Introduction
BEATING BACK THE VARIETIES OF BRIGANDAGE

Nothing will unlock Africa’s economic potential more than ending the cancer of corruption . . . [H]ere in Africa, corruption drains billions of dollars from economies that can’t afford to lose billions of dollars—that’s money that could be used to create jobs and build hospitals and schools . . .

Only Africans can end corruption in their countries.
—PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA, ADDIS ABABA, JULY 28, 2015

The places that lose talent, it’s where there’s a lot of corruption.
—PRESIDENT OBAMA, HO CHI MINH CITY, MAY 25, 2016

The evil of corruption reaches into every corner of the world.
—PRIME MINISTER DAVID CAMERON, LONDON, MAY 12, 2016

I encourage you to work with integrity and transparency for the common good.

Corruption is . . . sweet [so] we like it . . . [But] please, don’t develop that taste.
—POPE FRANCIS, NAIROBI, NOV. 25, 27, 2015

Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.
—GOAL 16.5., UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, 2015–2030
Corruption is an insidious cancer of a national body politic. It infects elites, metastasizes harshly across classes and castes, cripples institutions, consumes communities, and cuts deeply into the very structure of people’s lives. It destroys nations and saps their moral fiber. Like so many cancers, corruption is invasive and unforgiving. As it spreads relentlessly, it degrades governance, distorts and criminalizes national priorities, and privileges acquisitive rent seeking, patrimonial theft, and personal and family gains over concern for the commonweal. Corruption is the harsh political disease of our era. It must be conquered so that the planet’s least well-off peoples can prosper and begin to experience substantially better human outcomes. Combating corruption and beating back the merchants of sleaze are among the better ways to strengthen overall human outcomes.

The corruption malady unfortunately resists easy medicine and other forms of responsible treatment. In too many of the globe’s polities it is the default option, an intractable way of organizing daily interactions among powerful persons and between powerful persons and weaker members of national societies. Yet nothing is so ruinous to the body politic of the world’s poorest and most fragile countries as the drain of corruption. Only in a few places around the planet have cases of the corruption complaint, even severe examples, been driven into remission. Elsewhere, in nearly all of our continents, the curse of corruption has overwhelmed national immune systems and relentlessly enmeshed more and more wielders of power. This book explains why defenses have been rendered largely powerless—why even modern methods have so often failed to contain the tendrils of corruption and why corruption may be considered in some lights as an effective, if malign, form of governance. But, on the happier upside, this book’s main purpose is to demonstrate how and why a few significant nation-states, once riddled with decay, have inoculated themselves against infection by the corrupt political disease and have since produced long infection-free years of stability, probity, and economic growth. Learning from their successes and clinical best practices should give other nation-states new surgical and medicinal treatments capable of improving their own life chances against the incipient harms in their collective midst. This book shows how corrupt infections can be minimized and, in many situations, how the arduous uphill battle against corruption can be won—and won decisively.

But victories will come hard and after very long and carefully considered interventions by the very best practitioners. After all, in its many manifestations, corruption engulfs our everyday defenses. Even infrequent samplers of the media are assaulted by one after another irruption of human greed channeled as corruption. No single day in 2015 and 2016 has gone by without at least three or four instances of illegal, corrupt, harmful large-scale behavior having occurred or having been revealed somewhere in Africa, the Americas,
Asia, or Europe. Four corruption and anticorruption blogs (there may be more) have no shortage of infractions to report daily. Nor do the roughly 11 million documents leaked, 15,000 shell companies enumerated (2,400 of which were American), or the 200,000 offshore entities mentioned in the Panama Papers hint at anything less than a tsunami of questionable, possibly illicit and potentially corrupt, persons and polities.

Some randomly collected examples illustrate the range and variety of corrupt behavior around today's globe and provide glimpses of the extent of the problem; brigandage of many varieties is almost everywhere. Few political jurisdictions are immune. Few political and corporate enterprises are free from temptation. Moreover, the random examples below are as fully banal and prosaic as they are outrageous and perfidious:

- A former president of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and Antigua's long-time Permanent Representative to the UN took big bribes ($1.3 million and a steady job for his wife) from a wealthy Chinese developer from Macau in exchange for promoting what would have been a UN-sponsored exposition center in Macau. Indicted, but not yet tried in court, he was found dead at his home in mid-2016, allegedly the victim of a weight-lifting accident.
- In a small town in Uttar Pradesh, India, police allegedly burned to death a woman who refused to pay a big enough bribe to release her husband from jail.
- A teenager masquerading as the son of Tajikistan's autocratic president collected $50,000 from a citizen who wanted a protected plot of land. The teenager then called the appropriate government official and asked him to deed the parcel to the citizen.
- In Russia, a creative Siberian artist advertised on Facebook that he was selling special envelopes for delivering bribes, each decorated with the text of the article in that country's criminal code that outlaws bribery. The envelopes sold online like hotcakes, many purchased by state bureaucrats.
- A prominent Canadian petroleum exploration and development firm bribed the Chadian ambassador to Ottawa and his deputy with $34 million worth of company shares to obtain exploration rights in his home country.

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INTRODUCTION

The mayor of Tokyo resigned after opponents revealed that he had used public funds to pay for an $800 Italian meal, the most expensive suite at an exclusive hotel in London, Chinese silk shirts, comic books, and mystery novels.

A former chief executive officer of Calpers, the biggest pension fund in the United States, was sentenced to 4½ years in prison for steering $14 million in placement fees to an ex-board member in exchange for cash bribes and gifts. A federal judge called his crime “a dagger in the heart of public trust.”

The mayor of Bucharest skimmed 70 percent of the profits from illicit construction contracts.

The mayor of Rome resigned after being accused of padding his expense accounts.

New York State Assembly president and dealmaker Sheldon Silver was indicted for abusing his powerful public position for years, possibly for decades, to amass private gain. After a long trial, he was convicted of seven counts of honest services fraud, extortion, and money laundering, and later was sentenced to twelve years in prison. Dean Skelos, the majority leader in the New York State Senate, was also arrested for the same kinds of offenses and

“The Wages of Corruption.” The world’s most corrupt countries, witness North Korea, Zimbabwe, and Venezuela, are the nations with the least satisfactory economic results for their peoples, largely because kleptocratic rulers systematically and criminally steal from their impoverished citizens. Originally printed in the Economist, Aug. 13, 2016. Used with permission of Kevin KAL Kallaugher, Economist, Kaltoons.com.

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convicted of bribery, extortion, and conspiracy. He was sentenced to five years in prison.

- The onetime speaker of the Rhode Island House of Representatives went to prison for three years for taking bribes from a Providence restaurant and misusing $100,000 from his political campaign account. He admitted that he had been driven by “greed” and “just plain stupidity.”

- A South Korean prime minister resigned after a prominent local construction company executive said that he had given the prime minister and a governor cash in exchange for access to contracts. (The executive committed suicide, but left implicating tapes and documents.)

- In Nepal, after a disastrous earthquake leveled 500,000 buildings all over Kathmandu, local officials admitted that corrupt payments had for years persuaded inspectors to wink at false plans and to “look the other way.” This was collusive corruption at work.

- Explosions of sodium cyanide and other dangerous chemicals in Tianjin, China, which killed 145 citizens and injured 700, were traced to illegal permits granted corruptly by a former deputy mayor and a police chief, both of whom were jailed. Yang Dongliang, the deputy mayor and more recently and, ironically, the head of China’s National Administration for Work Safety, was investigated for “suspected violations of party discipline and the law,” code phrases for corruption. The mayor of Tianjin was also charged with the same kinds of breaches of discipline, and jailed for 12.5 years.

- The chief minister of the Indian State of Goa refused to approve work permits, invoices, and bills until a New Jersey–based international construction firm had paid repeated bribes. The American company ultimately forfeited $17.1 million in penalties to the U.S. Department of Justice for bribing officials in India, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Kuwait to win construction management contracts.

- In Ukraine, two senior officials were arrested in the midst of a televised meeting of the national cabinet for taking construction kickbacks and embezzling funds meant to purchase fuel, and for transferring the proceeds to banks in Jersey and Cyprus. The head of a government-owned railway was fired for stealing from the state. A former regional party leader allegedly “over paid” for coal and abused his power. He, too, was arrested, along with a former finance minister accused of stealing millions of dollars from the state. Another accused leader jumped to his death from a seventeenth-story window.

- Panama’s vice president allegedly received a $10 million kickback from a company that won a lucrative contract to construct a huge irrigation project.
scheme, never completed. Earlier, a former president of the country’s supreme court went to prison for five years for falsifying documents and for purchasing apartment houses for $1.7 million in cash without revealing how that amount was obtained.

- Eight Nigerian senior bank employees were sent to prison for defrauding the Central Bank of Nigeria and other banks of the equivalent of $500,000 by stealing huge quantities of high-denomination mutilated naira notes that were intended to be exchanged for fresh, new currency.

- In Kano, Nigeria, an investigator was told that “if you want to win your case, go to the judge with a beautiful girl.”

- About 10,000 demonstrators in Budapest demanded the ouster of Hungary’s prime minister for employing corrupt officials, especially six tax authority leaders who were alleged to have stolen official funds. Those six were barred from the United States because of corruption.

- In South Africa, a civil society organization published a “what-to-do” guide for citizens approached for bribes by the police, a not uncommon occurrence.

- A big German engineering firm that had paid a large fine in 2013 for massive bribes that sealed a Nigerian natural gas contract revealed in 2015 that its employees had also paid Brazilians to obtain $6.5 million in contracts connected to the 2014 soccer World Cup.

- Gulnara Karimova, daughter of Uzbekistan’s late dictatorial president and onetime heiress apparent, was accused of taking at least $300 million in bribes from Swedish-Finnish and Russian-Norwegian multinational corporations in exchange for access to mobile telecommunication contracts. Karimova, once described by the U.S. embassy in her country as a “robber baron” and as “the single most hated person” in Uzbekistan, was put under house arrest in Tashkent in 2014 by her father. (Disclosure: I taught her in a big class at Harvard University in the late 1990s.) Her father was also accused of taking vast bribes from a Russian oligarch, possibly for the same mobile telephone contracts and access. Telia, the Swedish-Finnish company that paid bribes to Karimova, admitted wrongdoing and put aside $1.45 billion to settle claims against it by the U.S. Department of Justice.

- Brazil’s ruling party and at least forty parliamentarians, including seven cabinet ministers in an interim government, benefited from at least $3.2 billion in bribes paid by Petrobras, the giant state petroleum company. Those bribes were a part of an even more massive scheme of contract fraud and enrichment involving the search for oil and gas deposits by Petrobras—a scheme or schemes that amounted to
"systematic corruption," according to the federal judge overseeing the investigation. The Petrobras frauds and attempts to limit the political fallout from such discoveries led to the impeachment of Brazil’s president, but ostensibly for a different offense, and the installation of an interim president himself deeply implicated in profits from Petrobras. The speaker of Brazil’s lower house of Parliament was accused of pocketing a $5 million bribe in the same scheme, and the head of the senate was similarly accused. Brazil’s once-popular former president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, was also implicated in the scandal.1 Separately, a naval admiral was jailed for allegedly running the nation’s secret nuclear energy program corruptly.

- Finally, doping. Russian athletes won Olympic and other sporting competitions (including the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi) for years despite using illegal performance-enhancing drugs. Russian testing laboratories were both bribed and compelled to cover up the systematic cheating; Russian athletics leaders orchestrated the widespread falsifications.

This list of different and various-sized transnational and national corrupt acts could go on and on. The accounts are each more sensational and alarming than the last. Some are brazen and audacious, others routine and grasping. But the horrific reality is that no one who resides or works in the developing world, engages in finance and commerce in the developing and developed worlds, attempts innocently or naively to bid for contracts, is an ambitious political official or senior bureaucrat in the developing world, operates as a lowly or senior policeman, or tries to get anything done (obtain a marriage license, perhaps) in nearly all developing world settings would be surprised by such revelations of illegality. Nor would citizens of dozens of the globe’s obscenely corrupt countries object to characterizing corrupt behavior as criminal behavior; in jurisdictions such as Afghanistan under President Hamid Karzai or Tunisia under President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, broad and far-reaching criminal-colluding networks operate and operated, top down, to maximize illicit off-takes from entire countries.

Those who know little directly about big-time pilfering endure their own daily abuses. Students often have to buy their promotions to the next grade. Impecunious shanty dwellers are compelled to pay illegally for water or electricity hookups that are rightfully theirs. Obtaining permits, a necessity of a hustled life at the margin, means the crossing of palms with “tea” money, or a payment attached to some other euphemism. All of these abuses of authority and illicit exactions are woven ineluctably into the fabric of daily existence across at least two-thirds of the globe. For billions of the planet’s inhabitants, corruption is inescapable.

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The Costs of Corruption

Given that the incidents detailed above are merely snapshots, it should be evident that global corruption is alive and well in the middle of the second decade of the twenty-first century. No region, no country, is immune. Arguably, there is more corruption in the world than in 1990, when the Cold War was ending, but real numbers, retrospective or current, remain guesstimates. Two researchers assert that 1.6 billion citizens worldwide are affected by bribery annually. The World Economic Forum suggests that the global annual cost of corruption is about 5 percent of total planetary GDP, possibly $2.6 trillion. It also claims that corruption increases the expense of doing business by 10 percent, on average. Global Financial Integrity estimates that $7.8 trillion was diverted illegally from emerging economies between 2004 and 2013, thanks to tax evasion, corruption, and other criminal activity. The World Bank believes that more than $1 trillion is paid in bribes annually. Whatever the real figures, the number of people involved and the direct wages of cancerous corruption are substantial; the resulting damage to the collective body politic is enormous and debilitating.

Even more debilitating are the indirect costs of corruption. Christine Lagarde, head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), told London’s Anti-Corruption Summit that corruption leads to low growth and income inequality. “A country,” she warned, “can be trapped in a vicious circle of corruption and fiscal profligacy, ultimately leading to a debt crisis.” She reminded leaders at the summit that corruption helped to determine “some or all drivers” of inclusive growth, including financial stability. It undercut needed private foreign investment.

Corruption is a constant complication in the everyday life of the majority of the world’s people, poor and rich. It is with them always, often in their face if they are attempting to accomplish daily tasks like innocently driving an automobile, timorously dealing with bureaucrats, seeking hospital assistance for themselves or a sick child, or engaging in major efforts to begin or build a business. For much of the world, corruption is the norm. It is expected that all forms of governance are manipulated by and for the benefit of ruling elites. As one analyst remarked, “It is entirely routine for the government to distribute public goods and resources on the basis of favoritism.”

President Nelson Mandela of South Africa bemoaned predatory elites that use corrupt methods to loot national wealth. President Paul Kagame of Rwanda called corruption “clearly, very largely, behind the problems” of Africa. When James D. Wolfensohn became president of the World Bank, he chose not to mince words: for developing countries to achieve growth and poverty reduction, “we need to deal with the cancer of corruption,” he said. “Corruption is the largest single inhibitor of equitable economic develop-
ment.” Jim Yong Kim, the current president of the World Bank, calls corruption “Public Enemy Number One.” Secretary of State John Kerry announced at the London Anti-Corruption Summit that he was shocked by the “degree to which I find corruption pandemic in the world today.” Corruption, he continued, “threatened governments by encouraging foreign extremism and fomenting domestic dissent.” Iranian economist Saeed Laylaz, a confidant of President Hassan Rouhani, admitted immediately after the United States and Europe had agreed to limit Iran’s nuclear program that his country’s economic problems were caused by mismanagement and corruption, not sanctions.5

Fortunately, the popular and academic literature about all manner of corruption is broad and rich. There is no absence of excellent studies of the phenomenon generally and with regard to regions and individual countries, or even concerning sections of particularly notorious nations. The profound and disturbing linkages of corruption to the smuggling of drugs, arms, migrants, and people in general; to nuclear proliferation questions; to money laundering; to the financing of terror and terrorists; and to transnational criminality and criminal gangs are well-known and examined by a wealth of telling and courageous scholars and writers. “How can you solve the problem of violence and organized crime,” asked a leading Mexican campaigner for competitiveness and better business conditions, “if you don’t solve the problem of corruption?” Violent insurgencies, as well, partially stem from regime corruption and criminal competition over proceeds from illicit activities. “Corruption has helped generate some of today’s most dire security crises.”6

There is no particular need for another book-length analysis of what corruption is (and what it is not), why it persists, how it deters development, and whether and how it should be calibrated. Most of this is old news.

What is novel, however, is the attention that global leaders began to pay to the problems of corruption after about 2010, and especially in 2015 and 2016. Driven by the cascading costs of corrupt dealings, especially in Africa and Asia, by massive dumps of incriminating documents, by newly invigorated American and European law enforcement concerns, and by a realization that the war on terror was a war, equally, on corruption, the leaders of the world began to focus more than ever on how best to lead an anticorruption crusade. Cameron’s 2016 London summit symbolized the new awareness. As the leaders at the summit hinted, this coming decade ideally could foster a real reduction in the growth of corrupt earnings for the first time since the early twentieth century.

To accomplish such an objective, we now need a study of how best and most effectively to curb, control, reduce, and diminish corruption, especially in the developing world (where it runs rampantly almost out of control and provides a substitute form of governance). This is that analysis, a how-to book showing what has been done successfully in a few countries and political ju-
risdictions to bring down high levels of corrupt activity, sometimes to negligible numbers. It includes an articulation of the variety of new methodologies and innovations being developed across the globe to confront corruption. It shows how political movements have battled corruption. It describes how an international anticorruption court could assist in punishing high-level corruption enablers. This is a book of hard-earned lessons—a Baedeker to anticorruption efforts for governments who want to end the scourge within their own public services and national borders, for civil societies that seek to reform their national environments, for corporate executives who wish to control their costs and risks, for donors who want to do good, and for all of us in and out of the academy who want first to understand how to minimize venal and petty corruption and, second, how to avoid the societal decay that accompanies corruption.

This book shows that many things can indeed be done to oppose and contain corruption. Corruption is not inevitable, nor so intrinsic to the offending societies that no amount of scrubbing will remove its stain. This cancer can be cured. Several polities once thoroughly infected with the pathogen of corruption—the former Macaus of the world—are now largely corruption free. The clean countries of the Nordic north and the southern Antipodes were not always without corruption. Several African nation-states have rid themselves of corrupt practices. But, exactly, how?

This book provides myriad answers to the “how?” question. Political will, usually in the form of committed national leadership, plays a major role in ensuring positive change. So does adherence to a robust rule of law and a panoply of legal, judicial, regulatory, and procedural reforms that inhibit bureaucratic discretion. The forging of effective investigative and prosecutorial instruments is essential. Public relations campaigns designed to prevent corruption are critical, as are the kinds of educational endeavors that have been pursued in at least a few of the more successful anticorrupt nation-states. Also necessary are the employment of new technologies such as the versatile mobile telephone, the existence and support of a free and energetic media, the presence of an emboldened civil society, and the actions of an aroused public apprised of its rights and responsibilities. “Without active citizens, free journalists, and independent judges, control of corruption is impossible,” one observer noted.7 These are all massive works in progress, as are the several embryonic and several successful national political party movements against corruption; the efforts of a new wave of brave prosecutors, as in Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania; and the availability of international protocols and conventions to encourage national initiatives against corruption.

The conquest of corruption will not be achieved solely by the dissemination of the reform ideas discussed in this book. Instead, these innovations should spur to renewed action those politicians, public servants, donors, and
international policy makers who care. Those innovations should indicate to lonely anticorruption advocates in some of the hardest-impacted countries that their efforts are neither neglected nor unappreciated.

Each advance in the battle to curb corruption is hard-won, but some places have established formidable beachheads and others are achieving significant advances. This book is a detailed examination of what those pioneers have done (and failed to do) to achieve real forward movement, and how others are trying to keep pace. This book embraces the notion that corruption, as unlikely as it may seem, can be conquered, frontier by frontier and territory by territory. It is full of lessons from the developed and developing worlds for the countries mostly in the developing world about what has been and can be done; it investigates the factors that have permitted the scourge of corruption both to resist and then to succumb to reform.

Pathways to a Cure

This book’s opening chapter draws on a very large literature to offer a dissection of the corruption malady—what it is and what it is not. That chapter provides a wealth of definitions (“the abuse of public power and position for private gain,” “partiality rather than impartiality,” “unfairness,” “a lack of transparency,” and so on) and parses the differences between those who advocate interpretations devoid of moral content and those who posit corrupt acts as deviations from integrity.

This first chapter examines the several significant ways in which corruption is understood in theory and in practice. It shows how corruption must be examined as a fundamental problem of public service delivery as well as of private and nonprofit sector action and inaction. The corrupt criminalization of states facilitates people- and narcotics-trafficking enterprises and the proliferation of dangerous weapons of war, not to mention the spread of terror.

Corruption is neither culturally relative nor efficient, as some observers once argued. The first chapter carefully considers those propositions and finds that corrupt practices produce no positive good. Nor are they “natural” or anywhere accepted.

The first chapter distinguishes between petty and venal (grand) corruption, showing how pervasive is the first and how destructive the second. It suggests that an embrace of ethical universalism is essential if a nation-state wishes to extirpate corrupt practices within its midst. The chapter also distinguishes among types of states to specify the different kinds of reform interventions that are possible, category by category. It shows how corruption criminalizes states and turns many into top-down looting machines.

Corruption is conceptualized as a problem of collective action, not of reforming agents of the state. Political will, defined in the first chapter, drives
that transformation of the collective; enlightened leadership is the primary engine of attitudinal and societal change.

The second chapter of the book examines how we can know what we think we know about corruption. It assesses the many ways in which the amounts and varieties of corrupt practice are now quantified and qualified. The advantages of direct over indirect measurement methods are set out, as are the arguments for perceptions-based approaches. This chapter evaluates the Corruption Perceptions Index and the World Bank’s Control of Corruption Indicator, finding both eminently useful, if conceptually compromised. It also examines the new Index of Public Integrity and its use of objective rather than subjective measures of corruption.

The second chapter discusses the role of other indexes in understanding corruption—especially the Global Integrity, Rule of Law, Bribe Payers, Financial Secrecy, Aid Transparency, and Open Budget indexes. Chapter 2 also examines the World Bank’s blacklisting of corrupt multinational corporations. Since much of venal corrupt behavior is engendered externally, this chapter further explores the roles of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, Revenue Watch’s Resource Governance Index, and rules promulgated by the Securities and Exchange Commission in calibrating and revealing potentially corrupt flows of cash into countries where mineral and petroleum riches are available for the taking and the exploitation.

The second chapter additionally demonstrates what works and what kinds of information will help us learn whether the efforts against the pathogen of corruption are in fact successful. It distinguishes between subjective and objective forms of measurement and shows how each has been employed to illuminate corrupt practices.

Legal barriers against corruption are fundamental in attempting to win any battle against such a scourge. The third chapter samples a variety of legislated mechanisms and systems to examine whether and how they help, and how much they wage war effectively against corruption. It looks comparatively at legislation antagonistic to corruption in Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, in countries that have been successful in reducing corruption and in other places where equally impressive legal constraints have accomplished little.

The third chapter also scrutinizes the structure and impact of American, British, Canadian, European, and United Nations laws and conventions intended to reduce transnational corruption. It advances the possibility of an International Anti-Corruption Court patterned after the International Criminal Court and examines its potential relevance and importance. This chapter discusses the roles of auditors general and of ombudsmen in revealing and sometimes attempting to remedy the results of corrupt acts. It analyzes the significance of the media and transparency more generally in combating cor-
ruption, and underscores the vital importance of independent judges and well-functioning court systems in enabling successful attacks on corruption.

The fourth and fifth chapters discuss the practice of using investigatory commissions to reduce the intensity and predatory nature of corruption, primarily in Asia and Africa, but also in Europe and Central America. The much-touted successes of the Hong Kong model are real, as are the distinctive experiences of the Singaporean and Indonesian examples illustrative of the critical importance of political will in combating corruption. In Hong Kong and Singapore, community attitudes and behavior were altered strikingly, and very swiftly. Well-run commissions supported fully by the political establishment made a signal difference. In Asia and Africa, the effectiveness of capable commissions may have been more repeatedly compromised and undermined by national political failures, but those failures demonstrate how vital it was for successful commissions to have enjoyed high-level national support.

Chapter 5 turns first to the mostly effective African commission experiences in Botswana and Mauritius to show how they prospered because of good internal leadership and the backing of the national executive and legislative authorities. Nigeria’s battle, an example of a much more difficult attempt to control corruption, is analyzed, especially the ambitious but ultimately frustrated efforts of the nation’s first Economic and Financial Crimes Commission. Ghana’s comparable Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice accomplished some important gains against corrupt practices but it, too, was hampered by political interference and a lack of meaningful independence. Three well-articulated East African commissions (those of Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania), and a comparable effort in Madagascar, all failed to reduce corrupt practices because of the several ways in which their operations were compromised by political considerations. The Zambian and Malawian commissions similarly suffered, especially after the end of President Kenneth Kaunda’s long reign in Zambia and under the wildly corrupt successors to President Hastings K. Banda, whose autocratic tendencies began it all. Taken together, the fourth and fifth chapters suggest that well-established and well-run investigatory commissions can help to reduce levels of corruption, but only if their endeavors are embraced by the full force of the state, as in Botswana, Hong Kong, Rwanda, and Singapore.

The sixth chapter of the book examines the fortunes of the five nation-states that showed the largest scoring gains in reducing corruption between 2004 and 2014. It explains how they changed from horribly corrupt to markedly less corrupt over that decade, according to the Corruption Perceptions Index and the World Bank’s Control of Corruption indicator. This “most improved” cohort includes Georgia, Liberia, Rwanda, Macedonia, and Montenegro. But being “most improved” is equated only in the Rwandan case with eliminating corruption; the others just bettered their scores considerably dur-
The decade examined. This chapter discusses exactly to what those countries owe their scoring gains. In all cases, political will mattered considerably. Each country instituted a number of critical regulatory changes and appointed anticorruption commissions with substantial mandates. Each tried to raise police and civil servant salaries, or at least (in Liberia’s case) to start paying wages. In a few, legislative and instrumental alterations in the nature of governance were also critical. Overall, improvement occurred because tough-minded leaders introduced institutional innovations and made sure that those innovations helped to bring about measurable reductions in corruption.

The seventh chapter answers a fundamental question. The Nordic nations and such places as New Zealand, now and since the indexes of corruption were invented, have always ranked highest among the noncorrupt. Yet, those nations were desperately corrupt a century or more ago. What moved them from the corrupt to the noncorrupt sides of the ledger? For the globe’s ten least corrupt countries, this chapter teases out the variables that can explain such major shifts over time (in several cases over centuries). Political will, again, was important. So were the development of high levels of social trust, the creating of new national solidarities, broad literacy and educational advances, significant attention to religious confessionalism, and the popular embrace over time of ethical universalism.

The eighth chapter examines the critical role of political will. It explains how responsible political leadership is the main ingredient of effective anticorruption achievements in modern times. Hong Kong, Singapore, and Botswana are cases in which determined heads of government and heads of state provided the essential ingredient of major reform. Hong Kong and Singapore were rampantly corrupt before new leadership drastically altered the incentive structure of corruption and rapidly reduced its presence. Botswana’s leadership did the same, but from a less infected platform. China and Nigeria are now undergoing the same kind of leader-driven anticorruption alterations. Time will tell whether Presidents Xi Jinping and Muhammadu Buhari succeed in smashing corrupt practices or whether China and Nigeria are too big and too deeply steeped in corruption for reform endeavors to be sustained. This chapter argues, however, that leaders like Xi and Buhari can make a difference no matter the size of their polity, and discusses a Bolivian case and a Tanzanian case that reinforce the notion that political will is absolutely central to anticorruption outcomes.

Chapter 9 examines the various ways in which a concerned civil society, aroused protest movements, social audit initiatives, and political party endeavors have managed to alter public discourse and, in several cases, successfully curtailed the spread of corruption and made its proliferation much more costly. Most notable is the victory of explicitly anticorruption political vehicles in India and Guatemala and the advances against corruption made
through the social audit mechanism in such places as the Philippines. This chapter also explores a variety of new technological advances, mostly the imaginative use of handheld devices, which have the potential to expose incidents of corruption and thus help in several important ways to win the fight against that infection. The text messaging capabilities and photographic capacities of mobile telephones are increasingly of great help in the contest; so are dash cam videos that can be quickly uploaded to YouTube or Facebook. This chapter also includes a discussion of how to make improvements to the ethos and management of multinational corporations so that they act more ethically and legally.

The penultimate chapter on lessons learned and best practices reiterates and supports the critical role of political leadership in transforming national political cultures from corrupt to noncorrupt. It also examines many of the other methods that are helpful in destroying the pervasive pursuit of corrupt gains throughout the countries of our planet. It offers a set of best practices for reformers (and donors) ready to do more than just talk about or bemoan the persistence of corrupt practices throughout two-thirds of the globe.

The final chapter offers a fourteen-step program capable of curbing corruption—the overall optimistic goal of this book.