



## An Assessment of Ghana's Corruption Struggle; the Role of Political Parties

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### ABSTRACT

Political parties play a significant role in the functioning of robust democracies, and consequently, they are held to high expectations, particularly with regards to addressing issues of corruption. In nearly all countries globally, political parties are inherently linked to the issue of corruption due to their role in selecting and electing leaders who govern nations and possess constitutional control over national resources. Therefore, they play a crucial role in either combating corruption or facilitating corruption. In the realm of assessment, Ghana, as a sovereign state since its attainment of independence, has encountered persistent challenges with corruption, which, according to existing evidence, seems to be escalating over time. Nearly every governmental entity is grappling with the pervasive issue of corruption. Furthermore, political parties are frequently perceived as entities that exploit their influential status to solicit bribes, allocate lucrative posts in the public sector to its members and followers, or divert public resources towards the control of party leaders or supporters. Corruption poses significant challenges in developing and transitional nations such as Ghana, where political institutions grapple with many manifestations of

### ARTICLE INFO

*Article history:*

Received 04 Jun 2023

Received in revised form

04 Jul 2023

Accepted 29 Aug 2023

**Keywords:** Corruption, Ghana's Corruption Struggle, Political Parties.

corrupt practises. Corruption erodes public trust in governing institutions and poses a significant challenge to the sustainability of democratic systems. In a competitive political context, democratic parties have the capacity to fulfil significant political roles and duties, particularly in combating corruption through many means. Although political parties are frequently associated with corruption, scholarly discussions on corruption and anti-corruption measures have acknowledged that if political parties assume the crucial role of combating corruption, it could result in significant progress. Therefore, this study evaluates the ongoing battle against corruption in Ghana, with a specific focus on the involvement of political parties. Furthermore, the study utilised secondary data for analysis, which informed the subsequent conclusions and recommendations.

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## I. Introduction

Corruption continues to be a significant obstacle for nations globally, particularly in the sub-Saharan African region. Corruption poses a significant threat to the foundations and principles of democratic institutions, while also endangering sustainable development, human rights, and the rule of law (United Nations General Assembly against Corruption, 2021). According to the United Nations General Assembly against Corruption (UNGAC 2021), the fundamental basis for combating corruption lies in the establishment of a robust framework characterised by principles such as integrity, openness, inclusion, and accountability in the execution of public affairs. Corruption can lead to the appointment of public officials based on favouritism rather than merit, hence limiting the availability of highly skilled individuals for local and regional administrations. Consequently, such circumstances give rise to a conducive atmosphere for various forms of corruption, further diminishing the efficacy and proficiency of the governing body. Organisations that exhibit inefficiency and ineffectiveness, characterised by the appointment of individuals based on favouritism or cronyism rather than merit, contribute to the provision of subpar public services and infrastructure. Consequently, this undermines public trust and diminishes the legitimacy of public institutions (United Nations General Assembly against Corruption, 2021).

Moreover, it is crucial to note that this phenomenon leads to substantial human consequences, such as impoverishment, mortality, sickness, and limited opportunities for personal advancement. Corruption has a detrimental impact on the process of economic development. This phenomenon results in the allocation of public funds towards enterprises that lack competitiveness, rather than those who provide more creative or cost-effective products and services. The presence of uncompetitive marketplaces, in conjunction with the detrimental effects of corruption on the quality of local public services and infrastructure, results in enterprises lacking a robust basis (in terms of personnel, security, and investment) upon which to establish themselves. Ultimately, this phenomenon may deter both domestic and foreign investors from allocating their resources in a certain region 2. (Carr & Outhowale, 2011).

In an optimal multi-party democratic system, political parties serve as the primary tools that facilitate the democratic process of political delegation and responsibility. Political parties play a crucial intermediary function in the relationship between citizens and the state, as they are tasked with the responsibility of advocating for citizens' interests and effectively translating them into a policy agenda

that addresses the concerns of the public. Through the implementation of an agenda that is centred around certain interests, their aim is to exert influence over the processes of policymaking and decision-making. Simultaneously, they assume the responsibility of holding the government accountable on behalf of both individual citizens and the broader societal framework. Therefore, it can be argued that the traditional political accountability system, which is considered essential for the proper functioning of a robust democratic society, is significantly flawed or perhaps completely ineffective in most emerging multi-party democracies in sub-Saharan Africa. Following a period exceeding 15 years of engagement with multi-party democracy, a discernible sentiment of discontent and disillusionment is emerging among the populace of these nations over the efficacy of prominent political institutions and players, including political parties. Formal multi-party elections have been observed in numerous emerging democracies in Sub-Saharan Africa since the early 1990s. Nevertheless, the pace of constitutional reform processes has been sluggish, resulting in a constrained democratic environment where parliamentary institutions, civil society groups, watchdog organisations, the media, and the electorate face limited opportunities to question, scrutinise, and counterbalance executive decisions at both the national and regional levels, let alone ensure their accountability.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that a significant proportion of political parties fail to adequately represent the interests of the general populace and promote the common welfare. Additionally, many parties exhibit a lack of responsiveness towards the demands and concerns of individuals. Instead, political parties are involved in a contest for power and control over governmental resources. Individuals often prioritise their personal interests over ideology and public matters, and their actions mostly revolve around patronage and clientelism<sup>3</sup> (Henrich and Brown, 2017).

The underdeveloped familiarity with the practises of multi-party democracy, alongside issues of corruption, pervasive mistrust among political parties and individuals, and limited institutional establishment, together contribute to the challenges faced by political parties in nascent democratic systems. According to Thomas Carothers, this phenomenon renders them the most vulnerable aspect in the process of democratisation within these nations<sup>3</sup>. (Henrich and Brown, 2017).

## II. Literature Review

### **The functions of political parties in the context of public accountability**

In well-functioning multiparty democracies, political parties play a crucial intermediary role between voters and the state. Furthermore, they serve as the intermediary linking the party system and the government. The intermediary role and simultaneous involvement of political parties in civil and political society afford them a distinct chance to collaborate with and potentially strengthen actors on both the supply and demand sides of public accountability throughout all three stages of the process. Therefore, parties possess the capacity to effectively tackle the universally established goals of public accountability. The objectives encompassed in this context are as follows: the establishment of democratic control exercised by citizens over their elected representatives in public office; the provision of mechanisms that enable citizens to monitor and balance the implementation of policies, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of governments; the prevention of power abuse; the promotion of learning among public decision makers and policymakers through evaluation and self-reflection; and, ultimately, the enhancement of government legitimacy<sup>4</sup>. (Holloway, 2006).

This suggests that political parties are expected to execute functions that extend beyond their responsibilities in direct political accountability pertaining to elections. They play various roles in relation to four distinct domains in order to enhance public accountability within society. These

domains include the demand side of accountability, which encompasses citizens and their organisations; the supply side of public accountability, which pertains to government and state institutions; the external enabling environment, which encompasses laws, rules, oversight organisations, and political stability; and the internal enabling environment, which refers to the processes of party institutionalisation 5. (Morof and Schmid, 2010).

### **The functions of political parties in the demand side of public accountability**

Political parties have the potential to fulfil several roles in enhancing public accountability on the demand side. This pertains to empowering citizens to hold the government accountable for its performance, behaviours, and utilisation of resources. According to Mungiu (2013), Randall, Salih, and Burnell discuss various functions of political institutions, including the dissemination of political information, the provision of ideologies and leadership, the aggregation and representation of citizens' interests, the promotion of political socialisation or mobilisation, and the facilitation of opportunities for political participation.

Political parties, when collaborating with other stakeholders such as civil society organisations, the media, and oversight and auditing bodies, have the potential to engage in participatory mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating policy execution and the allocation of public monies. Online platforms have the potential to foster political and social discourse among individuals and enhance dialogue between citizens and government representatives. The activities, which are often known as social accountability mechanisms, offer individuals a means of obtaining legitimacy by enabling their participation in the governing process beyond the mere act of electing those in power (Olsson, 2014).

However, this approach is effective only when prioritising the public interest over personal profit, and when there is adherence to laws, regulations, impartiality, and knowledge.

### **The functions of political parties in the realm of public accountability from a supply-side perspective.**

Political parties have a significant role in facilitating public accountability within the supply side of governance. In the context of a robust and effective competitive party system, the primary role of political parties is to act as a mechanism for holding the government accountable, thereby representing the interests and concerns of the voters. In addition, they have the capacity to aid politicians in their official capacities by fostering more responsiveness and accountability towards the concerns of the citizenry. Furthermore, they exert influence on policies through the development of programmes and the oversight of policy execution. Citizens have the capacity to offer input to political leaders and foster educational advancement through the active monitoring and evaluation of policies. Moreover, political parties are expected to establish their own set of ethical guidelines, commonly referred to as a 'code of conduct'. This code encompasses both the explicit and implicit norms, values, and principles that shape the behaviour of party members, particularly those in positions of authority. Ideally, party members, including those in power, should be held accountable and subject to formal or informal consequences when they contravene these codes. Instances of misconduct that may warrant such consequences include acts of corruption, abuse of power, defection to other parties, or engaging in discriminatory practises.

Political parties are additionally accountable for the process of political recruiting and training, which include the cultivation of prospective political leaders. This mechanism serves as a means for facilitating upward social mobility within society. They bear the responsibility for ensuring the quality of these prospective leaders. The ability of citizens to assess and contribute to the competence of

aspiring politicians has the potential to serve as a valuable ex ante control mechanism. This compensates for the limitations of the ex post mechanism of elections, wherein citizens can only vote politicians in or out of office after the fact, which often proves to be unsatisfactory. Ideally, this serves as a preventive measure against those with malicious intentions from attaining public office. Interactions between residents and prospective politicians serve as a catalyst for enhancing the level of information available to individuals, hence facilitating more informed decision-making processes during electoral events (Rothstein and Ulslaner, 2005).

### **The significance of political parties in facilitating the "external environment" for public accountability**

Political parties require a conducive external environment in order to effectively carry out their responsibilities of public accountability. However, it is important to note that political parties also play a role in shaping and fostering this enabling environment. Political stability is a crucial determinant in facilitating public accountability inside a nation. Political parties serve as a mechanism for fostering nation-building efforts by effectively managing and mediating conflicts of interest. According to Salih, political parties play a crucial role in ensuring political stability within societies that possess the capacity to accommodate heightened levels of political engagement from emerging social forces resulting from the process of modernization. Furthermore, political parties have a significant impact on the mobilisation of voters and the exertion of influence on politicians in order to advocate for legislative and systemic changes that enhance the institutional structure for ensuring public accountability 8. (Rothstein and Ulslaner, 2005).

### **Political Corruption**

Political corruption is defined as the improper utilisation of power and influence by elected politicians, government personnel, or their affiliates, with the aim of acquiring personal advantages that are deemed illegal. According to Heywood's (2015) scholarly work, a comprehensive elucidation of political corruption is presented in the subsequent manner: Political corruption is defined as the deliberate engagement of a public official (hence referred to as A) in activities that violate the established regulations and standards of their position. The aforementioned wrongdoing poses a significant disadvantage to the welfare of the public, specifically those individuals (referred to as B) who are expected to be the major recipients of the benefits associated with the official's position. The primary objective of engaging in corrupt conduct is to secure personal advantages for the public official involved, as well as for a third party denoted as "C." This third party offers rewards or other forms of incentives to the official, in return for obtaining access to goods or services that would otherwise be unattainable (Heywood, 2015).

The definition presented is a succinct summary of Heywood's body of work, as understood by several experts in the respective field. Political corruption is defined as the act of a public official violating legal and societal norms that are established to protect the public interest or a particular sector. The breach in question can materialise as a scenario where a public official obtains personal advantages or consents to receiving gifts or incentives from an external entity. The primary objective of these gifts or incentives is to provide the third-party with unauthorised privileges to goods or services that they would not otherwise be eligible for (Heywood, 2015). In this discussion, we will examine the topic at hand from an academic perspective in order to Nye (1967) posits that political corruption encompasses actions that vary from the prescribed duties associated with a public position, motivated by personal or private objectives, such as financial advantages for oneself, immediate family members, or a select group. This behaviour may also encompass the transgression of regulations that forbid the exercise of

specific forms of influence that prioritise individual interests. Furthermore, Friedrich (2002) proposed that political corruption can be delineated as a type of behaviour that deviates from the established or perceived societal norms within a given context, specifically in the domain of politics. Deviant activity is distinguished by a distinct motivation, commonly involving the pursuit of individual benefits that come at the cost of the collective welfare. Nevertheless, irrespective of the potential underlying reason, what remains noteworthy is the observation that private benefits were acquired at the cost of the general public. Private gain can show in several forms, frequently encompassing financial advantages, as usually seen by the general populace. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that private advantage can also manifest in various alternative forms (11). (Nye, 1967).

### **Kleptocracy and Features**

The term "kleptocracy" is commonly encountered, however a considerable number of individuals lack understanding of its definition and its usage. The classification of kleptocracy in Ghana can be characterised as a form of white-collar criminality. More precisely, it encompasses the endeavour to achieve financial benefits by unethical actions, wherein corporate entities actively participate in such conduct. The aforementioned phenomenon is facilitated by an adverse cooperation between these corporate entities and morally compromised government leaders, as expounded upon by Max Weber. The aforementioned conclusion is based on factual information that suggests that incidents of white-collar crime in Indonesia are primarily committed by corporations and government personnel. Moreover, according to Jeremy (2003), the state is the principal entity that experiences the majority of the adverse outcomes.

Political corruption is a phenomenon characterised by the improper utilisation of power and influence by elected politicians, government personnel, or their affiliates, in order to get personal advantages that are deemed illegal. Nye (1967) provides a definition of political corruption as the manifestation of conduct that deviates from the prescribed obligations inherent in a public position, driven by personal or private motivations, such as the pursuit of financial benefits for oneself, immediate family members, or a select group. This behaviour may also encompass the transgression of regulations that forbid the exercise of specific forms of influence that prioritise individual interests. Furthermore, Friedrich (2002) proposed that political corruption can be delineated as a type of behaviour that deviates from the established or perceived societal norms within a given context, specifically in the domain of politics. Deviant activity is distinguished by a distinct motivation, commonly involving the pursuit of individual benefits to the detriment of the general public. Nevertheless, irrespective of the underlying reason, it is noteworthy that private benefits were acquired at the cost of the general public. Private gain can show in several forms, frequently encompassing financial advantages, as usually seen by the general populace. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that private benefit can manifest in various alternative forms (Fredrich, 2002).

The key attributes of a kleptocratic system involve a significant presence of corruption inside the governmental structure, marked by a considerable level of unlawful behaviour. In this particular context, the term "bureaucracy" incorporates not just the executive bureaucracy inside the government, but also includes the legislative and judicial bureaucracies. Corruption within the Ghanaian bureaucracy encompasses several stakeholders, such as regents, governors, executive ministers, legislative members, as well as judges and prosecutors within the judiciary. The manifestation of this phenomenon is supported by the disclosure and subsequent judicial actions pertaining to instances of corruption. An further facet of bureaucratic corruption is to the collusion that occurs between bureaucrats and firms or corporations, wherein they jointly partake in illicit activities. The phenomenon of bureaucratic and

corporate conspiracy primarily centres on the pursuit of financial benefits using methods that are detrimental to the interests of the state. According to Jeremy (2003), the kleptocratic state commonly relies on public funds obtained from the unregulated exploitation of natural resources. According to Jeremy (2003), this practise tends to favour corrupt government officials and business collaborators, rather than placing the well-being of the general population as a priority.

Another term employed as a synonym for kleptocracy is a pronounced prevalence of corruption (extensive corruption). The term kleptocracy is an advancement over the term kleptomani, which refers to the inclination to unlawfully appropriate possessions from individuals who are not engaged in such activities as a means of livelihood. This psychological condition exhibits a very stable pattern. Perpetrators are individuals who often do not encounter financial adversity, including individuals who are well recognised, such as celebrities. The pervasive and extensive nature of corruption in Indonesia, particularly inside bureaucratic systems, signifies the presence of kleptocracy as a defining characteristic. The phenomenon of kleptocracy is characterised by the prevalence of corruption, which is perceived by certain individuals as either deeply ingrained or as a routine occurrence. Hence, the eradication of corruption is a formidable challenge<sup>13</sup>. (Fredrich,2002).

### **Collaboration of Political Parties with Civil Society Organizations to fight corruption**

The concept of civil society was first established in scholarly and literary discourse during the 5th Century BC by Aristotle. In his understanding, civil society referred to a community of individuals who were both free and equal, and who were related by a certain political framework. The ancient Greek philosopher perceived policy within the context of civic society (Holloway, 2019). The policy can be regarded as a historical manifestation of state governance. According to Aristotle, the notions of civil society and state are considered synonymous.

Civil society organisations possess distinct advantages when compared to other forms of organisations, rendering them notably proficient in the enforcement of social accountability. Therefore, it is imperative for political parties to engage in collaboration with these entities in order to effectively fulfil their responsibilities in combating corruption (Holloway, 2019). Certain civil society organisations may possess advanced capabilities in various areas. For instance, they may excel in monitoring government performance, demonstrating extensive experience in mobilising individuals for public protests, raising concerns about corrupt activities within the government, and occasionally offering potential solutions to address such corruption within the country. In contrast to multinational organisations, domestic civil society organisations possess a unique depth of knowledge pertaining to local corruption, which is crucial for formulating efficacious anti-corruption policies. Domestic civil society organisations, particularly those deeply embedded within society, may possess certain forms of social capital and trust that are not readily available to foreign agencies and international actors. Due to the advantageous attributes and favourable implications associated with social responsibility, civil society organisations have garnered significant support from development practitioners.

The favourable perception of civil society organisations involved in anti-corruption efforts has encountered many criticisms and obstacles. The potential conflict between the function of civil society organisations in ensuring government accountability and democratic principles can be argued. Civil society organisations' representatives are not chosen by the general public and lack a clear mandate to represent a specific constituency. Moreover, should civil society organisations achieve success in their endeavours, there is a possibility that citizens may exhibit diminished inclination towards safeguarding their rights via the conventional democratic mechanisms<sup>14</sup>. (Brett, 2003).

One additional limitation of anti-corruption organisations is their failure to adequately address "moral accountability," which pertains to their responsibility towards the beneficiaries of their anti-corruption efforts, as well as "procedural accountability," which concerns internal management practises and the handling of resources by civil society organisations (Edwards and Hulme, 1996). Civil society organisations may not exhibit significant efficacy in combating corruption. In several nations, the endeavour to combat corruption is spearheaded by well-established community-based organisations that leverage a substantial network of advocates. In contrast, in certain regions of the post-communist world, such as other countries, societal dynamics tend to exhibit fragmentation, resulting in a limited number of individuals actively participating in civil society organisations 15. (Bernhard and Karakoç, 2002).

Moreover, adversaries, including occasional government entities, frequently endeavour to undermine the conduct of political parties unwittingly as it pertains to matters of corruption. In countries with a reliance on external funding and a lack of robust domestic support, political parties that attempt to organise anti-corruption activities often find themselves operating outside the realm of formal political authority. Consequently, their voices may go unheard, a common challenge faced by political parties in many African nations, such as Ghana 7.(Olsson, 2014).

The efficacy of political parties in combating corruption, particularly for those in opposition, is limited due to their occasional lack of coercive and punitive authority in situations where all pertinent state institutions align themselves with the incumbent party. A condition of bias emerges when all individuals align themselves with a single political party, resulting in the concealment of their unethical actions. This situation poses significant challenges for political parties in efficiently fulfilling their responsibilities in combating corruption 2.(Carr, Outhwaite, 2011).

### **Corporation with Anti-Corruption Civil Society (ACS)**

The Anti-Corruption Civil Society (ACS) is a multifaceted entity that encompasses numerous actors, diverse alliances, and various modes of engagement across the globe. This organisation is a prominent contributor to the development and implementation of anti-corruption policies. The anti-corruption civil society comprises two primary facets. In a comprehensive sense, the term refers to people and collectives operating beyond the confines of the public sector, who actively advocate for the principles of integrity and accountability within society (Holloway, 2006). This element encompasses a variety of entities such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), community and commercial organisations, and also assumes the involvement of individuals or political parties. In this regard, the anti-corruption civil society can encompass several stakeholders, such as proactive individuals, journalists, local activists, and others. The other part, in a more specific sense, pertains to the institutionalised civil society, commonly known as anti-corruption non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other formal entities and groups that address matters related to anti-corruption, as stated in The World Bank's Strategy (2017).

The primary functions of the ACS in combating corruption encompass several key areas: conducting research and engaging in related activities, advocating for justice in specific corruption cases, enhancing public awareness regarding corruption issues, formulating action plans to combat corruption, monitoring government actions and decisions, and assuming a leadership role in removing corrupt leaders at both the national and local levels. Therefore, political parties have the potential to fulfil their responsibilities in combating corruption by engaging in partnerships with anti-corruption stakeholders, rather than resorting to propaganda as a means to conceal their own party's corrupt practises (Holloway, 2002; UN Office of Drugs and Crime, 2004, p. 17).

According to Themudo (2013), the assessment of political parties' responsibility and involvement in combating corruption within a nation is typically challenging due to the lack of clear correlation between a party's level of growth and its effectiveness in addressing corruption. On the other hand, there exist supplementary interconnected factors that have a role in shaping the influence exerted by political parties. For example, one prominent concern pertains to the relationship between press freedom and social trust. Additionally, there is a need to examine the extent to which political parties are willing to impartially address corruption issues, particularly when they implicate their own party (Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005). Furthermore, it is crucial to consider the prevailing political culture in many countries, where a "winner takes all" approach is prevalent. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge the involvement of political party members in corrupt activities, thereby exacerbating the issue of corruption. Inquiring about the manner in which individuals express their opinions, given the potential negative connotations associated with public criticism, as likened to the act of publicly exposing one's personal flaws or shortcomings 18. (Themudo, 2013).

Simultaneously, these factors pertain to the degree of democracy and the presence of political and economic freedoms within a society, which are primarily influenced by the governance of the state, the government's inclination to engage with opposition political parties, and its endorsement of the right to freedom of expression. Political parties are anticipated to play a crucial role in establishing a framework of checks and balances that ensures accountability of the government and other financial supporters. Additionally, they are responsible for regulating business transparency, particularly in its interactions with governing bodies. The current discussion centres on the significant hurdles faced by political parties as they endeavour to confront corruption in an effective manner. The inadequacy of resources and financial means. The efficacy of anti-corruption initiatives is impeded by limitations in available resources. This study examines the ramifications of individuals involved in corrupt activities and interest groups exerting substantial financial sway. There is a lack of adequate financial resources dedicated to anti-corruption authorities and their associated actions. The notion of political will and commitment pertains to the determination and devotion of political actors to pursue and execute particular policies or activities. This concept pertains to the propensity of these entities to distribute resources, mobilise support, and surmount obstacles. According to Elliott (1997), political parties are inclined to allocate substantial financial resources towards their campaigns, often above the prescribed limits set for official campaign expenditures.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

In conclusion, the pursuit of triumph in combating corruption through the acts and endeavours of political parties poses a significant challenge. The pervasive consensus among scholars and experts is that the political parties in Ghana have a significant role in the root causes of corruption. Hence, it can be argued that political parties in Ghana possess the capacity to effectively contribute to the mitigation of corruption. The governing body have the authority to adopt and implement disciplinary measures against party members who partake in acts of corruption throughout their tenure in positions of political authority.

Furthermore, it is crucial for individuals to refrain from participating in corrupt behaviours, such as the practise of buying votes, taking unlawful donations from wealthy patrons in exchange for expected favours, and indulging in extravagant expenses. In order to effectively address the issue of corruption, it is crucial for individuals and organisations to participate in collaborations with institutions that are implicated in corrupt practises. These alliances function as a mechanism for organising and executing initiatives with the objective of increasing public awareness regarding corruption.

Moreover, these collaborations are of utmost importance in spearheading accountability programmes and fostering the culture of whistle blowing. To effectively address corruption, it is crucial for individuals to actively participate in cooperative endeavours with political parties and civil society organisations.

Again, it is imperative for political parties to place utmost importance on the formation of openness throughout all aspects of their activities, while concurrently executing rigorous efforts to eliminate corruption within their ranks. This may involve the implementation of sanctions on those who are shown to have participated in corrupt activities, with the establishment of thorough training initiatives aimed at enlightening members on the significance of refraining from unethical conduct.

Lastly, it is imperative to implement stringent penalties for individuals found guilty of corruption, accompanied by an expeditious legal procedure. Ideally, these penalties should involve life imprisonment and the forfeiture of all illicit gains to the state. Additionally, it is crucial that the duration of the judicial process for corruption cases should not exceed three months, ensuring prompt resolution.

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