight mechanisms, which disincentivise those contemplating corruption (code family 1). The interviewee voiced the opinion that “the law has changed attitudes”. With regard to construction companies and British companies overseas, the interviewee commented that they had seen a growing, obvious awareness of the risks of becoming drawn into corruption investigations worldwide. NGOs were also viewed as playing a role in pressuring government to act, but the media was seen as less effective than they think (though the public are sometimes more worried than they should be) (code family 2). Public opinion had a limited role in deterring corruption, for example in relation to cash for honours, since they elect MPs, but pressure on government with regard to British corruption abroad is likely to stem from sources external to the UK.

Concerning the potential of British anti-corruption practices as an exportable model, the interviewee responded that it would be totally impossible, but also

“I don’t think we’ve [...] covered ourselves with glory over the way we dealt with the BAE payment. So I [...] think we have been fairly silly if we expect the rest of the world to [...] take our advice on how you deal with corruption!”

The interviewee expressed sympathy for businesses who were acting in countries where “for cultural or other reasons” payment of a bribe from them was expected



(code family 3). Disincentives for business to pay bribes were that they might become embroiled in a long investigation, which could lead to prosecution and which could bring damaging publicity for their reputation in the market (again, public opinion is not seen as important source of pressure on companies or governments), a dangerous development if they are doing business in the United States, for example.

Target Group Police

Interviewee: A Detective Superintendent

The Detective Superintendent enunciated one of the broadest definitions of corruption offered by our interviewees, not restricted to financial gain:

“Corruption for us is when any individual gains some advantage as a result of their position; advantage for themselves or for somebody else. Any its generally around what is plain to see as completely unfair: unfair competition, obtaining money or status”.

For the interviewee, allegations of corruption were easily made but extremely risky for the police because of their potential to undermine criminal trials (if you can link any police officer involved with corruption, the defendants will undoubtedly walk free). It was also emphasised that the police govern by consent and are trusted by the public; Britain has the lowest ratio of police officers to members of the public in the EU, and is a largely unarmed force. The reputation of the police is therefore “central” to their effective functioning. The high reputation of the police is in some ways a double bind, however, because a higher standard of proof is required to prosecute police officers for corruption. There is no cultural acceptance of police corruption, and people are more than willing to complain if the situation arises (which helps to limit corruption) (code family 4). The media is seen as helpful at times, but they are seen as having their own agenda that can lead to negative outcomes for the police, e.g. they can often draw attention and link separate cases of police corruption, which damages the reputation of the police.

The Detective Superintendent suggested that that “the corrupter” would be external to the police force, corrupting the police, but explains that the police is drawn from the community, and since corruption is part of human nature, some individuals who join the police will have corrupt intentions. Corrupters are generally regarded as stemming from the world of organised crime.



The interviewee acknowledged the existence of a real separation of powers between the government, legislature and police, but emphasised the role of political will in helping to fight police corruption by giving the independent police anti-corruption body the freedom to act widely. British police officers know that their organisation runs secret integrity tests on them, which is an incentive for them to report corrupt behaviour. The interviewee argued that the success in keeping corruption down within the police force is due to the resources and effort dedicated to tackling the issue.

The interviewee argued that in other countries, low police pay and general public acceptance may mean that bribery and corruption are common occurrences, but argues that widespread corruption undermines the economy, thereby indicating underlining the negative implications of corruption. The interviewee suggested that other countries could improve their anti-corruption efforts by using the best detectives to fight police corruption, involving prosecutors, and having firm political backing. Independent oversight is also required, as with the completely independent police complaints body. Witnesses need to be protected. Supervision and undercover methods are key to limiting corruption in the police force.

Target Group Media

Interviewee 1: A correspondent for broadsheet newspaper 'A'

The interviewee highlighted a long-standing concern in their work to avoid double standards when discussing corruption abroad and within the UK. Thus, the cash-for-honours scandal was, for the interviewee, an investigation of corruption. The interviewee argued that Western governments and companies are deeply complicit in corruption around the world, and Britain was no cleaner than other countries and did not observe higher standards. Whilst one could say that in one sense British bureaucracy is cleaner and there is less open corruption here, if one considers Britain's role over the last century (relating to code family 4), because of its historic power and economic wealth,

“it has probably been implicated in far more corruption than Nigerian governments or companies or individuals ever have been. So you have to look at the thing at two levels”.



Corruption can be bad for business, both because it makes them vulnerable to blackmail themselves and because foreign investment will be undermined if politics is believed to unfairly intrude on regulation in the market place. Nevertheless, not all businesses are convinced of this logic, most are ambivalent when it comes to combating corruption, and even those that are may be cautious about speaking out against corruption because of their own past involvement in corrupt acts ('skeletons in the cupboard') (code family 3 – contrary). Corruption has become a particularly critical problem for business in OECD states because companies in non-member states, such as China, India and Russia, have begun competing more assertively in foreign markets and, if an international standard against corruption is not enforced, there could be a 'race to the bottom' between western companies (who already have a poor reputation on this) and companies who are even more involved in corruption from other parts of the world.

The interviewee suggested that Britain has realised that combating corruption is good for the wealth of the nation, but suggested that Britain has always been prepared to export corruption, cynically allowing companies and individuals to act corruptly abroad in order to secure direct economic benefit to the UK. There has been an increasing commitment to anti-corruption norms over the past 15-20 years, which means that politicians would now be less willing to knowingly consent to corrupt arrangements, but what has appeared instead is a "ask no questions, hear no lies" approach; loopholes remain in British oversight and regulatory mechanisms. Furthermore, although the 'war on terrorism' has meant that there is greater scrutiny of international money flows, which means cases of corruption are more likely to come to light, because of the focus on the war on terror, cases may be less likely to be properly investigated (as in the case of the BAE scandal).

The interviewee argued that to tackle corruption successfully, one should not merely try to regulate companies more, but to change peoples' beliefs about the acceptability of such behaviour. The British media probably has helped to make corruption less acceptable, though not all have been particularly interested in the subject. The interviewee argued that a simple distinction should not be assumed to hold between broadsheet and tabloid coverage of corruption, however, arguing that some tabloids had played an important role in uncovering cases of corruption, whilst some broadsheets were cynical and resigned. The OECD has played an important role on consciousness-raising with regard to anti-corruption efforts, but there is still a long way to go. NGOs have also played an impressive part in changing mindsets about corruption, by telling people what British companies and nationals are doing overseas



(code family 2). The legal framework is still inadequate for effective anti-corruption efforts in the UK. Meanwhile, politicians from the two leading political parties have not been eager to tackle the issue.

Britain is seen as a model for good governance in some parts of the world (rightly or wrongly) and for that reason the recent BAE scandal has been very damaging, both in terms of undermining British anti-corruption efforts abroad and in encouraging a similar devaluation of anti-corruption efforts elsewhere. The OECD Convention can offer a more useful model of anti-corruption standards, and successfully prosecuted corruption cases internationally.

Interviewee 2: A correspondent for broadsheet newspaper 'B'

The interviewee explained that there was no specific 'house rule' of the newspaper on using the word corruption, other than caution to avoid libelling people and adhering to the legal definition, which the interviewee described as "quite tight". However, the interviewee later commented that because corruption does not appear to be a priority in the UK, there has been a lack of effort to tackle the problem of definition and update Britain's corruption laws.

The interviewee argued throughout the interview that corruption is not a systemic problem in the UK, and is "very limited" (code family 4). There are more cases of corruption than have been prosecuted, but it is a charge very difficult to prove. It was allowed that there is sometimes favouritism in the awarding of contracts, but these are exceptions to the rule); public administration is "done fairly cleanly and decently"(code family 4), especially at the national (as opposed to local) level of government. The interviewee posited that "classic corruption" in Britain involved local planning at the local council level with relatively little money involved.

The interviewee traced Britain's fortune with regard to its lack of systemic corruption to a long, cohesive tradition of public administration, and reforms of public life in the 19th century. Also, that standards raised over the past 10-12 years reduced the scope for political favours (code family 1). The interviewee distinguished between dangerous and innocuous forms of corruption. The cash-for-honours scandal was viewed as "second rate" corruption, and denied very much significance because, it was argued, giving someone a title does not give them power; those who have allegedly bought titles were assessed as playing no active role in the House of Lords



in actual fact. The interviewee also proposed that donations to political parties might give the donor more access to a political party (“a hearing”) but would not guarantee a contract or indeed make much practical difference in reality (code family 6).

The interviewee argued that the media, especially the tabloids, have fuelled public cynicism about politics. The interviewee stated that in 30 years of experience, very few politicians were ‘in it for themselves’, and that they approach ‘grey areas’ thinking of the public good (“in public policy terms”) (code family 4). In their newspaper, however, the interviewee made clear that there is an effort not to assume the worst, i.e. not to support suspicions of systemic failure, but to treat problems as serious deviations. Thus, just “because you get a thousand fraudulent votes in various places doesn’t mean the whole election is fraudulent”.

The interviewee emphasised that interactions between politicians and business may often be legitimate but may unfairly be interpreted as corrupt (e.g. the revolving door between Ministry of Defence staff and the defence industry). Equally bribery and corruption in general are not necessarily bad for business, it rather depends on the type of business being considered. Thus, in a market for consumer products, bribery would distort the market and so be bad. On the other hand, where the contract is with a State – e.g. the Pergau Dam – and is thus a limited rather than competitive market, the interviewee indicated that this would not be particularly bad.

The interviewee did not appear to regard bribery of foreign officials (e.g. as with the Pergau Dam affair of the 1990s) as a serious form of corruption, but rather as a serious “conflict of objectives”; between supporting jobs in Britain and foreign policy alliances, and the objectives of overseas aid and “securing proper development”. In referring to the Pergau Dam affair, the interviewee claimed that it was not corruption since “it wasn’t a case of anyone lining their pockets”; i.e. it was not corruption for private financial gain. However, the interviewee did attempt to distinguish between the relatively innocuous Pergau Dam affair and the “even murkier” recent BAE scandal. Competing moral goods, such as employment and security, were difficult to balance with anti-corruption policies (code family 5). Nevertheless, the interviewee suggested that in the aftermath of the BAE scandal, British ministers will not be able to lecture foreigners on anti-corruption efforts.

When asked their view of NGOs who have campaigned against corruption, the interviewee initially responded that they were “perfectly entitled to do it, but [didn’t] think that there are absolute moral rights on one side or another”. However,



immediately afterwards, in a discussion of whether corruption was less acceptable now than in the past, the interviewee responded that it was less acceptable today and this was in part thanks to NGO campaigns (now interpreted positively) (code family 2).

The interviewee agreed that British businesses may sometimes be forced to adapt to local customs with regard to paying bribes (and pointed out that one cannot expect them simply not to operate in certain countries). Additionally, it was implied that it is hard or undesirable to (over-) regulate the behaviour of companies abroad. They also underlined that company directors are much more sensitive now towards anti-bribery requirements than they were a few years ago.

Target Group Civil Society

Interviewee 1: A member of anti-corruption NGO 'C'

The interviewee demonstrated a difficulty in distinguishing normative values from an objective interpretation of the success of anti-corruption efforts in the UK (especially with regard to value and impact on law development and on impact of training and education for companies).

A considerable degree of pragmatism was displayed by the interviewee in accepting logic sympathetic to cases of non-compliance by state and businesses (code family 3). With regard to the BAE scandal, the interviewee viewed sympathetically government's decisions in light of what were accepted to be the competing pressures of British jobs and security, even though he labelled the move "a mistake":

"If I were the head of the SFO and the SFO were given all the information, I would think twice about continuing against the recommendation. I think you have to be a realist."

Concerning industry, the interviewee argued that

"there's been a feeling that somehow you only win contracts in some countries for selling arms or you know, aircraft or really major things, if you bribe, and then there's probably a lot of truth in that. And the question is then do you condone that or do you cease business? So you've got a pretty stark choice."



There was evident optimism from the interviewee about the potential and current effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts in the UK, which was justified with reference to positive legal developments, the raising of the profile of corruption and the development of discourse on the subject within the UK (code family 1).

The language used still suggested that corruption in the UK should not be overplayed or exaggerated (the interviewee referred with soft criticism to the view that the UK did not have corruption problems, but was uncomfortable with the challenge that the NGO itself had under-focused on corruption in the UK; blamed it on lack of resources in the organisation's early days and a desire to help the poor in developing countries.)

The general public were not considered to play an important role in constructing the discourse in the UK or as a source of anti-corruption pressure on government or businesses. Indeed, they are believed to not care much about anti-corruption policies and consider them of secondary importance to promoting British interests.

The code regarding faith in the basic decency of elite morality and corruption by mistake or mistaken logic was prevalent (code family 4). With regard to politicians, the interviewee explicitly rejected the notion of questioning their integrity, expressing also the opinion that:

'I do believe that the vast majority are highly ethical. I'm not one of these people who write politicians off, because I have to work with them, and I would say that on the whole those people with whom I work are in politics for a good reason, they want to make a difference, and I have every confidence [that this is so].

A perhaps surprising level of support was vocalised for business and portrayal as flexible partners in fighting corruption, more flexible and forward thinking than politicians (code family 3):

"To some extent, politicians have been behind business in recognising the costs. The business world was ahead of politics long before the politicians caught on. But not all businesses, of course."

The media was interpreted as playing a negative role as much as a positive in anti-corruption efforts, but more rigorous interpretation or critique of their role and influence was lacking.



Interviewee 2: A member of anti-corruption NGO 'D'

The interviewee argued that corruption in the UK today is mostly a matter of the 'revolving door' of public officials into positions with business and vice versa, especially with the Ministry of Defence and defence companies. The cash-for-honours scandal, on the other hand, was indicative of the wider issue of 'patronage politics', which carries the seeds of corruption and is deeply ingrained in the UK. Here, it is often about an individual winning influence rather than about personal financial gain.

British political and business elites were also presented as having an attitude that corruption is part of other peoples' culture and therefore there is no alternative to bribing abroad to secure construction and defence contracts for British business (code family 4). There has been too much emphasis on the bribe-takers, rather than the role of the bribe-givers; Western companies reinforce existing corruption and developing countries may often not have the resources to counteract them. However, it was posited that businesses are increasingly stating that corruption is bad for business (it increases risks, making a company less secure and more vulnerable to blackmail).

The interviewee argued that whilst preaching to other countries about fighting corruption and good governance, the British government has done nothing constructive in the UK:

“There is an absolute lack of political will to prosecute corruption. The withdrawal of the BAE probe is a classic example...”

The UK's legislation against corruption is “a mess”, and Britain is not properly implementing the OECD Convention. The UK is lagging behind the US and in comparison with other European states (unlike major corruption prosecutions in Germany, France, and Italy, there has only been a terminated enquiry in the UK).

To tackle corruption, a well-resourced investigative body is required, but this has not been a priority in the UK, unlike the goal of being awarded contracts (code family 5). The role of the media has been mixed; it has helped to raise consciousness about corruption, but can often portray it as part of the culture in developing countries. Some NGOs were seen as playing a stronger part in anti-corruption efforts than others (code family 2).



The BAE scandal has encouraged perceptions in the South that the UK has a hypocritical stance on corruption, and this view is a considerable obstacle to the UK's ability to promote good governance internationally. A lesson that could be learned from the UK is that hypocrisy leads to a loss of influence. More lessons should be taken from grassroots anti-corruption efforts in the South, which demonstrate that policies, rather than culture, create corruption.

Interviewee 3. A member of anti-corruption NGO 'E'

The interviewee explained that corruption can be regarded as a symptom of a problem, and it is therefore more helpful to try to understand what people are complaining about when they are complaining about corruption. Frequently, corruption is tied to perceptions of inequalities and wastages, but these need to be addressed on a country-by-country basis. Focusing on integrity – accountability, professionalism, and corruption control – is an effective way of tackling corruption.

The interviewee argued that NGOs were not affected in their outlook by the country in which they are based. The interviewee stated that the levels and focus of media and NGO activity here means that there is no reluctance to talk about corruption in Britain. Furthermore, the interviewee suggested “the work ethos of England makes it sort of slightly less prone to corruption” (code family 4).

The interviewee implied that Britain, as a considerable aid donor country, has an interest in pursuing the financial accountability of recipient states, which is why NGOs focus on corruption abroad rather than in the UK. Although the UK might be used as a model for anti-corruption standards in Commonwealth countries, according to the interviewee the NGO rather used

“the traditional templates [...] like [...], Liberal Democracies 101 but like as much as possible the nondescript country [...]”

In general, NGO use of the UK as a model for export was presumed to be implicit rather than explicit, unlike the case of the US.

The interviewee argued that people in developing countries are more likely to criticise British anti-corruption assistance on the basis of British political policies abroad than on the basis of British corruption scandals, but that in general the British have a good

reputation abroad in the field of development and anti-corruption efforts (particularly because of the strengths of the Department for International Development). The interviewee outlined the way in which countering corruption can be more effectively achieved by structuring societal accountability, rather than consciousness-raising.

Target Group Economy

Interviewee 1: An official of a national trade association

The interviewee displayed a degree of reservation when discussing the reputation (“rightly or wrongly”) of the British civil service for being corruption-free (code family 4), carefully qualifying his comments cases of corruption have tended to be seen as very isolated. The interviewee argued that attempts to bribe British officials are unlikely to be recorded, as are cases where bribes are actually taken.

Low salaries in developing countries were thought to be responsible for corruption to be more prevalent, and one could expect corruption to be less evident in countries where government officials are relatively well rewarded. The interviewee also highlighted the difficult position of individuals from the business world whose career may depend on the delivery of a contract or the survival of a business unit, so may come under great pressure when a government buyer demands a bribe be paid in order to award the contract (code family 3).

Moreover, the interviewee to some extent sympathised with companies whose critical market makes it necessary for them to work with governments that are well known to be corrupt, whereas if the particular market is peripheral, it would be easier for a company to stop doing business with corrupt governments in that area;

“what are you going to do? Say that ‘I’m not going to be a part of one of the biggest markets in the world’? I mean, that seems to me [...] an impossible situation for a company to be in.”

With regard to anti-corruption efforts, the interviewee explained that many companies have some form of corporate social responsibility manifesto, and that companies had recommended that the national trade association be reinvigorated by addressing ethical issues such as corruption. Nevertheless, only just over 3% of the trade association’s membership have signed up to its own anti-corruption initiative (although this includes “most of the big players in the industry”). The interviewee



argued that this was because most companies, especially smaller ones operating domestically, do not feel that the issue of corruption affects them.

Companies felt that in an internationally competitive environment, it is important that “all the supplier countries are [on] the same page as far as anti-corruption’s concerned”, and an international initiative is required to achieve this.

International standards-setting against corruption has been an important motivator for British businesses; In the last few years, UK businesses have felt that then need to respond to US trade association anti-corruption initiatives with European standards-setting. The interviewee emphasised,

“I wouldn’t want to give the impression that we were sort of pressured into doing it forcibly. I think it was something that [...] we were thinking about and [...] felt that it was important to do..”

It was nevertheless made clear that many British companies are in close contact and indeed operate in the US market, so US anti-corruption legislation and prosecutions have been a major factor in raising awareness that the issue needed to be addressed amongst British companies. Domestic standards-setting bodies are also credited with propelling the anti-corruption agenda in the UK, from government, to NGOs and research institutions, to industry associations (all of which have sent relevant literature on the subject to companies).

Perhaps the most important motivation for British businesses to support the anti-corruption agenda was that implicitly outlined in the interviewee’s explanation of the intended goals of international anti-corruption co-operation amongst industry (and outlined explicitly in the above interview with the correspondent for broadsheet newspaper A). Namely, that the chief competitors of US and European companies in Brazil, Japan and China, Russia, China, Indonesia, Korea and India, are encouraged to commit to the same anti-corruption standards. Many of the competitor states have poorer international reputations with regard to involvement in corruption. It thus it appears that there is a fear that if an international effort does not succeed in tying all countries in to the same standards of competition, there may be a ‘race to the bottom’ in which British (and US and EU) companies could lose out, since they face greater risk of prosecution for corruption than competitor countries of these other states.



Public opinion per se was not considered to place any pressure on industry to pursue an anti-corruption agenda. While the media has consistently demonstrated some level of interest in corruption within industry, the interviewee did not think it had played a part in motivating companies to pursue such an agenda either. Indeed, the interviewee argued that industry's promotion of anti-corruption initiatives has predated media revelations of scandals.

Interviewee 2: A development consultant

The interviewee displayed somewhat paradoxical approaches towards the morality and prevalence of corruption in the UK, was critical of overly relaxed attitudes towards foreign corruption by development agents, but generally adhered to the notion that Britain is largely corruption-free (code family 4).

It was argued that the “the majority of British people are honest”, though also that “the majority in any society are honest – otherwise society would crumble”.

Initially, the interviewee suggests that like any other, a British individual may be similarly “cunning and intelligent people who have, at a certain point, made a choice to be corrupt”. However, for the interviewee there is a distinction to be made between British and foreign corrupt officials; British officials may unwittingly be involved in corruption by allowing bribes to be paid, but they do not take bribes themselves (because they are paid well enough, and because of the threat of prosecution and jail in the UK) (code family 4).

Corruption is regarded as contingent upon levels of societal affluence. Thus, the British (and their officials) “don't *need* to do anything wrong” (my emphasis) because of better pay and societal affluence, as opposed to the condition in developing countries. However, low incidence of corruption in the UK means that there is more trust between state and society, regulation is more lax, and thus that those who wish to cheat find it easier to do so. British cultural exports such as cricket enhance Britain's reputation for fair play internationally. The interviewee argued that it is difficult to prosecute corruption cases in the UK; standards for evidence are high, and corruption difficult to prove.

Corruption has become “more frowned upon” in the UK, for which the interviewee credited “globalisation”; the British are more likely than in the past to be aware of “the difficulties” overseas and to understand “how damaging it is”, so are less happy



to pay bribes. Underlying this comment may have been the interviewee's own admission of:

“[shock] at the amounts that are being wasted on aid to corrupt countries, instead of being spent on humanitarian causes within Britain..”

and of lack of faith in the argument that such aid will be to the benefit of all in the long term. The interviewee characterised the decision to drop the SFO investigation into the BAE affair as morally unjustified but economically justified (code family 5), and concluded that:

“I think the government made the wrong choice, but then again I don't know all the facts”,

implying, in other words, that the government may have been justified in acting with security interests (as well as economic policy) in mind.

Perceptions of Corruption: An Assessment of Key Features

Definitions of 'corruption'

There was a fairly wide array of approaches to the definition of 'corruption' amongst interviewees from all target groups. It was, for different interviewees, legal, restrictive, unclear (legally), 'grey' (morally), and complex, characterised by rent seeking, for some, or prestige enhancing, for others. Somewhat surprisingly, the police respondent demonstrated usage of a more expansive definition (including the motivation of prestige enhancement) than some of the other interviewees.

Sources and causes of corruption

Most interviewees cited a number of sources or causes of corruption. Although many supported the code that standards of public life in Britain are generally high (and corruption cases are anomalies relating to individual rather than systemic failures), economic explanations were also prevalent (i.e. that societal wealth is negatively associated with levels of corruption). Ignorance of officials, and the existence of 'grey zones' both moral and legal, was cited by some of the respondents, but it was not a



predominant explanatory factor. Individual and systemic (intentional or default) causes of corruption were mentioned by all interviewees.

Effective factors against corruption

All the interviewees referred to the perception (code family 4) that there are high standards of public life in Britain and this is related to British cultural attitudes towards 'fair play'. Though not all interviewees were entirely convinced by the argument and some thought it misleading, all thought it significant in terms of public discourse about corruption in the UK. As mentioned above, societal wealth was negatively associated with levels of corruption for the interviewees, and there was a latent sympathy and support towards the development goals of countries in the South.

NGOs were roundly judged to have played a significant role in raising consciousness of the issue (that corruption is a 'bad thing' for the public and for business), and in pressuring the government to action against corruption. They, rather than the public itself, were regarded as an effective source of public pressure. The media's part in consciousness-raising and exerting political pressure was deemed to be of mixed value to anti-corruption efforts. Political responsibility for promoting anti-corruption efforts was mentioned far less, and usually in critical terms (that they were insufficiently committed to advancing anti-corruption efforts). The effectiveness of Britain's legal framework for combating corruption was also questioned by several interviewees. The good faith of businesses in seeking to tackle corruption was more often recognised than their connivance in corruption, or than their self-interest in supporting anti-corruption efforts.

Overall, a paradox appeared to underline the responses of the majority of interviewees, who considered that a) Britain has a strong tradition of being relatively corruption free, b) in recent years progress had been made in the UK towards identifying corruption as a problem and tackling it, and c) the collapse of the SFO investigation in the BAE case was cause for some disillusion or cynicism about the extent to which things have improved in the UK in confronting corruption.



Perceptions of the exportability of the 'British model'

For the majority of the respondents, it was not entirely clear what 'British model' entailed (in terms of anti-corruption norms). Some were more concerned than others that the potential of the British government to promote anti-corruption norms and good governance abroad had been damaged by recent scandals, but for others this was not a significant issue, whether because it was not a suitable source of 'model' in the first place, or because it was not a priority in terms of British interests.

Conclusion

One of the central aims of the study has been to answer the question 'what makes the difference in the UK?' Why is public life in Britain commonly perceived as relatively corruption-free? Moreover, can the answers to these questions be replicated elsewhere? The second phase of the research project allowed us to provisionally test some of our earlier tentative answers to these questions. A negative explanation offered for the perception that corruption in Britain is uncommon was that it may not be overt, making it harder to expose. A number of interviewees highlighted this perspective, arguing that Britain does not appear corrupt because it does not want to investigate corruption, and these views were obviously bolstered by the conclusion of the recent SFO probe into the BAE case. Certainly, there seemed to be wider support than anticipated for the perspective that corruption is under-reported and under-prosecuted in the UK.

A number of positive reasons why Britain might be perceived to be a relatively corruption-free country were also hypothesised at the conclusion of the first year of research for the project. The most obvious possibility was that it may be rare for people to have direct experience of corruption; petty corruption would be uncommon, given the wealth of Britain and relatively decent salary levels of its officials. The theoretical assumptions of these propositions were broadly supported amongst all the respondents, and indeed the economic association for the lack of corruption in the UK appeared to be supported with stronger conviction than the cultural argument - though the interviewees placed different emphases on the comparative prevalence and significance of corruption at local and national levels of government. A further factor that could have nourished perceptions that standards of public life in Britain are high was the recent rise to prominence of the issue and effort to promote clearer and more modern legal and political approaches to the subject. This factor was far less obvious



in the interviewee responses than had been the case in the earlier documentary phase of the research, and it is clear that recent scandals dampened most of the respondents' enthusiasm for what progress had been made in the UK in these areas. The recent BAE scandal was also a much-cited cause of scepticism and, for some, regret, that Britain would not be able to promote good governance and anti-corruption norms as successfully at the international level because of the loss of prestige. However, there was weak conception of a 'British mode', and insofar as it was seen as cultural, there was no belief that it could be replicated elsewhere. Meanwhile, the cited economic underpinnings of the 'British model' were not even contemplated as a basis for replication by others.

Finally, the concluding report of the first year of research highlighted the way in which positive perceptions of standards in British public life could be correlated with socio-economic status (according to the findings of the survey for the Commission on Standards in Public Life, 2004¹⁶); those with higher educational backgrounds, broadsheet newspaper readers and the young, were the most likely to hold such a perception. It was therefore hypothesised that the more one is able to succeed in a society, reap the available benefits or aspire to do so, the more positive one would likely be in assessing the general standards of fairness of the system. Despite the limitations of the interviews' number and range, it is clear that this hypothesis was challenged by the findings of the second research period. In the first instance, it was evident that perceptions of the fairness of the system varied far more widely amongst interviewees than had been demonstrated between documents from and between target groups in the first stage of research. The sceptical approach of the correspondent from broadsheet A was just one element from the interviews that highlighted the fact that socio-economic status does not automatically define an individual's perspective. Nevertheless, in light of the limitations of the interviews carried out, these findings are only sufficient to modify rather than to overturn those of the survey mentioned above and the subsequent hypothesis itself. In conclusion, it is proposed that perceptions of levels of corruption in Britain are likely to be influenced by the observer's socio-economic status and, moreover, that the discourse and efforts of a country (like Britain) to combat corruption are shaped by the particular economic and political position it enjoys in international comparison.

¹⁶ Survey of public opinion carried out by BMRB Social Research between 2003-4, commissioned by the Committee of Standards in Public Life (report September 2004): Hayward, 2004.



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**SIXTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME OF THE EUROPEAN
COMMISSION PRIORITY 7, FP6-2004-CITIZENS-5**



SPECIFIC TARGETED RESEARCH PROJECT: CRIME AND CULTURE

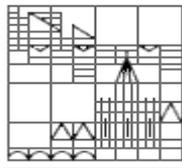
Crime as a Cultural Problem. The Relevance of Perceptions of Corruption to Crime Prevention. A Comparative Cultural Study in the EU-Accession States Bulgaria and Romania, the EU-Candidate States Turkey and Croatia and the EU-States Germany, Greece and United Kingdom

Members of the Project Consortium

University of Konstanz, Germany (Co-ordinator)
University of Tübingen, Germany
Police University, German Federal State of Baden-Württemberg (Affiliated)
Centre for Liberal Strategies, Sofia, Bulgaria
Research Institute for Quality of Life (Romanian Academy), Bucharest, Romania
Galatasaray University, Istanbul, Turkey
University of Zagreb, Croatia
National School of Public Administration and Local Government, Athens, Greece
Panteion University, Athens, Greece
South East European Studies at Oxford (SEESOX), United Kingdom
Center for Research and Policy Making (CRPM), FYR Macedonia (Affiliated)

Contact

- Prof. Dr. Hans-Georg Soeffner, Person in Charge
Hans-Georg.Soeffner@uni-konstanz.de
- Dr. habil. Dirk Tänzler, Scientific Co-ordinator
Dirk.Taenzler@uni-konstanz.de
- Dr. Angelos Giannakopoulos, Head of the Project Office
Angelos.Giannakopoulos@uni-konstanz.de



University of Konstanz

Research Group Sociology of Knowledge
Universitätsstr. 10
Box D 35
D-78457 Konstanz
Germany
Phone: ++49 (0)7531 88 3129
Fax: ++49 7531 88 3194

Project Homepage: www.uni-konstanz.de/crimeandculture/index.htm

Email: crimeandculture@uni-konstanz.de