

sional Papers series includes Peter B. Kenen's "Washington and the World: Organizing Economic Cooperation," which offers a framework for a United States policy response to the increasingly interdependent world economy. UNA/USA also offers extensive information on conducting model United Nations programs.

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Notes

1. Of the eight essays, five dealing with comparative politics were previously published in *PS*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (1984), pp. 545-63; four dealing with the teaching of international relations appeared in *News for Teachers of Political Science*, No. 40 (1984), pp. 10-23.

2. See also Basil Karp, "Teaching the International Dimension of American National Government," *The Political Science Teacher*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1989), pp. 16-17.

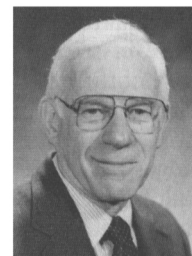
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Basil Karp recently retired as associate professor of political science at Pennsylvania State University. He has published articles on enriching the undergraduate curriculum with a global perspective.



Political Corruption: Making It the "Significant Other" in Political Studies

Harvey G. Kebschull, *North Carolina State University*

Corruption! Scandal!

Few other words catch the reader's eye or the listener's ear as do those words—though if the word "sex" is added, the catch rate probably doubles or triples. Yet despite the prevalence of real and presumed corruption and scandal, political scientists have not placed a high priority on the systematic analysis of these topics or their injection into standard textbooks and courses on American or foreign governments and politics. That seems unfortunate, for if students of politics are to achieve a more accurate understanding of "who gets what, when, how," to use Harold Lasswell's definition of politics, they need to have an appreciation of the causes and consequences of scandal and corruption as well as

of the formal institutions and processes of government and politics.

The Pervasiveness of Scandal and Corruption

As a subfield in political science, "scandology" may be quite new, but political corruption and scandal have a long and rich heritage. History is full of individuals who have used their political power to their own advantage in flagrant disregard of society's laws or norms. In ancient times, King David used his position to bring Bathsheba to his bedroom to commit adultery and then, to have her permanently, he commanded that her husband be placed in a battlefield position where he would most likely

be killed. Benjamin Franklin wrote from England in 1775 about "the extreme corruption prevalent among all orders of men in this rotten old state" (Peck 1979, 35), and political corruption was a familiar phenomenon in the United States well before Watergate. The more recent cases of the "Recruit" scandal in Japan, the awesome rip-offs of society by the Marcoses in the Philippines and Mobuto in Zaire, and the sinking of the Greenpeace ship, the *Rainbow Warrior*, by French operatives are illustrative of the scope of contemporary national and international political scandals.

Along with the "lesser" cases of corrupt state legislators in Arizona and in South Carolina, this highly selective list of local, national, and

international cases illustrates that corruption has been an aspect of politics throughout history, influencing from time to time who gets what, when, and how in all political systems, at all political levels. It is a rare week indeed that passes without reports of political scandal or corruption. The number of reports is substantial; as Michael Johnston notes, "a computer search of the *National Newspaper Index* for the period from 1972 until the fall of 1989 pulls up over 5800 articles" (Johnston 1990, ix).

For observers (as well as, apparently, the practitioners) of political scandals and corruption, the variety of forms that scandal and corruption take makes it unlikely that boredom will ever set in. Tax collectors have been notorious throughout history for using their power to collect more money than was lawful; bribery of judges has distorted justice; and ballot boxes have been stuffed and votes deliberately miscounted, to the advantage of some candidates and to the detriment of others. From time to time, bureaucrats at all levels have abused their powers to help their friends and themselves feast at the public money troughs, as the defense contract scandals have so clearly revealed. There is no golden age of incorruptible politics, in the United States, in Europe, or anywhere else in the world.

All of that might be very depressing if the focus remains on the damage done to political institutions as well as to individual reputations and careers. And yet there is another side to political scandals and corruption that compels attention, that side being the sometimes sheer stupidity that is involved, the farcical yet tragic situations, the outlandish B grade movie settings, the "sleaze thing." As Bruce Gronbeck notes, the exposure of corruption "often brings out both the Art Buchwalds and the Jeremiahs of a society" (Gronbeck 1978, 156). Political sin fascinates, and "corruption, money, murder, sin and sex in the service of politics, and vice versa, will not be concealed by neologisms," as John Logue asserts, adding that "Christine Keeler and Mandy Rice-Davies will not be reduced to correlation coefficients" (Logue 1988, 254).

Corrupting the political process may not be the world's oldest profession, but it has a long and dishonorable history that cannot be denied. Human greed, jealousy, and lust are inevitably among the building blocks in any political system, along with the more noble traits of honor and service, and they must be accounted for if an accurate picture of politics is to be achieved.

Avoiding the Obvious: The Evidence

But even if routine, ubiquitous, tragic yet often comical, political scandal and corruption seem to remain distinctly at the fringes of the

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concerns of political scientists. An informal survey of a number of American government texts found that even in the most detailed indexes, the heading of "corruption" is very rarely found among those of "cooperative federalism," "corporate political action committees," "corporate state," "cotton dust," and "Council of Economic Advisers," though the Corrupt Practices Act gets a nod in a few texts and Watergate in all of them.

The heading "scandal" receives even less recognition, except for the "Watergate scandal," as indexes skip from "Sandinistas" to "Scandinavia, socialism in" to "*Schenck v. United States*," apparently oblivious of the need to acknowledge the role of scandal in American politics. "Sex," it should be noted, is a frequent entry in indexes, but it is always the sanitized version referring only to the male/female classification of voting participation, etc., and never to the linkage with "scandal." Similarly, texts that contain a glossary of terms seem to find no room to define political corruption or scandal, even

though they may later devote several pages to "Illustration Credits" to account for all the colored pictures contained in the book. Pictures may be worth a thousand words, but even a picture of Donna Rice sitting on Gary Hart's lap on the good ship *Monkey Business* would seem to require some explanation of how scandal affects American politics.

Basic texts on European governments and politics are no better. They seem to imply, by the infrequency of any discussion of political scandal or corruption or the listing of those topics in indexes, that all is fine, proper, and legal in those systems, after which revelations of corruption in the British judicial system or the London Metropolitan Police may come as a distinct shock to students. When scandals spill over borders, involving governments even half-way around the world, as in the case of the *Rainbow Warrior* or Irangate, they are elevated to a new level of significance, capable of disrupting international relations, violating international law, or undermining several governments simultaneously.

A noticeable shift of emphasis occurs in studies of Third World politics, where discussions of political corruption and scandal appear more frequently. The obvious question that arises is whether political corruption is in fact more rampant in Third World political systems than in the Western world or whether some similar acts are viewed differently in different cultures. Whatever the reasons for the more frequent discussion of corruption in Third World politics, the evidence suggests that the costs and benefits of corruption in the Third World have received more systematic analysis than has been applied to First World politics.

Political scandals and corruption also seem to be rare subjects of courses in American universities and colleges. An informal review of course offerings in a number of schools found very few that indicated an extended, systematic treatment of the topics. Similarly, few panels at professional meetings are devoted to these topics and, as Michael Johnston notes, "corruption research continues to suffer from a kind of 'legitimacy problem,'" with many funding institutions regarding "corrup-

tion-related proposals as 'risky' or inconsequential" (Johnston 1990, ix).

Despite this apparent indifference to political corruption and scandal in academia, public interest in these topics was demonstrated clearly in October 1991 as a mesmerized public watched the televised hearings on the charges brought by Anita Hill against Clarence Thomas, the nominee to the Supreme Court. Public opinion polls in the United States, Western Europe, and Japan indicate a high degree of interest in and concern about the extent, costs, and consequences of corruption. A Gallup Poll in May 1991 found that only 19% of the respondents said that senators and representatives had high standards of ethics and honesty (college teachers at least rated 45%! (Gallup 1991, 31), while a *New York Times*/CBS poll in October, 1991 reported that 83% of American adults perceived members of Congress "to be corrupt, pampered by unnecessary perquisites and arrogant about their power" (*New York Times*, October 10, 1991).

When an official investigating commission was established in France after the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior*, a poll found that 70% of the Frenchmen believed that the commission "will hide part of the truth" and only 11% said that it "will tell the whole truth" (Hastings 1987, 596). A 1989 poll of Japanese found that the respondents did not have a very high opinion of the ethical standards of members of the Japanese Diet, as 62% said that the standards were "Not very high," and 20% said that they were "Not high at all" (Harris 1989). Following the disclosure of the Recruit scandal in Japan in 1989, which involved about 160 persons, the prime minister's popularity plunged to a humiliating 3.9% in early April shortly before he resigned (Nester 1990, 91).

Outrage at corruption sometimes takes a much more vigorous and overt form than merely responding to pollsters' questions, as evidenced in the reaction of ordinary Filipinos to the discovery of the hidden wealth of the Marcoses and the numerous coups in Third World states that have been justified in part on the grounds of widespread governmental corruption. It is obvious that scan-

dals and corruption arouse public interest, condemnation, and sometimes violent actions. Why, then, if scandals and corruption seem to be an inevitable part of politics in all societies and of interest and concern to many citizens, are they not an inevitable part of political studies?

Avoiding the Obvious: Some Possible Reasons

Several reasons may be advanced to help explain why corruption and scandal do not seem to be accorded their "rightful" place in political studies, and are not yet to be granted the status of the "significant other" in our analyses.

. . . the evidence suggests that the costs and benefits of corruption in the Third World have received more systematic analysis than has been applied to First World politics.

Despite the many changes of focus over the years in our political studies, from the "formal-legal" to the "behavioral" to the "post-behavioral" and so on, the emphasis upon the formal, legal institutions and processes of government remains prominent, particularly so in studies of American and other democratic governments and their politics. There is a strong underlying commitment to the "civic education" of our students as we try to perpetuate the best aspects of our system while reducing the problem areas. Our emphasis on legal, constitutional, legitimate government, however, tends to relegate political corruption and scandal to the sidelines as nonlegitimate, abnormal and, consequently, unintegrated into the general pattern of government and politics. There we hold them in abeyance, recognizing their existence, but unwilling to acknowledge their constant presence on the playing field. Corruption and scandal seem not to deserve a separate chapter along with "The Constitution"

and "Political Parties"; perhaps if we ignore such topics, we seem to be saying unconsciously, they will go away and not intrude on our desire to perfect fully legitimate politics.

A second problem arises from the inability to achieve a generally agreed upon definition of scandal and corruption. Without a basic definition, however, it is difficult to proceed with systematic analysis. Unlike precisely defined terms such as "Congress," scandal and corruption have been defined in several quite different ways. In popular usage, they may mean little more than "I don't like" something, such as calling it a "scandal" when the letter I wrote to my senator denouncing him as a rat was not promptly answered in a courteous manner. While such a deplorable failure on the part of the senator might call for condemnation, such a broad and loose definition of scandal does little to promote systematic analysis. Yet the fact that the terms are used so loosely must be recognized, even while attempts are made to define them more precisely.

And the attempt to be more precise is clearly evident in many analyses. That precision itself, however, sometimes contributes to a splintering of definitions, making agreement difficult. Almost every study of corruption and scandal begins with a discussion of the problems of defining the terms, after which the author then lays out his or her own definition for use in the study. Though the specifics may differ, a survey of these various definitions indicates that they can generally be grouped into four basic categories; unfortunately, the categories are sufficiently different to make a blending of them very difficult.

One definition emphasizes the illegal use of public office for private gain. That quite narrow and precise definition is challenged by those who see corruption as actions that are inimical to the "public interest," whether such actions are specifically required or prohibited in law. A third definition relies upon public opinion to determine what is corrupt or scandalous, though the problems of trying to determine what "public" is to be used and how to discover its "opinion" can be just as difficult as trying to define "the public interest."

A fourth type of definition, generally referred to as a “market-centered” definition, defines corruption occurring when a civil servant extracts as much economic return as possible, based upon the market value of the services provided, using the public’s demand curve to calculate what the market will bear.¹

The confusion as to what scandal and corruption really are is further complicated by attempts to make important distinctions between scandals and corruption, such as that advanced by Andrei Markovits and Mark Silverstein, who assert that “political scandals can only occur in liberal democracies” for reasons they discuss at length in their book, *The Politics of Scandal: Power and Process in Liberal Democracies*.

The task of systematic analysis is also obstructed by the fact that information and data on the scope and impact of scandal and corruption is often diffuse, difficult to obtain, unreliable, and borderline, in the sense that it falls into the gray zone of questionable actions that may or may not be legal or ethical. Few academics are willing to take the risks of engaging in scandal or corruption in order to deliver an “insider’s” view, as some do who are willing to participate in more legitimate activities such as political campaigns to obtain information firsthand. While studies using definitions of scandal and corruption based upon legal principles can be quite precise in totting up the number of arrests made and convictions obtained, those who use different definitions can be more frustrated by the borderline legal and ethical characteristics of actions that may be under investigation as being corrupt or scandalous.

Making Scandal and Corruption the “Significant Other”

As Markovits and Silverstein point out, “The study of scandals, particularly political scandals, is barely in its infancy,” and they go on to quote, approvingly, a statement made by a German sociologist that “there hardly exists any research about scandals which itself would not be scandalous” (Markovits 1988, 1). Lately,

however, several events have taken place that suggest that this may be an opportune time to begin to nudge the study of scandals and corruption from infancy to the toddler stage—uncertain of its footing and yet ready to take some significant steps forward.

Several studies have recently appeared that have greatly expanded the resource base of case studies and theoretical considerations, such as *Corruption: Causes, Consequences and Control*; *Corruption, Development and Inequality*; *Corruption, Development and Underdevelopment*; *Corruption in India*; *Political Corruption: A Handbook*; *Political*

Public opinion polls in the United States, Western Europe, and Japan indicate a high degree of interest in and concern about the extent, costs, and consequences of corruption.

Corruption in Africa; *Political Corruption: Scope and Resources, An Annotated Bibliography*; and *The Politics of Scandal: Power and Process in Liberal Democracies*. In addition, the number of journal articles on the topics seems to be increasing, and the appearance of a new scholarly journal several years ago, *Corruption and Reform*, indicates a major step in the maturation of a sub-field of the discipline. With the abundant materials now available, organizing upper-division or graduate level courses on political corruption and scandal is feasible and necessary.²

The organization of several conferences on the theme of corruption is further evidence of scholarly interest in an off-beat topic, and there is now a Study Group on Corruption and Political Finance of the International Political Science Association. The papers prepared for these meetings constitute an increasingly large reservoir of studies on which to build our analyses.

Another significant development is

the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and the increasing movement toward more open, more democratic governments in the Third World, a development that has begun to open many previously secret archives and records of events that fall within the purview of our concerns. As more details become available, a more complete picture of the extent and consequences of corruption and scandal can be achieved, and a better assessment of the costs and benefits of various types of corruption can be made.

In addition to the interests of the expanding number of colleagues who are concerned about the subjects of scandal and corruption, the developments indicated above can be and need to be brought into the classroom. Students need to confront the various definitions of corruption and scandal, particularly with respect to the issue of the cultural relativism that may be involved. Another useful confrontation is that of trying to determine the placement of various acts on the continuum of “not corrupt” to “corrupt.” In this connection, the relationship of “illegal” to “unethical” can be explored in the context of how far government powers should extend. And, finally, students need to examine the issue of the costs and benefits of corruption, exploring the ideas that corruption may be tolerable or even advantageous in certain stages of development,³ and that whatever the stage of development, corruption and scandal entail major costs to individuals, to institutions, and to political systems as a whole. In a subtitle to an article, the authors asked, “If political corruption is in the mainstream of American politics, why is it not in the mainstream of American politics research?” (Peters 1978). Perhaps the time has now come when we can focus more precisely and usefully on the juncture of Corruption Creek and the mainstream of both American and comparative political studies.

Notes

1. Discussions of these definitions can be found in *Political Corruption: A Handbook*

and in many of the materials cited in the bibliography of that substantial text.

2. I teach a course on the topic and would like to learn of similar courses or of interest in developing such a course.

3. Two frequently cited studies that explore the costs and benefits of corruption are Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Corruption and Political Development: A Cost-Benefit Analysis," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (June 1967), pp. 417-27, and Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

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Revisiting the History and Objectives of Pi Sigma Alpha

Charles Tidmarch, *Union College*

Editor's Note: The following is reprinted, with revisions, from Pi Sigma Alpha Newsletter 1(1), Winter, 1992.

While some of our readers may know a bit about the history of Pi Sigma Alpha, many more do not, or have at least forgotten the basic facts. In view of the organization's current rededication to its purposes, it may be appropriate to review briefly the history of the national political science honor society.

Pi Sigma Alpha was founded at the University of Texas in October 1920. Formation of the society filled a longstanding need of political science students and faculty for an organization that would bring persons especially interested in the study of government into closer association

with one another for their mutual benefit. Professor C. Perry Patterson was chosen to promote the society, and subsequently served as president from 1920-1932.

Pi Sigma Alpha's success on the University of Texas campus led to increased interest on other campuses, and gradually other institutions applied for and were granted chapters. In 1922 chapters were installed at the University of Oklahoma and the University of Kansas. In March 1922, the society held its first national convention on the University of Oklahoma campus. Chapters continued to be added up until the Second World War, at which time growth was arrested temporarily. Since the post-war period expansion has proceeded at a dramatic pace. In the fall of 1991, there were more

than 410 campus chapters scattered across the nation in 49 states and the District of Columbia. The society fills an important need in the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and interest among students of political science. Its position among the leading honor societies was established in 1949 through admission into membership in the Association of College Honor Societies.

Chapters receive into membership students of government, political science, public administration, and international relations, regardless of their membership in other honor societies or social organizations, when such students attain high standards of scholarship and academic distinction both in political science and in the sum total of their academic work. Faculty members teach-