the Manifestation of Corruption in the Turkish and Russian Internet Media

Abstract

Corruption is a vice that affects the economy in many ways. According to a report by the World Bank, bribes paid across the world every year sum up to a value around $1 trillion. This amount is significant in view of the fact that the economy of the world currently stands at an approximated $48 trillion. As times change, corruption becomes even more difficult to detect and prosecute because of the difference in the manner in which individuals view corruption. While others view corruption as a “cancer” to the society, others may have the view that corruption makes things easier for everyone involved in whatever they may want to achieve. Some people have even blamed bureaucracy in government and corporations for the spread of corruption.

1 Carvajal, R., “Large-scale corruption: Definition, causes, and cures”, Systematic Practice and Action Research (2009), Vol. 12, No. 4: 335-353


The internet media has grown in size and influence over the years since the advent of the internet. More people have the ability to access information regardless of where they are today because of advancements in technology⁴.

Technology has developed and spread such that many people can access the internet and receive news updates through their mobile phones⁵. The number of people with access to the internet continues to grow every day. However, the internet media has faced accusations of reporting the news in a skewed way. Among the most sensitive issues of public interest that the Internet media reports is corruption⁶. The issue of corruption in the Internet media has received considerable attention from the public, but has not been adequately researched.

This paper seeks to discuss corruption in the internet media, with focus on two countries: Turkey and Russia. These two countries have received considerable attention in recent history because of the way their governments control the internet media⁷. This paper shall highlight the measures that the governments of Turkey and Russia have taken to control the internet media as well as the reasons why they took those measures. In addition to that, it shall highlight the issue of corruption in the media as one of the reasons why the internet media may fail to report news about corruption in an open and free manner⁸.

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⁵ Morozov, E. Technology’s role in revolution: Internet freedom and political oppression. The futurist, 2011. Vol. 45, No. 4: 18-21


Further, this research work will discuss the factors that affect the way the media reports news concerning corruption.

Keywords: Internet media, Corruption, Turkey, Russia
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Introduction

Corruption is a phenomenon that has caused many problems to the world today. Despite the awareness that individuals and organizations have created against the vice, the indexes produced every year indicate an increase in corruption in many economies, especially the developing countries. Corruption is a type of human behaviour where some individual derails another person, making them to shift from their normal ways of doing things, following their customs or undertaking their duties by promising them security, honours or money. Corruption is not a new vice because it has existed amongst the populace since time immemorial. In history, corruption has manifested itself in diverse kinds of societies and cultures throughout the existence of humanity. As such, the exact definition of the term „Corruption” has become more complex.

The complexity of finding the uniform term for the definition of „Corruption” has increased because of the numerous contexts in which the term can apply. What may qualify as an act of corruption in one society may not be regarded as a corrupt act in another, rather a sign of good will or gratitude. Despite the difference in context, the fact is that corruption remains a global vice. Corruption is the result of certain political, economic and cultural conditions in both the developed and the developing countries. In order to understand the manifestation of corruption better, it is imperative that this research looks at the different forms in which corruption exists.

With the coming of the Internet, people have new channels of getting information. The Internet has undergone immense growth from the time it was unveiled in the 1990s to

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The Internet has fast gained traction as among the most convenient ways of collecting and disseminating information because of the number of people that this medium can reach at any given time. Journalists have taken advantage of the proximity that the internet has with the people all over the world to start global and nationwide debates son matters of interest to the public. As it is today, it is comparatively easy for a journalist to break a story in the United States and reach readers in the United Kingdom at the same time.

The problem is in some countries; the government has put in efforts to muzzle the free use of the internet. In most cases, human rights groups and the public view this action as an act of violating the right of the people to access information. Some governments have justified their act as a protection of the government and the country. Such an explanation holds in instances where the government controls the use of the internet to prevent the spread of potentially harmful news.

Some governments have even taken extreme measures to stop unwanted news from spreading. Some of the measures that they have taken include performing abductions, prosecutions, imprisonment and even sanctioning an individual or a select group of individuals for the activities that they perform online. These measures serve to place restrictions on the freedom of the digital media and Internet. Freedom House reveals that the

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world had seen an overall decline in the digital media and Internet freedom\textsuperscript{19}. The reason for the decline is that governments have adopted three main trends in controlling the Internet.

The first trend is surveillance. Surveillance involves the government looking into every detail of the use of the Internet by an individual or any a group of people, trying to detect any potentially harmful use. Surveillance of Internet use means the government can detect any use of the Internet that the authorities view as bad for public consumption. As such, the moment that the surveillance reveals unwanted use of the Internet, the I.P. address is derived and the individual or the group is questioned, sometimes detained\textsuperscript{20}.

The second trend is imposing new laws. The imposition of laws has become increasingly popular in recent history. It involves the government using constitutional means to control the use of the media and the digital media. The government sponsors laws that would definitely restrict internet use and implements them. In many instances, such governments use the legislature to create laws controlling the internet media\textsuperscript{21}. People who go against these laws face arrest and prosecution for their ,,illegal” activity over the internet\textsuperscript{22}.

The third trend of restricting online speeches is directives by the government to restrict speeches over the Internet. Directives are informal laws that count when the government issues them, and they are regarded as the law. When the government issues a directive restricting speeches issued over the internet, the sites responsible for the same are impounded and shut down. The government agencies responsible check the activities of the


websites and determine whether they have been spreading potentially harmful information over the internet. However, analysts have come out strongly against these directives, claiming that they go against Article 19 of the Universal Human Rights Declaration.

Of concern is the fact that despite the tremendous growth of the internet, people cannot exercise their right to free expression online. People also cannot exercise their right to access information because the government has placed restrictions. This paper shall analyse corruption from a theoretical perspective while assessing the way the media reports cases of corruption in the society. This research uses Turkey and Russia as the case study for this research, because these countries offer good examples of how the government controls internet media and how the media gives reports on news regarding corruption.

This research shall also provide information on the most popular media in Russia and Turkey and the way in which the government manipulated the media to satisfy its own needs and prevent the public from getting information that incriminated the government or highly placed individuals in the corporate world. This information is important in viewing the methods employed by the government to control the Internet media as well as in the assessment of the effects of these methods used by the state to control the internet media. These effects vary from social effects to economic effects that the country faces because of creating an environment where people are not free to access information at will.

Chapter 1: Corruption: A Theoretical Analysis

The corruption of the media has not received the required attention that it should, based on the research undertaken on the topic. Researchers have attempted to demystify

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media discourse with regard to corruption\textsuperscript{25}. However, research on this topic is limited. This research shall therefore attempt to shed light on the issue of media manifestation of cases concerning corruption and the factors that influence such discourse. Before addressing the above issues, it is important to understand the forms in which corruption exists along with the different types of corruption.

**Forms of Corruption**

**Fraud**

Fraud is among the most popular forms of corruption\textsuperscript{26}. Fraud mostly takes place in an organizational setup, where an official at an organization or a society steals assets belonging to the organization or the society under their own control. This action is mostly popular in government, where studies have established that there is poor record keeping, therefore making theft and fraud considerably easier\textsuperscript{27}. Fraud and theft thrive mostly in the developing countries, where the respective governments have not set up the necessary checks and balances to ensure that the property of the state is protected\textsuperscript{28}. Therefore, some malicious individuals take advantage of the lack of regular audits into the stocks of the state and steal some of the state property for their own use\textsuperscript{29}.

Many developing countries have failed to control fraud because of weak vigilance systems. In most cases, there are few officers in charge of fraud and theft, therefore making

\textsuperscript{25}Carvajal, R.. “Large-scale corruption: Definition, causes, and cures”, *Systematic Practice and Action Research* (2009), Vol. 12, No. 4: 335-353

\textsuperscript{26}Goel, R.K., & Nelson, M.A. Causes of corruption: History, geography and government.


the work of fighting graft significantly difficult\textsuperscript{30}. Most of the individuals involves in corruption hold senior positions in these governments and engage in fraud and theft by virtue of the position that they occupy in their respective governments\textsuperscript{31}. The acquisition of assets owned by the public makes through fraud and illegitimate transactions makes up the most common form of corruption\textsuperscript{32}.

\textit{Institutional corruption}

Institutional corruption takes place within institutions, most commonly the government. Companies and governments may become the sources of corruption in specific frauds or they could be the targets of malicious and corrupt individuals\textsuperscript{33}. Governments are constituted of both political leaders and technocrats from the academic and professional spheres of the economy\textsuperscript{34}. As such, people working for the government have different goals that they intend to achieve by working for the government.

In most cases, conflicts of interest arise. What an individual may envision for himself by virtue of holding a specific position in government or an organization may be in conflict with what others may want both for them and for the institution\textsuperscript{35}. Bureaucratic and political corruption takes place when there is poor management of these conflicts in interest. With poor management of these conflicts of interest, individuals who could potentially benefit from the allocation of resources and specific projects may have the ability to influence or

\textsuperscript{30} Frys, T. Building states and markets after communism: The perils of polarized democracy. CUP 2010. Print.


exercise control over decisions made concerning these projects. This form of corruption occurs most commonly in instances where there is a misuse of the decision-making processes instigated by individuals possessing the power to change or disregard rules in their respective capacities.

**Bribery**

An argument may hold that bribery may be the most common corruption form. Cases of bribery continue to occur in almost every country in the world, and they are as common in the developed countries as they are in the less developed countries. Bribery involves a potential beneficiary making use of extra-legal ways to make payment so that they may acquire specific favours from an individual or an institution. Most bribery cases reported have connections with the allocation of resources and specific favours.

Bribery can apply in various areas in an institutional setup. One of the most common departments where bribery thrives is in procurement. It is a fact that government contracts are considerably lucrative due to the size of operations that governments undertake and the number of government employees who need supplies of different types to work effectively. As such, many individuals do all that they can to win these contracts, sometimes having to bribe government officials. Others may pay bribes to avoid paying taxes on their earnings.

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38 Bailard, C. Diffusion of the Mobile Phone and African Corruption. *Communication in Politics* (2009), V. 26, 3: 333-353
or their imports. In some instances, people who cannot meet payment deadlines have bribed institutional officials so that they receive the favour of a deadline extension. Others pay bribes to the government authorities so that the state can ignore their misdeeds. A growing type of bribery is the monopolization of public information, which shall form the basis of this research work.

Having discussed the forms in which corruption exists in the contemporary world, this research finds it necessary to look into the different types of corruption that exists. Understanding the types of corruption helps in demystifying the difference between the forms and the types of corruption.

Types of Corruption

Political Corruption

This type of corruption involves lawmakers, like dictators, monarchs and legislators. These are individuals in positions of power in a governmental setup with the power to affect the course of things by virtue of the positions they hold. Some individuals in these positions involve themselves in corrupt acts by seeking rewards or bribes for their personal or political benefits so that they return political favours to the people who support them in disregard to the interest of the public.

Political corruption works best in systems where so much power has been given to a few people who may collude to satisfy their sponsors. There have been reported cases of members of parliament in different countries soliciting bribes from businesspeople so that

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43 Lessmann, C & Kalenborn, C. The effects of press freedom and democracy on corruption:

they pass laws that favour their businesses. Others pass these laws to protect their
own businesses when they are affected by changes in the society brought about by
policy changes\textsuperscript{45}.

*Grand Corruption*

Grand corruption involves the highest ranked officials in government. This group
includes the head of state, the members of the cabinet and other senior officials in
government. These individuals may engage themselves in corruption to satisfy the interests
of a few people in politics or business. For instance, the President of a country may relax
laws on immigration to allow immigrants from other countries in exchange for money or
another favour. Another example is an instance where ministers issue directives for the single
sourcing of tenders so that they lock out competitive bidding to in favour of a business entity
and receive bribes for taking such an action\textsuperscript{46}.

Grand corruption may be difficult to detect in societies where the top leadership is
secretive and limits information reaching the public. Most of the cases where grand
corruption has been revealed have become increasingly difficult to prove because of the
power that this group of individuals have\textsuperscript{47}. Many senior officials in government make bad
use of the power vested in them to award a small group of people so that they receive
support for their own development both in their career and in their political ambitions.

*Petty corruption*

\textsuperscript{45} Ali, A.M.,&Isse, H.S. Determinants of economic corruption: A cross-country

\textsuperscript{46} Carvajal, R.. “Large-scale corruption: Definition, causes, and cures”, *Systematic Practice and Action
Research* (2009), Vol. 12, No. 4: 335-353

Vol.126: 225-256
Petty corruption is common among the lower level citizens of a country, making it among the most commonly occurring types of corruption. It involves an individual paying a comparatively small sum of money to another individual so that the other party may facilitate certain official transactions. For instance, a person may bribe an official serving in the customs department so that they may get clearance at the borders or at the airports. Another example is an event where a person may bribe an officer to issue them with building permits.

Petty corruption is a major problem for countries, because it involves the common people. This type of corruption is difficult to stop because the sum of money involved may be difficult to detect. As such, governments and anti-corruption agencies have found it increasingly difficult to deter the vice. Petty corruption thrives because of long bureaucratic processes in place at government offices, which perpetrators of corruption try to avoid.

Administrative Corruption

Administrative corruption involves people in administrative positions using favouritism and bribery to allow specific business entities to avoid operating as per the regulations, lower the amount of taxes that they should pay or even win small procurement contracts. In most cases, the people involved in administrative corruption receive a sum of money for their efforts to ensure that their chosen company benefits from their actions.

Administrative corruption thrives in governments and institutions where an individual or a group of individuals in an organization or in government have the power to control and change the procedure of factors such as taxation and awarding of tenders. Therefore,

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50 Koons, Jennifer. Press Freedom Can Governments Control the Press in the Internet Age? Washington, D.C.:
administrative corruption is a type of corruption that is difficult to detect. Most cases of administrative corruption have been revealed by competing companies that feel that the administrative units involved did not apply the rules as they should, in the award of tenders or in exempting the favoured companies from making some payments in tax ⁵¹.

**Corporate Corruption**

Corporate corruption takes place in relationships that exist between private business organizations and their clients or their suppliers. It is normal for an organization to have a specific select group of suppliers and clients. However, some individuals in management positions in these business organizations may take advantage of their relationships with their clients and suppliers and favour them in the organization”s transactions with them ⁵². For instance, a client may be supplied with better quality goods or services compared to others because they bribed the company”s employees.

Corporate corruption also takes place within the organization in instances where corporate officials make use of the resources owned by the corporation for their personal gain, while disregarding the interests of the shareholders at the company ⁵³. For example, some corporate officials may inflate the cost of specific programmes undertaken by the

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company like seminars and training programmes, giving the finance department figures way above the actual cost of these programmes. The organization’s shareholders finance these programmes. Therefore, inflating the costs so that the officials retain the overcharge sums up as an act of corruption.

**Systemic Corruption**

Systemic corruption occurs in all levels of the society, from the poorest people in the society to the wealthiest. Most people do not mind paying bribes or giving favours to people who may help them get a specific item for their benefit or avoid processes that may affect them and their businesses. For example, an individual may pay a bribe to a law enforcement officer to avoid prosecution for a crime that they committed. Another instance is where a politician gives handouts to people in exchange for their votes during an election.

Systemic corruption affects the entire society directly because the public is involved in the act. Systemic corruption thrives in desperate societies where a majority of the people are poor and vulnerable to offers of bribes from individuals in the society that need their help to reach certain personal gain. In such scenarios, it is difficult for an individual to reject a bribe because of their personal condition. For systemic corruption to be stopped, it is necessary that the authorities change the mind-set of the people from being vulnerable by empowering the people economically and advocating for fair practice in the different scenarios where systemic corruption may occur.

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57 Bailard, C. Diffusion of the Mobile Phone and African Corruption. *Communication in Politics* (2009), V. 26, 3: 333-353
As mentioned earlier in this report, corruption remains a serious problem in the contemporary. In recent history, numerous discussions have been initiated to find ways of not only stopping the occurrence of corrupt vices, but also mitigating the effects of graft to the society\(^\text{58}\). Of concern in this study is corruption in the Internet media. The Internet media has gained popularity in recent past because of the numerous advances in technology. Governments have tried to control the use of the Internet in instances where the internet has been used as a medium for revealing and discussing government misdeeds\(^\text{59}\). This paper shall look at the government control of the internet media in Turkey and Russia in the wake of events that have taken place and those that continue to occur in these two countries\(^\text{60}\).

Government control of the Internet media in other countries will also be viewed for purposes of studying the trends and comparing the measures that they take after the Internet media has informed the people on different inappropriate occurrences that touch on the government and senior government officials\(^\text{61}\).

**Manifestation of topics related to corruption by the media**

Discourse reflects spoken interaction and written texts, both formal and informal, in all forms. The media has fallen subject to scrutiny for the manner in which it gives news reports on topics of corruption. The media plays an important role of informing the public on matters of interest on any topic\(^\text{62}\). The media also plays an important part in informing the opinion of the people on certain matters as well as setting the agenda on different topics.


However, the media has faced accusations of not giving the issue of corruption the weight that such an issue deserves as it disseminates information and knowledge to the people. More recently, numerous scholars have recognized the importance of the media as an arena where sense can be made around different contemporary organizations. They have also recognized the media as an arena for the production, contestation and dissemination of knowledge concerning management. However, this purpose has not been well fulfilled by the media, with emphasis on the recent spate of corruption scandals involving corporate organizations all over the world. It is imperative to note that the media not only disseminates information and knowledge to their passive audiences, but also getting its impact by interacting with their audiences.

The organization and production of news often adhere to values and beliefs that already exist in the public domain. Therefore, the media impacts greatly on various issues that may qualify as worthy of presentation as news, or that are considerably controversial among the members of the public. In that light, perceptions concerning the value of the news like the conflict, the proximity, the drama as well as the personalization works to determine the issues under discussion in the media. Further, these perceptions impose some form of media reality systematic bias through the accentuation of features that work towards making some events interesting to the public.

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Examining the media in its entirety, as an institution, is essential since it takes into consideration the relations that exist between the media and the broader processes of transformation in the society \(^{68}\). In investigating the role that the media plays in the production and circulation of discourse with regard to corruption, it is important to look into the language that the media uses \(^{69}\). The discovery of corruption in government and organizations and the reporting of corrupt practices is a crucial duty assigned to journalists such that such discovery and reporting on the vice is associated with admiration from many quarters of the society. A reporter who informs the public on corrupt behaviour of people in power (government) and highly placed people in corporate organizations draws admiration not just from the public but also from fellow journalists \(^{70}\).

On one hand, the expectation of the people is that journalists should act as a watchdog for the public. This expectation that the media acts as a watchdog leaves the media inclined to report and uncover instances of corruption the moment such an allegation comes forth. This happens when a strong coexistence exists between the media and the different ways in which the state can intervene. Such a relationship exists in countries like Norway and other countries in the North of Europe \(^{71}\). On another hand, the media can also accentuate the features of organizations that may be dramatic, putting the operations of these organizations in the spotlight. It is important to find a distinction between the reporting of news and „selling”, because it is a sign of contradictions and tensions that come about as results of processes like political liberalization, mediatisation and privatization of the industry and the

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\(^{70}\) Garcia-Murillo, M. Internet access effect on corruption in the government. *International*

financial position that majority of the print media outlets are in, which in most cases is a
difficult position.

Despite the nature of the media as it is today, there is limited research on the accounts
of the internet media on issues concerning corruption, especially with regard to issues
concerning corruption in the corporate world and crises created by corruption\textsuperscript{72}. People have
new ways of receiving information because of advances in the internet and the digital media.
However, individuals who manage websites have placed restrictions on areas of access as
one browses the web. Some countries have placed restrictions to conform to the requirements
concerning universal human rights with the aim of protecting the community\textsuperscript{73}. For example,
a government may take the step of muzzling the Internet media to prevent hate speech and
child pornography, which are explicitly illegal in many countries\textsuperscript{74}. Other countries have
imposed laws that restrict the use of the internet, thereby hindering the exchange or the
transmission of especially social and political news\textsuperscript{75}. In the event that a government faces
repression or is at risk of losing power, the availability and the dissemination of news
containing politics may present some level of harm to the government. The government
blocks, deletes, censors or monitors online content to prevent unwanted activities and news
from being unveiled\textsuperscript{76}.

It is imperative to note that corruption has a significant degree of influence on the
projects that a government undertakes. When the activities of the government are affected,

\textsuperscript{72} Carvajal, R.. “Large-scale corruption: Definition, causes, and cures”, Systematic Practice and Action
Research (2009), Vol. 12, No. 4: 335-353
\textsuperscript{73} Dutta, N., & Roy, S.. Education, corruption and the Media: An investigation of the associations. Affairs of the
Economy (2013), V.33, 2: 207-219
\textsuperscript{74} Tella, R. D., & Franceschelli I. " Advertising by the Government and Media Coverage of Scandals
\textsuperscript{75} Frye, T. Building states and markets after communism: The perils of polarized democracy.
\textsuperscript{76} Ahrend, R. Press freedom, human capital and corruption. DELTA Working Paper, No. 2002-, February
(2002).
the effect streams down to the economy of the country, which is negatively affected. The economy grows at a much slower pace compared to when there is no corruption\(^\text{77}\). In addition to that, corruption discourages foreign investors from investing in a country because of the fear of losing their money or spending unnecessary amounts of money on projects that would otherwise cost significantly less\(^\text{78}\). The World Bank reports that people pay bribes amounting to approximately $1 trillion all over the world every year. This amount is significantly large, considering the fact that as at the year 2002, the economy of the world was worth $30 trillion, according to Nelson and Goen (113).

While cooperation between the media and the government should help in reducing instances of corruption, some governments view the media as a possible interference in their operations\(^\text{79}\). Normally, as mentioned earlier, the responsibility of the media would be to report instances of corruption in corporate entities and within government with the expectation that the government would react to the reports and take action. This system works well in some countries like the states in northern Europe, where the media has worked with the governments to reveal corrupt practices in the ranks of government and in large companies\(^\text{80}\).

Many governments, however, do not take the reports by the media seriously. When the media continues reports on corruption, the government intervenes to censure the media houses. When the media issues reports on corrupt acts especially touching on people in senior


\(^{80}\) Morozov, E. Technology’s role in revolution: Internet freedom and political oppression. The futurist, 2011. Vol. 45, No. 4: 18-21
positions in government, the public gets informed and expect a certain type of reaction from
the government\textsuperscript{81}. However, when the authorities in charge of corruption do not indicate
their willingness to investigate the allegations, the public develops impatience and speaks out
against the government. As such, the government has devised ways of controlling the media,
especially the internet media, because news spreads faster over the internet, according to
Andersen, Bentzen, Dalgaard, & Selaya (405).

One way the government has found to be effective is influencing the quality of the news
that reaches the people. One way of influencing the quality of the news is by owning news
websites in the Internet media\textsuperscript{82}. The government or its officials may take it upon itself to be the
main source of information to the people over the internet while blocking access to the other
private internet websites that inform the people on government misappropriations and
weaknesses. In such a case, the government may embark on a vigorous publicity campaign to
make their sites the most popular among internet users, selling the idea that they offer credible
news on their websites while the other websites issue incorrect information.

Another way is through prevailing upon the management of popular news websites to
report news in such a manner that would not taint the image of the government. Analysts
view this method as coercion of the internet media to conform to the government way of
branding itself. The government would like to gain the trust of the media. If it cannot get the
members of the public to trust them, they use an existing organization to send out a positive
image of the government. The problem arises when the public notices that the government
uses certain media houses to cover up corruption stories. The people will choose to ignore the

\textsuperscript{81}Svensson, J. Corruption: Eight questions. Economic Perspectives Journal
2005.V. 19, 3: 19-42

\textsuperscript{82}Adserà, A., Boix C & Payne, M. Are you receiving service? Quality of government and
government-sponsored sources, instead opting to search for information from sources that they believe do not have any relations with the authorities.\textsuperscript{83}

Once the government manages to influence the way the internet media reports news on corruption, it becomes difficult for the people to get the truth on these issues over the internet.\textsuperscript{84} The media may mention cases of corruption but not give them an in-depth analysis to get to the root of what happened and what the government did in response. The compromised Internet media cannot be heavily critical of the government and its actions against corrupt officials as it would if it were free to report as it wishes.\textsuperscript{85} The news on government of corporate corruption may not receive the due attention in the manner in which the free Internet media would. For instance, with a free media, such cases would be the first bit of report that people would see when they log on to their websites.\textsuperscript{86} However, when the government becomes effective in censoring the media, the media may end up never reporting such news, and when they do, they are not highlighted and they do not form the main news. As such, the public cannot easily access such news, and so the people cannot discuss the corruption in the government and in corporate institutions.\textsuperscript{87}

\textbf{Reasons for such manifestation}

The Internet media may fail to report news in a free manner because of a number of reasons as discussed below.

\textit{To maintain the country’s stability}


\textsuperscript{Lessmann, C & Kalenborn, C. The effects of press freedom and democracy on corruption: Matters of Conditionality. Policy Modeling Journal 2013. V.35: 857-886.\textsuperscript{84}}


\textsuperscript{Goel, R.K., Nelson, M.A.,&Naretta, M.A. The internet as an indicator of corruption awareness.European Journal of Political Economy 2012, Vol.28,issue 1: 64-75.\textsuperscript{87}}
Keeping a country stable is undoubtedly one of the most difficult things to do in governance. In most societies, political leaders, business leaders, religious leaders and other members of the society advocate for cohesion and unity. In democratic states, the government involves the media in campaigns aimed at promoting peace and cohesion, which are prerequisites for a stable nation. The stability of a country affects many things in a country. To begin with, it directly affects the economy of the country.

Many countries depend on the stability of the country for tourism. When there are negative reviews about a country on the internet, many potential tourists get discouraged from visiting the country either for leisure or for business. As such, the number of tourists visiting the country will decline, leading to a reduction of revenue for the government. This decline in turn negatively affects the economy. In some countries, a significant number of people depend on the tourism sector as their source of livelihood. When tourist arrival figures reduce, they do not earn, therefore contributing to increased unemployment and poverty.

Further, some countries are attractive business destinations, yet are fragile. The fragility comes in the sense that with news about corruption being rife in the government and in the corporate realm, many investors may be discouraged to invest in the country. Foreign investments, both direct and indirect, provide employment to many people. In the event that some foreign investors view the country as a place where the corrupt thrive, they may decide to withdraw their companies from operating within these countries. This

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decision, if taken by many investors, will negatively affect the economy in terms of employment and revenue. Therefore, the internet media may report news about corruption in a less serious tone to avoid an instance where the country becomes unstable.  

Fear of victimization by the government

In some countries, the governments have put in place measures that prevent the Internet media from publishing news on certain matters. Such governments tend to victimize media companies that may go against the government directives. The aim of victimizing the media is to discourage other Internet media practitioners from publishing “sensitive” materials for online viewing. Victimization of the media is not a new occurrence in the contemporary world. When the Internet media reports news about corruption in government and in the corporate world, the government may clamp down on the respective websites, shutting them down completely. When the government shuts down the websites, such media organizations cannot collect revenues from sources such as advertising.

It is a fact that many media organizations face serious financial problems. When the government shuts down their websites, the government affects their main sources of income. Subsequently, they have to lay off their employees. Most media companies operating news websites fear such measures, and as such may refrain from posting news concerning corrupt acts in government or in the corporate world. In some cases, they may be forced not to report some aspects of corruption allegations through bribery.

93 Carvajal, R. “Large-scale corruption: Definition, causes, and cures”, Systematic Practice and Action Research (2009), Vol. 12, No. 4: 335-353
97 Hanitzsch, T., and Rosa B. "Explaining the Trust that Journalists have in Public Institutions Across 20 States:
In the event that instability arises from reports on corruption posted on the website of an internet media organization, that organization automatically becomes a target of the government. When the organization becomes a target, the government scrutinizes every move it makes. The management face threats of legal action or even retaliation from the security agencies in the country. The government may file charges against the management of the internet media organization, accusing it of inciting the public to violence. It is imperative to note that the government becomes very strict when the peace in the country faces threats. Even the international community becomes concerned when reports work to evoke the emotions of people towards violence. In such an event, the government may also have the right to institute stricter policies to regulate the way the media reports the news after the unrest, even when the reports aimed at creating a free environment for the media and the public.

To protect the government interests

In some countries, the major media organizations are owned either by the government or by people with close ties with the people in high ranks in government. As such, the government may use the internet media to push its agenda and cover up allegations of corruption in government or in some organizations. Protection of the government’s interests may also come in an instance where the media house supports an initiative that the government is in the process of undertaking, and as such may not be harsh with criticism when cases of graft rise from that project. As such, the media may report such a case without

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giving it the weight that it deserves, so that the opinion of the public is not skewed towards developing resentment for the government\textsuperscript{99}.

The government may be receiving considerable amounts of funds in support of certain projects from a certain company. When such a company faces graft allegations within its ranks, the government may prevail upon the media not to report such news. The revelation of such cases if not properly handled may compromise the completion of the said project, which may be in the interest of the public. In that regard, the state may desire to protect the integrity of the project while making the decision whether it will investigate the matter without exposing the facts to the members of the public\textsuperscript{100}.

To protect its own or the owners’ interests

The Internet is largely an uncontrolled forum in countries where there is no autocracy\textsuperscript{101}. In completely democratic countries, the government allows people to exercise their freedom of expression, provided it does not violate the rights of other people\textsuperscript{102}. On the other hand, the countries without complete democracy have witnessed instances where the state has limited their freedom of expression over the internet\textsuperscript{103}. The Internet media also has people with specific interests owning them. In that light, these people would not report news regarding corruption in the event that such news implicates them. This scenario could happen


\textsuperscript{102} Habib, M., & Zurawicki, L. Corruption and foreign direct investment. \textit{Journal of}

in an instance where the ownership of the media organization is embroiled in a damaging court case concerning corruption. In such a case, the Internet media may weaken the impact that such a report may have by not giving such a report priority.\(^\text{104}\)

When the owners have a corruption case, it directly affects the media house in terms of business.\(^\text{105}\) Most organizations avoid any relationship with an organization whose leadership have been painted by the media as made up of corrupt individuals. As such, the media organization may fail to report such a case.\(^\text{106}\) In the event that the case is already in the public domain, they may use words that would not give the exact picture of the situation as it really is at that particular time so that the organization survives.

**Factors that affect manifestation of topics related to corruption by the media**

Research has established that the media has reported news about corruption in ways that have erased the gravity of the matter on many occasions.\(^\text{107}\) It is imperative to look into the factors that may affect the manifestation of topics related to corruption by the media. The factors that affect the way the media reports the news with regard to corruption are as discussed below.

**Stability of the country**

Many countries face many issues with regard to their economy, insecurity, unequal distribution of resources and political oppression. In such countries, news of grand corruption in the ranks of government, or reports of graft in some companies may easily agitate the


people\textsuperscript{108}. An example of such a scenario can be seen in the Arab Uprising involving countries in Northern Africa and in the Middle East like Egypt, Libya and Syria. The people in power may want to retain stability by gagging the Internet media\textsuperscript{109}. The government may force or compromise the internet media through bribery so that they do not report such news because such news may affect the stability of the country.

\textit{Corruption in the media}

Cases of bribery in the Internet media are rife across the world such that in many countries, people do not trust the Internet media\textsuperscript{110}. For example, when a reporter finds out that a senior government official or a highly placed corporate leader is involved in a corruption case, the reporter may decide to force the individual to pay a sum of money in bribes so that the reporter does not spread that information\textsuperscript{111}. The Internet reaches millions of people at the same time, and so the government officials involved may fear that their reputation may undergo severe damage. As such, they may decide to make the payments to cover up the story\textsuperscript{112}.

When the story finally reaches the members of the public, the avid readers of the news presented by the media organization for which the reporter works, the report may be reported differently, with some facts concerning the case hidden from the public\textsuperscript{113}. Many people with the financial might to bribe journalists or bloggers find it easy to compromise the quality of

\textsuperscript{108}Bailard, C. Diffusion of the Mobile Phone and African Corruption. \textit{Communication in Politics} (2009), V. 26, 3: 333-353


the reports because many Internet media face financial challenges\textsuperscript{114}. Such people pay considerable amounts of money so that their cases are not highlighted and become the subject of public debate.

\textit{Government policies and directives}

The government may issue a directive against the media reporting some bits of news to the public. The reasons why a government may take such steps differ, depending on the issue at stake. With the spread of democracy came the illusion of good and fair leadership\textsuperscript{115}. It is a fact that in every government setup, there are individuals who may want to take advantage of the trust that the public has in them to enrich themselves or to protect their own interests while they are in office\textsuperscript{116}. Because these people may be in government or may have close relationships with those in positions of power in corporate organizations, these individuals may begin proceedings to place policies that restrict the freedom of the media through decrees or through legislative means\textsuperscript{117}.

The government may also issue a directive against the manner in which the Internet media reports issues to do with corruption so that the stability of the country may be maintained. Some reports by the Internet media work to evoke the emotions of the people, leading them to demonstrate against the government\textsuperscript{118}. In some instances, the people may riot against the government. The government may involve the internet media in working out ways of reporting such news, therefore affecting the outcome of the news reports so that they


avoid such instances of riots and unrest, which may affect business and the economy by extension\textsuperscript{119}.

The government authorities such as the Turkish and the Russian authorities have subordinated and intimidated the internet media in many instances\textsuperscript{120}. They have performed these acts in a number of ways as discussed below.

\textit{Giving personal privileges to certain people}

Sometimes, the source of a leak in classified information is people working in government. The issue is in some cases; these leaks are intentional\textsuperscript{121}. The government may prefer using one media house to the others because of the manner in which the media house reports government functions and activities. As such, the government may give information to the preferred media house and leave out the others. It is common for governments to give preferential treatment to some media outlets and not accord the same treatment for other outlets\textsuperscript{122}.

By treating one media house with favour, it is clear that the government may effectively hide information from access by the public. When the government fails to treat all the media houses fairly and decide to treat other media houses more harshly, the government has to have a rationale for taking such a decision. As such, by giving access to information on


\textsuperscript{121}Morozov, E. Technology’s role in revolution: Internet freedom and political oppression.\textit{The futurist}, 2011. Vol. 45, No. 4: 18-21

corruption to one media house while leaving out the rest amounts to subordination and intimidation of the media. \cite{123}

*Acquisition of ownership by the state*

When the internet media becomes difficult to control, one of the ways in which the government imposes its authority over the activities of the organisations is through the government taking over the ownership of such establishments, making them the property of the state. \cite{124} In most states, the government reserves the power to assume control of any property if it determines that such property poses reasonable harm to the citizens. The government may also take control when there are no records indicating ownership of the property \cite{125}. When the government takes over property, it may decide to use it in whichever manner it may like, until such a property is returned back to the owner. \cite{126} The governments of numerous countries have seized control of not just the Internet media, but also premises of the companies that publish online articles that paint the government in bad light to the public.

The state may also seek to control the affairs of the Internet media and other forms of media through indirect control \cite{127}. Indirect control is a situation where the government does not desire to possess the property, but because of restraints, the government cannot begin the process of acquiring the said property \cite{128}. As such, the government may support one of the

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128. Lessmann, C & Kalenborn, C. The effects of press freedom and democracy on corruption:
individuals with close ties to it to acquire the media organization and use it to promote the image of the government aside from trivialising matters of importance such as corruption. The government may also prefer to use the private companies owned by its allies to reduce the impact of the news reported over the internet about corruption in government.

**Banning access to some online sources of information**

Most governments collect information on the media outlets that are friendly to the government and those that give harsh criticisms in their reports about the government’s misgivings. As such, the government may give the media outlets that it does not prefer some form of a blackout. This government may implement this blackout in two ways. To begin with, the government may intentionally fail to inform them of the important developmental issues that the government may want to communicate to the people. When the media organization fails to have information concerning government press releases, some people begin to view it as less serious and people may draw assumptions that the media house has received bribes to damage the image of the government and its officials.

The second way of implementing the blackout on less preferred media companies is through the refusal to divulge any important information to certain media outlets. The government may make the decision to either deny the entire media fraternity the information

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129 Carvajal, R., “Large-scale corruption: Definition, causes, and cures”, *Systematic Practice and Action Research* (2009), Vol. 12, No. 4: 335-353


that they may seek from the government or deny a few selected media organizations such information \(^{133}\). The government may even take extreme measures against these companies’ access to important information by denying them entry into the halls where the government officials may be issuing press conferences or undertaking special events \(^{134}\).

These media organizations may lack important news; therefore, less people will go online to look for information from their websites. The lesser the sensible news that draws the attention of the people the more the Internet media organization loses audiences.

*Refusal to give information requested by the public or other interest groups*

When a corruption case or any other case of an equal or more magnitude leaks to the public, the government may decide not to reveal any details concerning the issue of concern to the members of the public \(^{135}\). The move to deny the issuance of information to the public may be with the aim of protecting the interests of the highly ranked individuals in the government or influential people in the private sector \(^{136}\). As such, the government may express its disappointment in the people who may be peddling such „rumours” and give a stern warning against the circulation of such news upon requests from a section of the media to reveal more concerning a sensitive issue like corruption.

It is also common for governments to refuse to reveal details about its own investigations on issues related to graft within the government to other special interest


\(^{135}\) Morozov, E. Technology’s role in revolution: Internet freedom and political oppression. The futurist, 2011. Vol. 45, No. 4: 18-21

The government may cite confidentiality in the way it wishes to deal with the matter, therefore refusing to divulge any details to these groups. As such, the government may opt to use official means of communication as opposed to just issuing the requested information, asking the interested parties to wait until the government is ready to issue a comprehensive statement regarding the matter. However, many people are of the view that when the government employs such a tactic it seeks to delay the course of justice by waiting for the effects of the case to wear off slowly until the public loses interest in the issue.

**Legal suits against journalists and media outlets**

A known fact is that every government is governed by secrets. When these secrets leak into the public domain, the government first targets the media houses that spread such information through the Internet and other means. The government may go to court and obtain an injunction stopping further publication and discussion of an issue of concern like corruption. When the courts issue the media houses with such an injunction, it may also prevail upon them to withdraw the already published stories on such issues from their websites. As such, the people may not get to know all the details concerning the particular cases.

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Journalists and other citizens have also faced threats of prosecution for blowing the whistle on government malpractices and corruption. An example is the case of Edward Snowden, the journalist who revealed that the United States government was spying on other governments through an articulate spying mechanism run by the military. Edward Snowden faces arrest in the United Kingdom and other allied countries, which led him to seek asylum in Russia and other countries that would offer him refuge.

The case is different in countries like Russia and Turkey. In these countries, the government has presided over the arrest and prosecution of journalists who have reported cases of widespread corruption in government. In many of the cases, the government may not want to appear as oppressive; therefore, they attach the actions of these journalists to terrorism. As things stand, more than 30 journalists are in custody since the beginning of the year and face charges related to terrorism in Turkey alone. Others have cases of libel and defamation filed against them by the persons that their reports implicated in corruption still pending in court.

**Suspension of the respective media outlets’ license**

One of the extreme measures that the government can take to intimidate the media fraternity is to revoke their operating licences when they go against the wishes of the government and report damaging news about senior government officials or influential people in the society. When the government withdraws a license belonging to a media

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house, the company stops the collection and production of news and programs immediately the revocation is announced or when they receive official communication stopping the company from continuing with operations. As mentioned earlier, this line of action has damaging effects on the media companies, making them to lose revenue and lay off their employees indefinitely until such a time that the case against them will be concluded in court.

In some cases, the annulment of the license held by the targeted media organizations may also attract fines from the state, the courts and from media governing bodies that may file charges of incompetence and carelessness against the media house. As such, the companies may have to pay huge amounts of money in fines and compensation to the parties that may take the option to sue the company or a journalist in court. Many governments have the ability to control the use of the internet to spread information. With that in mind, the government may prevent the staff at the online media house from publishing any information on their websites or on their accounts on social media networks that could implicate the senior individuals in government in cases of corruption.

Use of Legal sanctions

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Another way in which the government may intimidate the media is through the imposition of legal sanctions against them. For example, the government may force these companies to pay additional taxes to the state from their earnings. Most media organizations, especially the internet media, largely depend on advertisements for their revenue. The government may begin watching their activities closely and file charges of tax evasion in the event that these organizations fail to file their tax returns with accuracy.

The government may also look for petty mistakes as excuses for harassing media practitioners. The government may sponsor regular and uncoordinated inspections to ascertain that the media organization conforms to safety and hygiene standards. In the event that the government finds a loophole in these areas and others, the government may decide to shut down the media house for a while as it continues its „investigations“. The truth of the matter may be that the government may target the media house because it either published damaging information concerning the government and its officials or was yet to publish news on the same.

**Research Aim**

This research aims at finding out how the media reports news concerning corruption, by looking into the cases of Russia and Turkey as examples of countries that have exhibited control of the internet media.

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Research objectives

1. To find out how the internet media reports news concerning corruption in Turkey and Russia

2. To find out the factors affecting the way the internet media reports news in Turkey and Russia

3. To assess the effects of such reporting to the society

Task of the study

This study sheds light on the matter of the internet media as well as highlighting how the government controls the internet media in two countries namely Turkey and Russia, using the internet media to cover up corruption allegations.

Importance of the research

This research is important in understanding of the importance of the internet media and the effects of excessive control on the internet media.

Chapter 2: Research Methods

Research design

Collecting data requires that one understands the nature of the study. Given that corruption and media freedoms are sensitive topics in both countries, this paper will not use first-hand information. Instead, it will evaluate information sources, researches and articles in the Internet media that provide insights of corruption in Turkey and Russia (Hürriyet Daily News). This paper will utilize the wealth of information available on the Internet especially in newspapers and journals.

It is important to note that despite the matter of corruption having gained considerable attention from the public, human rights activists, non-governmental organizations, global and
state anti-corruption agencies and global bodies like the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund, the research on the way the internet media reports news concerning corruption is still limited. As such, it is imperative to understand how the Internet media reports news related to corruption in high places in government and in the high offices in the corporate world and the way in which the person under investigation for allegations of corruption affects the way the Internet media reports such news.

Aside from discussing the way in which the internet media reports news concerning corruption in the high ranks of power, this paper shall also assessed the ways in which the government may use the media to sell an agenda to the people, despite the agenda being unpopular. The government uses many ways, as shall be highlighted by this research. The research shall look into the methods used by the government of Russia headed by Vladimir Putin and the government of Turkey headed by Erdogan to control the influence of the Internet media, from different fronts. The status of the Internet media in these two countries will be highlighted in this paper, as well as the plight of the people who advocate for more freedom. This group of people includes civilians who are activists, and journalists who want the people to know the truth about corruption in government and in the corporate world.

**Research Sample**

This research work shall assess available data on Russia and Turkey online media, while comparing their relationship with the respective governments.

**Research Findings**

Ipsos Public Affairs provides insight into the credibility of global communication channels that citizens rely on to get information about their governments through its journal publications. Ipsos is a corporate reputation and social research body that specializes in

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154. Ipsos Public Affairs Point of View Summer 2010 Global Communication Channel Credibility
research to collect data on how consumers perceive information.

Fig. 1 shows the global credibility index report by Ipsos published in the summer of 2010.

Over the last decade, information available to the average person has increased exponentially with the growth of the internet\(^\text{155}\). Thus, the need to classify sources of information as the public sees it. Newspapers, televisions, radio and magazines remain the traditional sources of information (mainstream media). Stock reports, press releases and product advertising are company-controlled media outlets while conversations; online forums and social networks, are the consumer’s voice. However, information is as useful as its credibility, prompting the research to establish which medium the public considers credible.

These statistics are further broken down into which medium is most effective depending on the frequency of its use and how credible citizen perceive these sources.

\(^{155}\text{Ibid}\)
Fig. 2 shows how often communication mediums are used and how credible people think they are.

Television news is the most frequently used media with newspapers coming in a close second in the mainstream media category while company websites are the preferred choice. Conversations remain the most popular ad credible source of information amongst friends and family. While these statics are representative of the world, countries such as Italy, Russia and Hungary are exceptions since newspapers have lower credibility there. However, its consumer’s voice is more credible than the company/corporate voice\(^\text{156}\). Therefore, while traditional media is the undisputed leader in information dissemination (frequency and credibility), consumer voice takes precedence over company voices in Russia and Turkey. This shows that with the increasing number of persons in the younger demographic, the

\(^{156}\)Ipsos Public Affairs Point of View Summer 2010 Global Communication Channel Credibility
popularity of online media is growing in both credibility and usage spheres satisfying the rationale to use online media as the main content source for this study.

Online sharing forums have gained a sense of permanency and given that the Internet at greater reach. They create a networking support system for its users that keeps them up to date with changes in the socio-political sphere. Online encyclopaedias remain the most trusted source of information compared to conversations. Although its usage stands at 28% its associated credibility at 74%, 4% less than conversations which is at 78%. Wikipedia’s credibility ranges from a low 66% in Russia to a high 87% in Germany. In Russia, it is the second most reliable source of information, behind conversations while in Germany it ties with traditional media. In Turkey, advertising is at a low of 18% compared to other forms of corporate communication. Company website remain a favourite despite their low usage; they are thought as the most reliable information provider for companies. Online forums are less credible (59%) despite their popularity (28%), which is higher than what other online source ratings. Likewise, social media/web video sharing sites have similar usage and rating statistics. Blogs, Facebook and YouTube have 15%, 17% and 19% usage levels with
corresponding credibility ratings at 44%, 43% and 45% respectively.

Fig. 3 shows how often uses engage a media tool to get information.

The linear trend indicates that with the exception of TV, newspapers, stock reports, company spokespersons (for example CEO’s) and blogs, the popularity of each communication tool falls below its expected reach. This indicates the mediums people use based on presence, society’s impression of the medium and actual use of the said communication tool.
Fig. 4 shows the different levels of credibility attached to each media avenue.

In the future, more people would not stop the increase of online channel use. Young individuals such as those from age 18 to age 24 have higher chances of expressing their voices consumers through online tools. These tools include forums, blogs, wiki and video sharing. Company websites have a different and distinct pattern. Generally, both the credibility and use of the company’s voice and that from the consumer are nearly the same across states.

Online media has highlighted the divide between the ideological grandstanding and allegations of corruption in both countries over the years. The Economist (n.p.) provides many instances showing ideologies that cohabit with corruption. On one hand, presidents/governments portray the image of hallowed civilization/democracy while their cronies pillage the country. Media restrictions limit the scope and nature of information getting to its citizens while the repercussions of blowing the whistle remain fatal for all persons involved. In both countries bribery is the norm, so much so that it seems obligatory for one to give/receive one. In this case, incorruptible officials are the enemy.
The state underpins the ideology and the existence of graft. The folly lies in the idealistic version of each country, Turkey as an Islamic jewel nation and Russia as a light unto other nations. The reality as The Economist (n.p.) elaborates is a contumacious mess of governments that insult their citizens as much as they plunder from them. In its global coalition against corruption two-year survey, Transparency International observes that citizens of both countries think corruption has been on the rise. Highlighting the destructive effects of power and the practices of ideology is important for this study, as well as the understanding of the fact that the state is all-powerful and privileged yet safeguarded as though it is fragile gives it the impetus to protect itself from public view.

It is important to note that it creates a system that undermines equality. Since corruption takes on many forms, it implies citizens have to work harder to afford services that should be available to them at subsidized rates. The most common form of corruption is bribery. It embeds itself onto all human interactions across all social classes, undermining the efficiency of equitable allocation of resources. One in every four persons has paid a bribe in the past year to access one of the eight institutional services i.e. the police, parliament, civil service, healthcare et al. 31% of persons paying bribes earn an above average income per country while 26% live below the average. These statistics show he extent to which society’s integrity has fallen and with it people’s deference for the law. Why should anyone adhere to state laws if they can buy their way out of jail? The study will employ the findings of the Global Corruption Barometer report released in 2013. It collected data from over 2,000 participants in both countries and thus provides a credible source of information.

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Chapter 3: Content Analysis

Content analysis uses data to quantify and analyse the meanings, relationships, and relevance of words and concepts to infer the messages texts convey. For this study, analysis will use two methods to examine the applicability of the research and offer practical insights into the context, concept and relationship of the information in question. With regard to corruption of the media, its manifestation can take on many forms. The most notable include the dereliction of duties, serving to spread propaganda, abusing its power for private gains via advertisements and publishing damning articles and petty corruption via bribery, illegal tapping and bribery amongst others.

Corruption in Russia

In 1917, state repression ushered Russia exploded into revolutionary chaos after the First World War. After this era, Stalin took over dictatorship of the nation. The trend resembled the rise of Russia after the Japanese defeat of 1905, a path of modernization and capitalism. There was a growing discontent, about the influence the west had over its tastes and preferences of its people. After the chaos of settling into a post-soviet world, Russia had Mr. Putin promise peace and prosperity. One could be forgiven for thinking he delivered on these promises of nationalism have been delivered. Truth is, while the president presents himself as a messianic father of civilization and moral barricade against the West, his cronies pillage the country. Hope of restoration seduces Russia to forget the devastating effects of corruption, albeit temporarily.

The Moscow Times (n.p) reports that many citizens think the alternative to Russian anarchy is tyranny and repression. Which may explain their love for strict laws and their reluctance to obey them. Social pressure becomes self-destructing as opposed to effecting action. Putin came into power on the pretext of opposing Western luxuries and he maintains this perception away from home. His recent disregard for international laws has cemented his
endearment to his people. Annexing Crimea gives Russians the reprieve of being international rebels, making them believe in their freedom. The postmodernist Russia is a slave to worsening political repression and an increasing disregard for international law. The question now is how long it will take its citizens to translate these sentiments to their reality, do away with the double standards and revolt against the same perceived international repression back home.

To understand the how corruption manifests itself on online media, one must understand that it is a systemic problem. It is a dominant aspect of politics and it has replaced the rule of law, offering opportunities for collusion across all aspects. It anchors on politics, business and organized crime. The second is the role and organization of cyber operations. Russia’s vigilance in monitoring online operations puts many western nations to shame. It integrates the military, government, the youth and government linked cyber criminals. The internet and all its related tools are instruments of modern information warfare. The government through the military conducts surveillance 24/7 everyday via cyber espionage, DDoS attacks (distributed denial of services), disinformation, debilitation of information, intelligence gathering, counterintelligence, degradation of information and propaganda amongst other techniques. This is the face of information and communication in Russia today.

The government crated the foundation of journalism in the country but while it relaxed the media’s economic restrictions, it retains control over the content. The current model is state commercialized in that the media functions as both a societal institution and a commercial venture. The state controls 70% of electronic press, 80% of the regional press and 20% of the national press either financially or managerially. Eight month into office, president Putin implemented Russia’s information doctrine, which sets it apart from other democratic states. It set out to do three things, to protect strategically vital information
concerning the country, protect itself from damaging foreign information and indoctrinate patriotism. The last two are where questions arise. Granted, Russia relies extensively on youth groups and cyber-criminal syndicates to monitor it online operations, how effective is outsourcing these contracts to criminal associates useful in the fight against corruption?

While it enjoys a good education system and has characteristics of an extractive economy, most of its wealth lies in few hands and unemployment rates are worrisome. More than 80% of the 1000 participants in the Global Corruption Barometer believe that their government is run by private entities who are furthering their self-interest.

The Global Corruption Barometer (2013, pg. 37) lists the perceived avenues for corruption by the citizens on an increasing scale of 1-5.

![Perceived levels of corruption in different institutions](image)

Fig. 3 shows how corrupt Russians think the named institutions are over the study period.

Parliament, the police, the judiciary and the civil service are the most corrupt institutions according to Russians. The media is not far behind these sectors since it is a state agency. Gazprom control television networks indirectly while the government oversees other
forms of media. Pro-Kremlin companies have taken over running popular non-state owned publications with indirect supervision of the internet and regional media. However, the Kremlin tactic is a political strategy to attack corrupt regional elites.

Despite these findings, many Russians are hopeful that the situation can change with their participation in the reform process. They cite social media as the most effective tool for change. Transparency International estimates that 87% of participants in the global survey are willing to report corruption instances in at least one way\textsuperscript{158}. Many Russians believe in the power of online platforms to effect change since they believe in their integrity. It is important to note that online platforms are growing, as is the internet’s reach across the globe. If the recent uprising in Egypt is any indication, the platforms such as Twitter and Facebook are tools the youth are proactively using to engage their governments and promote citizen awareness of national undertakings.

While the citizens work to get more information of the state’s affairs, the government can address four anti-corruption methods to reduce its prevalence. The first is scaling down on the number of politicians in office who are the drivers of bureaucracy. The second is addressing inequitable distribution of resources outside Moscow, St. Petersburg and the country. By giving other regions infrastructure, Russia will have effective and efficient economic development, lessening opportunities for bribery and other forms of corruption. Another tool is decentralizing government to local levels. This will allow better accountability across the board and provide system checks that are customized to suit the local’s needs. Lastly, society through the civil service and the media should be able to hold

the government accountable via an independent, active free press and civil service. This way, the government will get accurate on its performance from the people without self-censorship.

**Corruption in Turkey**

Many Turks make their peace with corrupt officials who embezzle as they provide services to the country, they are a better alternative who steal without regard. The Hurriyet Daily News and Good Morning Turkey are the mainstream sources on information regarding Turkey. Other online sources include journals such as the 2013 Turkey Progress Report commissioned by the EU Parliament & Council Commission on the main challenges to enlargement strategies. Another is the special report from the Freedom House on Democracy in Crisis in Turkey.

Similar to Russia, Turkey’s media is closely associated with the state. Media houses are designated by the military to sabotage democratically elected governments and as such, political parties that assume power are always employing coercive tactics to suppress the freedoms of its media. The current government (the AK party) has employed strategies such as intimidation, buying out media companies, mass firing journalists, imprisonment and wiretapping. These tactics deny Turkish citizens access to information and limits their political discussions.

In practice, the government hold over the media is economic. The economic structure of Turkey is such that persons or entities that own media companies have diverse investment portfolios. The problem arise from the fact that the prime minister’s office controls resource allocation via the tendering process, private assets and monies. Therefore, any reports on corruption result in media houses incurring significant fines as punishment for challenging

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159 Diğdem Soyaltın, “Turkish Court of Accounts in Crisis: An Urgent Problem, Yet not a Main Concern?” *Research Turkey*, 19 December 2013.


162 Ibid.
the government. Case in point is the Dogan Media Group that has had to do away with several assets including Milliyet (its leading paper) following government persecution. In similar fashion, AKP has transferred control over the leading media outlets using the government agency dealing with defaulting companies.

In Turkey, the government oversaw the arrest and imprisonment of dozens of journalists, blaming them for involvement in terrorism activities. Journalists, civil servants and citizens practice self-censorship if only to limit the extent to which the government can prosecute them. These measures weaken Turkey’s democratic institutions and question the accountability of the AK Party to safeguard its citizen’s rights and freedoms. In 2001, the AKP ran on the promise of inclusive governance, democracy and nationalism. This was to be a new era of media freedom after years of military guardianship. The military and its bureaucratic allies prohibited discussion that highlighted diversity and a broader outlook on nationalism. Their influence was so significant that it inspired a post-modern coup that ousted a democratically elect government in 1997. The AKP (Virtue Party) which succeeded the Welfare Party faced strong opposition on these grounds and its leader, the current prime minister, Mr. Erdogan, when his party won the 2002 elections.

In some ways, the AKP delivered on its promises, taboo topics concerning minority groups (Alevis & Kurds) rights, Armenian genocide and headscarves for women are no longer punishable by law. However, while many Turk’s agree that under the AKP there has been a deliberate effort to secure some freedoms of expression, the gains do not outweigh the political oppression they are enduring. The party consolidated its power and held Kurdish workers captives in ongoing peace negotiations with the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party).

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164 Diğdem Soyaltın, “Turkish Court of Accounts in Crisis: An Urgent Problem, Yet not a Main Concern?” Research Turkey, 19 December 2013.
its 2010, campaign the AKP promised to amend the constitution to increase the judiciary”’s independence and separate government powers yet to date nothing shows its intent to deliver these promises.

While Turkey is not a dictatorship, having an authoritarian government implies that one is risking one of not all of his/ her reputation, freedom and livelihood. The corruption scandal of 2012 has had a ripple effect on the citizen”’s political landscape. Confidence in the Erdogan government grows weaker by the day while media houses grow bolder in their investigative journalism. Former pro-government media houses like Haberturk and Hurriyet are covering the scandal yet prominent columnist from Sabah and Yeni Safak are losing their jobs. Mainstream media houses like the Milliyet, Sabah, Hurriyet and Aksam are able to crossover political legacies ad ideologies with circulation numbers of over 100,000 each. are the biggest threat to the Turkish government. Therefore, it backed the sale of Aksam and Sabah to pro-government private sector businesses and forced the Milliyet into a sale to pay off its tax penalties ($ 2.5 billion).

Questions over accountability of its bureaucrats embezzling funds meant for charity raises concerns on the credibility of the AKP. It rose to power under the guise of being a more tolerant Islamic regime. Satisfying the elitist need for reform and the conservatives need to reject the western rhetoric won it support of the IMF and the international community, attracting foreign investments and stabilizing the economy. Yet as the AKP won over its citizen”’s, it began consolidating power, reversing Turkey”’s gains on democracy. It utilized tools inherited from military guardianship to suppress public debate and hide the extent of graft by government cronies.

165 “HSYK Launches Probe into MİT Wiretapping Columnists,” Today”’s Zaman, 24 November 2013.

166 Ibid.
Foul play was evident in the Gezi Park protests (27, May 2013) where the
government alleged to sell the park to private investors for development of shopping
complexes, restaurants and hotels. An image of a police officer wearing a mask pepper
spraying a female protestor sparked a nationwide protest lasting over two weeks and
receiving international coverage. However, the stance of national media to broadcast a nature
documentary symbolized corporate cowardice and its aversion to conflict.

Fig. 4 shows how Turks think corruption affects the mentioned institutions.

The media comes a close second after political parties and politicians on the
corruption index. Showing that despite its ability to reach a large audience, the people have
no faith in its independence. The President and his Prime Minister have a controlling stake
in media houses thus limiting its effectiveness to maintain democracy. Speaking at a
TUSAID (Turkish Industrialists & Businesspersons Association) forum earlier this month,
its president, Mr. Haluk Dincer, cites corruption as a growing threat to the prosperity of the

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Diğdem Soyaltın, “Turkish Court of Accounts in Crisis: An Urgent Problem, Yet not a Main Concern?”
Research Turkey, 19 December 2013.
Turkish economy. Citing a World Economic Forum report, he puts the additional costs of corruption at 10% for any business with a global cost 5% of the GNP (Gross National Product). Released in February 2014, the report puts the cost to the EU at 120 billion Euros per annum, translating to a $1 trillion loss to bribes\(^\text{168}\). Dincer notes that corruption is not a fight that can be won in isolation. It takes the teamwork of politicians, civil society and businesspersons to lead the way and effect change. While many Turks are of the opinion that they would rather pay more that use online platforms to report corruption cases, they still fall into the 54% that believe they are instruments of change\(^\text{169}\).

As things stand, the Turkish citizens continue to seek ways of effectively communicating to the government of Erdogan their disgust with the happenings in government. Of course, after the leaks of news concerning corruption in the government that hit the web a few months ago, the public has lost a considerable amount of trust for the authorities, specially the country’s political leadership. The public was even more agitated when the government went ahead and passed rules to control the use of the Internet in Turkey, thus reducing the democratic space of the people.

The government of Turkey needs to regard the complaints around the decision to use the parliament of that country by both the public and human rights group both within and outside the country, especially in the European Union, where Turkey hopes to be a member soon. The decision to limit the access to the Internet by the people has been termed as a gross violation of the universal human rights, with lobbyists requesting that the country not be allowed to join the European Union before lifting their authoritarian laws against the media.

\(^{168}\) Diğdem Soyaltın, “Turkish Court of Accounts in Crisis: An Urgent Problem, Yet not a Main Concern?” Research Turkey, 19 December 2013.

\(^{169}\) The Hürriyet Daily News, 12/13/2013.
Recommendations and Conclusion

Media corruption is the deterioration of the media’s role as a watchdog for the public and as the fourth democracy pillar\textsuperscript{170}. It involves using the media as a toll for spreading propaganda either on behalf of the government or against the government. Some individuals with political ambitions have paid bribes to journalists so that they can report propaganda against their rivals to make it easier for them to fulfil their political ambitions. Propaganda has also been used to make some initiatives unpopular among the people\textsuperscript{171}. For example, in countries where a section of people may desire a change in the constitution, another section may use propaganda as a tool to advocate against the changes.

Media corruption also involves the abuse of the powers entrusted in the media for personal gain. The public relies on the media for information, and as such expect the media to be non-partisan in its delivery of news and reviews about issues. However, the media, especially the Internet media, has faced criticism in the recent past for seeking to satisfy their own needs at the expense of the members of the public\textsuperscript{172}. For example, some journalists have published information to favour several personalities in their online articles in exchange for an amount of money. Journalists have also faced accusations of advertising products and ideas held by certain individuals and disguising them as editorial content at a fee. These kinds of actions amount to corruption of the media.


The internet media in Russia and Turkey are different because of the way the people view the, in Russia, a majority of the population support the ruling party, and view the internet media as a distraction to the activities of the government\textsuperscript{173}. President Putin’s government has moved to place sanctions against the free use of the internet to reports issues concerning the government. The public has come out strongly in support of most of these measures, therefore leading to further stringent laws that restrict the use of the internet as a medium of spreading information to the people\textsuperscript{174}. However, investigations have revealed that the Russian government has placed restrictions on the use of the Internet to spread information concerning corruption in the high offices of government\textsuperscript{175}.

In Turkey, the government has put in place policies to control the use of the internet after a series of leaks of confidential information concerning corruption involving the Prime Minister, Recep Erdogan\textsuperscript{176}. This move drew considerable criticism from the member of the public, with thousands of people going to the streets to demonstrate in protests against the move by the government to deny them the freedom of expression\textsuperscript{177}. Audio files of the Prime Minister talking about relaxing some laws regarding zoning for a tycoon in the construction field so that he receives two villas went viral in the internet, prompting the government to


take action by pulling them down. In some cases, the Turkish government has blocked the websites that report corrupt practices in the government, making them inaccessible to the public.

As democracy continues spreading and citizens from autocratic states becoming more liberated through information, it is important to recognize the role of the Internet media in fighting corruption in the society. The Internet media can act as a watchdog in societies that do not have tolerance for corruption. The Internet media can investigate allegations of corruption and provide details on such acts to the public. If the internet media is allowed to report cases of corruption freely, cases of corruption will definitely decline, as seen in the United States of America and the United Kingdom, where the internet media has been granted freedom, in the words of Andersen, Bentzen, Dalgaard, & Selaya (418). For the media to be effective as a watchdog, both the government and the public have to support the freedom of the media.

The media can also assist in fighting corruption by creating awareness to the public about issues like corruption. Because the Internet media is effective in reaching millions of

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people in such a short time, when the governments use the Internet media to advocate against corruption, many people will understand the effects of corruption to the society. Further, the government may involve the Internet media in educating the people on corruption as well as what the government is doing to prevent the spread of corruption. Informing the members of public regarding the consequences attached to corruption will be important in deterring people from engaging in acts of corruption. With this in view, it is essential that both the members of the public and the authorities knows recognize the duty of the media to educate the members of the public as well as furnish them with information regarding what takes place through their news reports.

The governments of Turkey and Russia have adopted extreme measures against the freedom of the internet media. Aside from blocking websites belonging to leaders in the opposition, the government of Vladimir Putin has also blocked the website of an independent newspaper, the Echo of Moscow (Ekho Moskvy). In recent history, the Russian authorities made the founder of the VKontakte, Russia’s leading social network, to seek asylum in Central Europe. This exile occurred after the founder was fired for his refusal to hand to state officers some piece of private information concerning Euromaidan protesters in Russia. The ownership of the company also changed hands, with wealthy and influential executives such as Alisher Usmanov, the famous billionaire industrialist and a close ally of the President,

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quietly purchasing 52 percent of the stakes in the company. The Russian government has sponsored a law that has already been debated in the country’s parliament, the State Duma, and now awaits the signing into law by the President. This law requires all bloggers in Russia whose sites attract more than 3000 views per day to register their blogs with the state. When Putin signs the Duma’s bill making it law, the internet media stands to undergo intense scrutiny from the state authorities in unprecedented ways.

The government should put into consideration the proposal that it embraces the internet media and acknowledge it as a medium that can facilitate communication between the public and the government, as opposed to increasing measures that limit the freedom that the internet media should enjoy. As established earlier in this report, the main reason for the current crackdown on the internet media is because of the protests that rocked the streets of Moscow and other towns late December where people were in protest against the decision by Putin to vie for the presidency. The Russian government had to act radically and fast to avoid a scenario where the people would seek a change of power by forceful means, as it happened during the Arab Spring. The fear among the people of Russia is that the government seems determined to increase its corruption of the internet media to suit its own needs. Such a move is evident in the desire of the country to block out websites and social media platforms over which the government does not have control such as Twitter, WordPress, Google and Facebook, and divert internet users towards social networks owned

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by Russians. The problem is the rate at which people close to the Presidency are acquiring strategic companies such as social media sites and other media houses 190.

The case is not any different in Istanbul, where the government has moved to curb the rapid spread of embarrassing leaks through the secret passage of new legislation to give the government bureaucrats more power to undertake the censorship of the internet. The Turkish government already has stringent policies governing the Internet media. As such, the additional laws would only serve to reduce the democratic space available in the country 191.

Transparency International views the restriction of the Internet media and its corruption as retrogressive to the efforts that the international community has gained to expand the democratic state 192. The European Union has also spoken strongly against the measures that Kremlin and the government of Turkey have implemented to control the use of the Internet by the people 193. The United Nations has also highlighted the need for governments to allow the freedom of the media to prevail unconditionally, terming the moves to control information spread as a violation of the right of the people to access information, as they may desire 194. Further, the Transparency International terms the monitoring acts by governments as a violation of the privacy of their citizens, therefore pushing for the relaxation of the rules in these countries 195.

195 Camaj, L. "Role of the Media in the Fight against Corruption: Effects of the Media on Accountability by the
In conclusion, information is important to the people such that it helps them to come up with informed decisions and opinions concerning matters in the public domain. A common saying is that information is power. With that in mind, it is imperative to note that without free access to information, corruption and other malpractices find the perfect environment to thrive, and as such, the rights of the people may be disregarded in many ways. People try to make their corrupt acts as anonymous as possible and would do anything to keep them secret. However, in the contemporary society, people with the privilege to access some information may demand payments from affected parties in form of bribes. They may also ask for bribes from other people seeking access to the same information. Without freedom of access to information, the people cannot participate actively in matters of politics because they do not get the necessary information that would help them make their decisions on their political positions with regard to issues such as corruption.

It is imperative that the authorities advocate for the freedom of their people to access information at their will, and that they stop using their power to intimidate journalists and

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bloggers into giving in to the demands of the state\textsuperscript{201}. The stringent measures put in place by the governments of Turkey and Russia have not worked to make the people more cooperative\textsuperscript{202}. Rather, these moves have served to make more people agitated and radicalised against the respective governments\textsuperscript{203}. The gagging of the internet media has not also been an effective measure towards ensuring stability in the countries\textsuperscript{204}.

It would be wise for the government to involve the Internet media in campaigns that would be of benefit to the community such as marketing and branding the country as an initiative for the country to attract more tourists into the country. Cooperation between the government and the Internet media can be of benefit to the economy of the country because aside from the Internet media depicting the country as a peaceful place, it will also serve to attract business people into the country to undertake investments. Such investments will provide employment to people within the country while also providing the government with the much-needed revenue to continue taking care of their citizens, instead of engaging the Internet media in constant wrangles.

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